



The Irish Association of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Dóchas – The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations

16 February 2018

STATEMENT: SAFEGUARDING AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE IN THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

Dóchas – The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations – stands by the strong commitment of its members to fight and speak out against discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse. We are strongly committed to working together across the sector to ensure that the most vulnerable are protected.

Commenting on recent media reports, Suzanne Keatinge, Chief Executive of Dóchas said: “International non-profits are not immune from incidences of sexual harassment and abuse. The overwhelming reaction has been one of shock, and disappointment and rightly so. There can be no excuse.

“However, it’s important to acknowledge that a lot of work has gone into putting into place effective safeguarding, whistleblowing and transparency policies in recent times. As a result, international aid agencies do now have robust policies, processes and human resource procedures in place, which have helped to strengthen our commitment to a zero tolerance approach to incidences of abuse. This has involved strong leadership within organisations, which in turn is strengthening a culture of transparency and accountability to the staff and people that we serve,” said Keatinge.

Ms Keatinge added: “However, as recent events have revealed, the gravity and seriousness of any such incidences of abuse or discrimination demand ongoing reflection – clearly there is more that we need to do. We also know that a zero tolerance approach needs to be monitored through learning, reflection and action, that we need to continue to seek ways to be more transparent and accountable when incidences occur.

“Even over the last few days, it is a sign of the dynamism of our members that new ideas about strengthening the sector’s approach to safeguarding have come up, such as issuing

global humanitarian passports, mandatory reporting on dismissals, and strengthening reporting of this nature.

“What has happened demands intense thought and consideration so that we further improve our policies and procedure in relation to sexual harassment and abuse. In this regard, over the coming months, Dóchas will be putting in place processes – involving our member organisations – to discuss and reflect on our approaches to safeguarding in order to test and seek new opportunities to strengthen our practices.

“Above all, we need to remain focused on the most important issue here – protecting and upholding people’s dignity – and for that, we need to continue to do the vital lifesaving work that we do in a way that offers the highest protection to the people we aim to serve,” said Keatinge.

Ends

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Notes:

- Dóchas is the Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between its members, and a platform for them to speak with a single voice on development issues. For more information, visit: www.dochas.ie.
- Dóchas currently has 60 member organisations, who are working in Ireland on issues related to international development. A list of Dóchas members can be found here - <http://dochas.ie/membership/our-members>.