

CARE places human dignity at the centre of its relief and development work, and as a global confederation. With a presence in over 100 countries, we recognise the importance of organisational culture and accountability in creating a safe and supportive environment for our staff, partners, and the communities with whom we work. At CARE, we believe that all people have the right to live their lives free from sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, and that no child should be subjected to abuse of any form.

CARE has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse. We make very clear in our Safeguarding Code of Conduct, the standards, behaviours, and attitudes that CARE employees and related personnel must abide by to ensure that we are upholding 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 adhere to our global [Safeguarding Policy: Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, and Child Abuse](#), at all times. Our ongoing focus on building a positive safeguarding culture throughout CARE, more robust recruitment processes, providing safeguarding training to our staff and partners, and having available safe, accessible, and trusted reporting mechanisms, are all ways that we aim to prevent sexual misconduct, and hold ourselves accountable to our policies.

All our safeguarding activities are guided by a survivor-centred approach. Our intention is for the needs and wishes of survivors to inform the way we handle reports of misconduct, and for survivors to be treated with dignity and respect. Their privacy and the support we can provide them, are our priorities. Every report of sexual 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 this is 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.

Since 2017, CARE International has collated and published annual data on allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse. In 2021, a total of 12,181 people worked for CARE across 102 countries. During this period, CARE received 56 allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse, and child abuse, by CARE staff and related personnel.

We collect this data in two separate categories:

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

15 of the 56 complaints received were allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, or child abuse, towards programme participants and community members, of which 10 were investigated and closed in 2021. Of these, 3 complaints were upheld. Disciplinary action included 1 dismissal and 1 warning given. The subject of the complaint for the third case resigned from their position prior to us being able to carry out disciplinary action. Five complaints remain under investigation at the end of December 2021.

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

41 of the overall 56 complaints received were allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse towards CARE employees or related personnel. 35 complaints were investigated and closed in 2021, of which 21 were upheld. Disciplinary action included 16 dismissals and 5 warnings given. Disciplinary action for a further 2 investigations is still being determined. Two subjects of complaint resigned from their position prior to us being able to carry out disciplinary action. A total of 4 complaints remain open at the end of December 2021 and are currently being investigated.

In some cases, there may be more than one person involved in one complaint. In these instances, and following an investigation, multiple disciplinary measures may be taken.

In addition to the above, CARE closed another 3 cases, which had remained open at the end of 2020. All 3 cases involved allegations of sexual misconduct towards CARE employees or related personnel. Disciplinary action following investigation included one dismissal and one warning. The third case was unsubstantiated.

In some cases, a subject of complaint will resign from their position, prior to us completing an investigation, and carrying out any necessary disciplinary action. We cannot stop this from happening, but when it does, we are still committed to completing the investigation, and making decisions on the allegations, to the fullest extent possible. We will continue to support the survivor according to their needs. We also participate in the [Misconduct Disclosure Scheme](#), wherever legally feasible. The scheme works on preventing known perpetrators of sexual misconduct from moving about the sector.

The COVID pandemic continued to increase the prevalence and risks of sexual violence to women, children, and vulnerable adults, throughout 2021. However, we acknowledge that the number of reported allegations decreased in 2021, in particular those involving programme participants and community members. This was reduced from 30 out of a total of 61 reports in 2020, to 15 out of a total of 56 reports in 2021. Whilst we cannot be certain why this is, it is possible that COVID restrictions have impacted the ability of people to report via, for example, our community feedback mechanisms, or they have had less exposure to CARE staff and related personnel. We will continue to build mitigations in ways that reduce the possibility of doing harm through our programming, including improving our feedback and accountability mechanisms. In 2021, this included introducing 'Risk Assessment' and 'Safer Programming' methods to help us identify possible risks for where and how sexual misconduct could occur, and to prevent incidents from happening. With COVID restrictions impacting how we delivered face-to-face training on Safeguarding with our staff, we made available an online training, and shared this for use with our partners.

In 2022, 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. Building on our work in 2021, we will reinforce our safer recruitment practices by using the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme throughout our global confederation to prevent known perpetrators of misconduct from working with CARE or moving about the sector. In addition, we will work together with our national and international partners to strengthen capacity and understanding of safeguarding in our operating contexts 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 the communities where we work.

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