Evaluation Report for Programme Name: SAFEGUARDING RESOURCE AND SUPPORT HUB (RSH) GLOBAL EVALUATION REPORT

Response to Alinea International to RSH Evaluation Report

Overall summary:

- This end-line evaluation reviewed the Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH) programme's effectiveness, impact, relevance, efficiency, sustainability, and value for money in strengthening safeguarding against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) in the international development and humanitarian sector. It focuses on the extent to which the programme supported capacity-building of small less resourced national CSOs, sharing lessons learned and recommendations for future safeguarding initiatives. RSH was a £10m programme running from 2019 to 2025.

- Key evaluation conclusion: The RSH programme improved safeguarding culture and capacity among small CSOs, with mentorship proving more effective than digital-only approaches. However, sustainability is limited by staff turnover, funding, and weak integration with national systems. Value for money was strong, but short project cycles restricted deeper, lasting impact.

Summary of management response to the recommendations

The evaluation identifies 12 high, medium and low recommendations. Recommendations are directed towards the implementers of the new and second phase of the RSH programme and broader recommendation to FCDO and wider sector donors. FCDO agrees with the lessons and recommendations from this and will use them to shape future programming and implementation, with findings particularly feeding into delivery of RSH next phase working with the implementing partners.

Overall, this is a comprehensive and informative evaluation providing key lessons and evidence on the effective approaches RSH took for building capability on PSEAH (Protection from SEAH). The findings note the relevance of contexts, are useful and user friendly and present interesting observations on the successes and challenges of the programme. The evaluation provides strong recommendations for future safeguarding initiatives, donors and the broader sector.

The Evaluation was awarded an 'excellent' rating from the FCDO EQUALS quality assurance process, with a score of 81% - criterion fully met or exceeded with no shortcomings. The quality of analysis and findings is very good and EQUALs and FCDO provided few suggestions for improvement.

Good practices noted include: an assessment of the strength of evidence supporting significant findings (Table 11); organisation of lessons (Section 10) in a matrix which meets the OECD-DAC definition; Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) analysis well incorporated; and data effectively used and guided by ethical standards.

Feedback on the first draft included to streamline and more clearly present the findings and recommendations. This was done and the recommendations consolidated.

FCDO will disseminate lessons across FCDO and with external partners with a focus on informing future capability building initiatives for safeguarding against SEAH.

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**Priority levels were assigned by Alinea based on the extent to which recommendations address fundamental structural challenges that limit programme effectiveness and sustainability. High-priority recommendations target systemic barriers, including organisational culture transformation, capacity-building approaches, network access inequities, and sustainability challenges. Medium-priority recommendations address important programme effectiveness factors, while low-priority recommendations focus on valuable programme enhancements.

Recommendations**: FCDO	Accepted or Rejected	If "Accepted", Action plan for Implementation or if "Rejected", Reason for Rejection
Recommendation 1: High Priority STRENGTHENING ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP: Establish comprehensive leadership engagement and cultural transformation approaches that embed safeguarding as organisational ownership rather than compliance-based individual responsibility. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this, and agrees that engaging leaders is an essential to enable fully transformative culture change. Particularly the conclusion that the programme *achieved substantial organisational culture transformation by successfully shifting safeguarding from compliance-based individual responsibility to embedded organisational ownership. This transformation was most pronounced where leadership actively championed integration rather than treating safeguarding as an external requirement.* This will shape and inform our future programming, particularly RSH, working with the implementing partners.
Recommendation 2: High Priority ENHANCING CAPACITY-BUILDING APPROACHES: Prioritise intensive mentorship-based capacity-building over digital-only approaches while implementing systematic strategies to mitigate staff turnover vulnerabilities. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this recommendation. A refreshed mentorship strategy forms part of the next phase of RSH. Implementing partners have been asked to consider these findings and recommendation in developing this. RSH will however continue to offer digital offers as well, recognising the importance of reaching a breadth of partners, and the convening power that live, online offers can provide.
Recommendation 3: Medium Priority IMPROVING CONTEXTUALISATION AND ACCESSIBILITY: Develop participatory translation and adaptation processes that move beyond linguistic conversion to encompass cultural and conceptual understanding through systematic plain language approaches. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers**	Accepted	This recommendation is primarily for future implementing partners, but FCDO agrees that effective, contextualisation is key to support to raise knowledge and build capability. The programme recognised the challenges faced in developing some materials and iterated its approach over time, learning from experiences and feedback.

Recommendation 4: **High Priority** ADDRESSING NETWORK ACCESS AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS: Fund inclusive governance reforms in safeguarding coordination mechanisms while systematically supporting CSO engagement in formal networks to overcome structural exclusion patterns. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Partially accepted	FCDO accepts this finding but notes that some of the structural barriers were beyond the scope of the programme. The RSH programme will consider what other actions can be taken to support CSO engagement in wider, formal networks. FCDO will highlight this finding to wider partners and donors in disseminations, to inform wider efforts to support more inclusive structures and networks. We are not however involved in all safeguarding coordination mechanisms and so cannot commit to funding governance reforms.
Recommendation 5: Medium Priority OPTIMISING DIGITAL LEARNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE: Design infrastructure-responsive blended learning approaches that address regional connectivity inequities while providing comprehensive digital platform support and expanded in-person engagement. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this finding, and that *platform diversity successfully extended reach but required sustained technical support for effective utilisation and the multiplicity of engagement modalities represented a strategic strength*. The programme has developed a number of 'offline' offers and will continue to use and promote these.
Recommendation 6: High Priority BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY FROM INCEPTION: Embed three-dimensional sustainability approaches addressing organisational capability building, PSEAH engagement continuity, and local handover processes from programme inception, while acknowledging contextual factors beyond programme control. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this finding. Sustainability forms a strong basis for the model of the next phase of the RSH programme with the implementing partners taking forward the localisation approach (piloted in the first phase) to embedding national hubs. The programme will seek to embed all national hubs from the start, with the aim that national CSOs will ultimately take over leadership of activities.
Recommendation 7: Medium Priority STRENGTHENING GEDSI INTEGRATION: Develop adaptive GEDSI strategies for varied political contexts while investing in comprehensive accessibility infrastructure that requires sustained attention to cultural sensitivity beyond initial programme phases. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers**	Accepted	FCDO agrees with this – the evaluation highlighted a particular success of the RSH programme for reaching marginalised groups through intentional targeting – despite structural barriers; *Adaptive programming approaches demonstrated the programme's ability to respond to diverse needs, while political and cultural restrictions highlighted the limitations of technical approaches to addressing systemic exclusion.* FCDO will highlight this finding in disseminations, to inform wider efforts to support GEDSI sensitive capability building approaches.

Recommendation 8: Medium Priority ENHANCING PROGRAMME COORDINATION: Mandate explicit coordination mechanisms with existing government and sector-wide safeguarding structures while acknowledging the time requirements, resource constraints, and contextual factors that limit engagement beyond programme control. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this recommendation given the caveat noted in the evaluation of time requirements, resource constraints, and contextual factors that limit engagement beyond programme control. There was ongoing assessment and acknowledgement by RSH along the lifetime about the challenge between on the one hand focusing efforts directly on CSOs support, and on the other trying to work through the wider sector /engagement to enact change. It was decided to focus on supporting CSOs directly, while also engaging with government and national settings, where possible. A key aim of the local ownership approach piloted in Ethiopia and Nigeria, was to facilitate national acceptance and accessibility by government, donors and less-resourced CSOs and contribute to further extend safeguarding practices in countries, beyond the funding lifecycle of the programme. In some cases, RSH deliberately chose to operate in a more discrete manner, due to topic sensitivities and e.g. a higher risk of shut down. Where RSH engaged, this was to raise the voices of CSOs and the importance of PSEAH in the workplace. However, we will consider how future programming and wider FCDO engagements/efforts can support to build the enabling environment for CSOs and capability-building offers and initiatives to thrive.
Recommendation 9: Low Priority SUPPORTING CSO COMPLIANCE AND ACCREDITATION: Develop accreditation support mechanisms that help smaller CSOs demonstrate safeguarding capacity through accessible pathways without creating exclusionary processes. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers**	Partially Accepted	FCDO partially accept this. Accreditation can be a very useful mechanism for CSOs to demonstrate capability. However, creating / adding a new offer must be balanced with consideration of wider existing sector accreditation offers and the need for contextualised offers which will vary in shape and scope. The Evaluation recommended partnering with existing accreditation bodies. The new phase of the RSH programme will continue to work with and alongside wider international / national capability building initiatives to ensure it adds the most value to organisations and does not duplicate any efforts.
Recommendation 10: Low Priority STRENGTHENING NETWORKS AND PARTNERSHIPS: Expand RSH networks through strategic partnerships with research institutions, UN bodies, and international networks to	Accepted	FCDO agrees with this recommendation and RSH will continue to seek to improve action and engagement across a range of stakeholders and within communities of practice. FCDO recognise how far RSH has come since inception, to establish itself as a key convenor in the sector on PSEAH, and a global public good.

increase CSO visibility and amplify smaller organisation perspectives in global safeguarding discourse. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers**		A core pillar of RSH remains to collaborate and coordinate on PSEAH across the sector, at national, regional and international levels to advocate for and enable strategic coordination of efforts, experience and skills, to share challenges and lessons learned as a result of activities and strengthen the knowledge base on PSEAH. A critical element of this pillar will be to amplify the voices of CSOs and bring local CSOs more strongly into sectoral discussion spaces.
Recommendation 11: Medium Priority INVESTING IN EVIDENCE AND LEARNING SYSTEMS: Develop real-time learning and adaptive management systems that capture user experiences, contextual shifts, and marginalised actor feedback to enable responsive programme evolution. **Intended Audience: Sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this recommendation. User feedback and a continuous, iterative approach to improvement has been core to the RSH programme, and why it has continued to go from strengthen to strengthen. Future programming will continue to gather evidence and feedback, in an inclusive way, balanced against the need for meaningful and well-spaced mechanisms to minimise participant burden and to maintain trust. More broadly, FCDO will highlight this finding in disseminations, as a particular recommendation to donors, recognising the importance of monitoring mechanisms centring inclusion through disaggregated data collection, with qualitative feedback from particular vulnerable groups to *inform/analyse how safeguarding approaches are understood across different contexts and enable responsive programme evolution*.
Recommendation 12: Medium Priority IMPROVING EXIT STRATEGY AND TRANSITION COMMUNICATION: Develop transparent communication strategies about programme duration while implementing comprehensive transition planning as a programme design requirement from inception rather than end-of-programme activities. **Intended Audience: Programme implementers and sector donors**	Accepted	FCDO accepts this recommendation. This was also a key internal finding of the programme over its lifetime and efforts were made to better communicate and plan for exit/ transition periods, noting the challenges of this against efforts to secure wider donor/sector funding to continue operations at the end of core, planned 'cycles'. The next phase of the RSH programme has built this in from the outset, with an approach centred around embedding the programme nationally, with a set model in place to support this – seeking to support and mentor appropriate CSO candidates for taking over operations, early on.