

IDRC Safeguarding Glossary of Terms

The IDRC Safeguarding Glossary of Terms comprises concise definitions clarifying and standardizing key safeguarding concepts. The glossary is aimed at ensuring IDRC staff, grantees and partners have a consistent understanding of critical safeguarding terms, to better equip them in discussions on safeguarding or sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH).

Definitions in the glossary reflect definitions set out in IDRC's Preventing and Responding Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Policy (available in [English](#) and [French](#)), and a range of global good practice safeguarding guidelines and sources¹.

Glossary of Terms

Balance of probabilities — refers to the common standard of proof in sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment administrative investigations, where more evidence supports the finding that the misconduct happened than otherwise.

Best interests of the child — primary consideration must be given to the child's wellbeing in actions concerning a child due to the child's dependency, maturity, legal status and often "voicelessness", in balance with procedural fairness.

Child/Children — refers to person(s) under the age of 18.

Concern/ Complaint — refers to information provided, whether by a victim-survivor or any other person (source), indicating conduct that may be in breach of IDRC's policies or procedures but that has yet to be assessed.

Confidentiality — refers to two aspects of a SEAH investigation. The first relates to the victim-survivor, who must be fully informed of all aspects of the investigation process and must provide their informed consent. The second relates to access and dissemination of information, where the investigation team should ensure that required information is available to authorised individuals on a strictly need-to-know basis.

Do No Harm — refers to the ethical guiding principle stipulating that organisations should refrain from doing any harm while making an effort to do good. It is concerned with minimising unintended, negative consequences when providing support or funding.

Informed consent — comprises of three components: comprehension, voluntariness, and stated permission. Victim-survivors should be provided with all information related to the investigation process, how the information will be used, the potential risks and benefits and have indicated they comprehend the information related to them (*comprehension*). Victim-survivors should provide their consent voluntarily without influence or coercion from others, and can change their mind about participating in the investigation at any point without the need for

¹ IDRC's Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) glossary (in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)) is also available as a helpful resource presenting concise definitions for core concepts central to IDRC's efforts to advance GEI through research.

explanation (*voluntariness*). Victim-survivors should provide their verbal or written consent to move forward with the investigation (*stated permission*).

Procedural fairness — requires investigators to inform the Subject of Complaint of the nature of the concern, to provide all parties with an opportunity to provide their account of events, give and respond to evidence, act fairly and without bias, and make reasonable inquiries or investigations before coming to a decision, among other actions.

Safeguarding — refers to the prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, plus any broader forms of violence, exploitation and abuse.

Sexual exploitation — refers to any actual or attempted abuse of a person in a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another.

Sexual abuse — refers to an actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, coercion or under unequal conditions. This would include forced marriage and sexual slavery and also includes sexual activity with a child (any person under the age of 18).

Sexual harassment — refers to any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation.

Subject of Complaint — refers to the person against whom the allegation, concern or suspicion has been raised.

Substantiated — refers to the conclusion of an investigation where there was sufficient evidence based on the “balance of probability” assessment, to establish the occurrence of a misconduct or SEAH incident.

Victim/survivor-centred approach — a victim/survivor-centred approach creates a supportive environment in which the victim-survivor’s rights and wishes are respected, their safety is ensured as far as possible, and they are treated with dignity and respect, in balance with procedural fairness.

Unsubstantiated — refers to the conclusion of an investigation where the available evidence was insufficient to allow for an investigation to be completed, or that there was insufficient evidence to establish the occurrence of misconduct for a variety of reasons. Such a conclusion does not mean the allegation was necessarily false.

Victim/Survivor — refers to a person who has experienced SEAH, including those who self-identify as a victim or survivor. An individual’s choice of how to identify (as a victim or survivor) will be respected.

Zero tolerance approach to inaction — refers to an approach of not allowing and accepting any form of violations, undesirable behaviours and acts that are in contravention of IDRC’s Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) policy, and ensuring all allegations are treated seriously, investigated and where allegations are confirmed through investigation, disciplinary action is taken as a result, including dismissal.