



# Managing Sexual Violence against Aid Workers

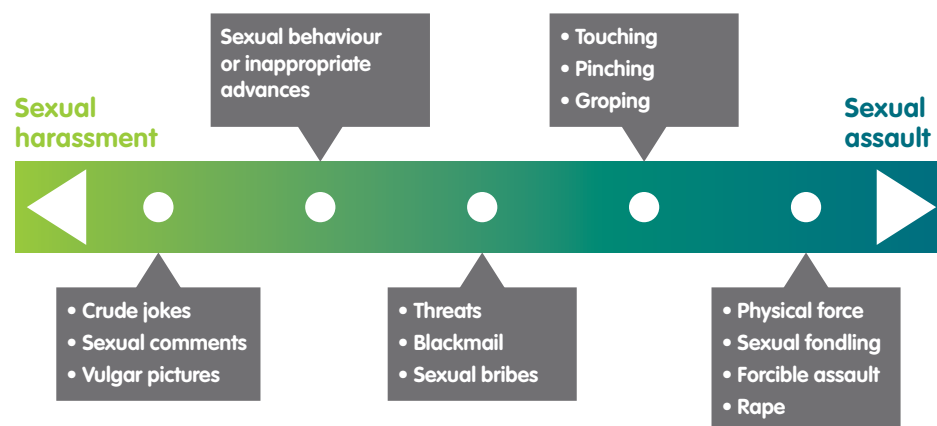


**Aid agencies have a duty of care to respond to incidents of sexual violence against their staff. Sexual violence in all its forms violates human rights. Incidents of this kind are deeply distressing for the survivor, their family, their colleagues and the whole aid community. Sexual violence incidents also have the potential to leave survivors with lifelong physical and mental health problems.**

Anyone can be the target of sexual violence. Aid workers' personal characteristics – such as their sex, race, gender, sexual orientation, relative power and choice – interplay with their organisation and role, as well as the context in which they work, to affect their vulnerability to sexual violence.

Sexual violence is any act of a sexual nature that is unwanted or forced. It covers all incidents from sexual harassment to rape, including stalking, sharing sexual images without consent and sexual assault. The continuum of sexual violence is shown below.

## Continuum of sexual violence



## Organisational standard of care in response to sexual violence

To provide a basic standard of care for survivors of sexual violence, an organisation should:

- make appropriate medical and psychological care available as soon as possible and in a confidential, if not anonymous fashion;
- offer choices that empower survivors and only intervene if someone could be at further risk;
- offer support and advice on legal and justice processes;
- pursue prosecution only if the survivor consents;
- respect the survivor's confidentiality by following information sharing protocols on a need-to-know basis, while allowing the survivor to speak out as desired;
- follow clear response protocols for identifying and dealing with alleged perpetrators;
- provide a feedback mechanism so survivors are kept informed of any actions being taken; and
- mitigate risk and exposure through prevention, preparedness and swift post-incident action.

## Survivor-centred approach

An organisation's management of sexual violence should aim to be survivor-centred at all times. Through a survivor-centred approach, the organisation gives the survivor control over the decision-making processes after the incident, provides internal support and arranges for support from relevant professional bodies.

Exceptions to the survivor-centred approach should only be considered if following the survivor's wishes could place the survivor or others at risk.

# How to manage sexual violence against aid workers

Aid agencies should aim to prevent, be prepared for and respond to incidents of sexual violence against their staff.

See pages 3-5 of this summary brief for more details on each of these stages.



# Prevention



Approaches to prevention should focus both on deterring potential perpetrators and on minimising the vulnerabilities and risk factors for aggression and sexual violence.

## Who are the perpetrators?

### Dispelling myths

- 'Stranger danger' is commonly perceived as the greatest risk although the perpetrator is more likely to be someone the survivor knows.
- Incidents of sexual violence are not always extremely violent acts and can vary significantly in nature.
- Although women are more likely to be targeted, men can be targeted as well; certain circumstances, including personal characteristics and the local context, can increase the risks to men.

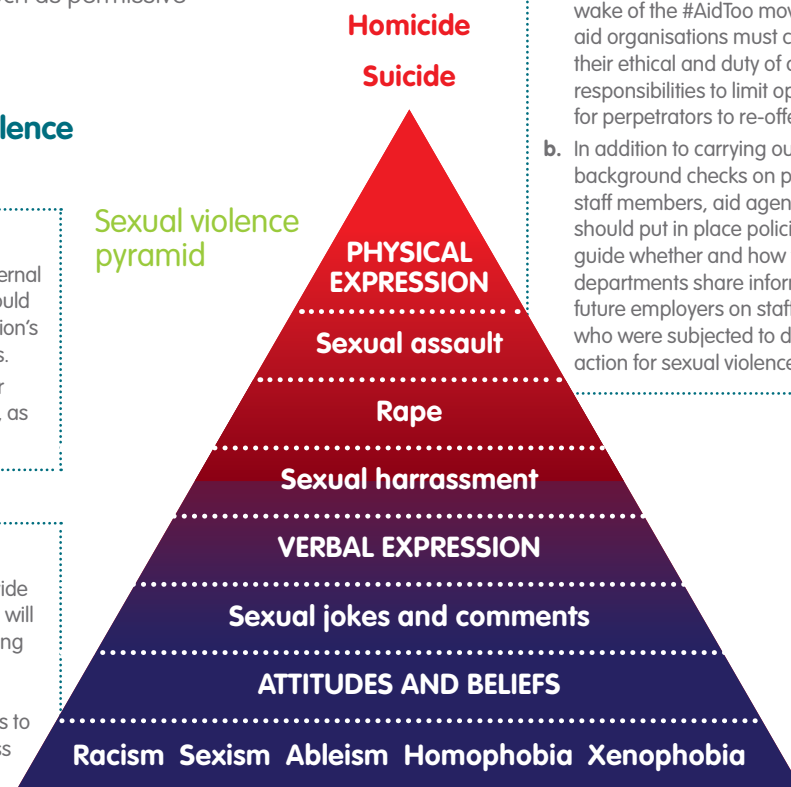
## Understand the risks

All prevention efforts need to have a balanced focus on individual as well as external and organisational vulnerabilities and risk factors (such as permissive organisational environments).

## How to prevent sexual violence

- Inclusive risk assessments**
  - Individual, organisational and external risk factors for sexual violence should be incorporated into an organisation's standard risk assessment process.
  - Risk assessments should consider both external and internal threats, as well as their interrelationship.
- Induction and training**
  - While organisations need to provide specialised training to those who will be specifically involved in preparing and responding to an incident of sexual violence, there is a further need to train all staff on key areas to support prevention, preparedness and response efforts.
- Reporting and whistleblowing**
  - Robust and confidential reporting and whistleblowing mechanisms are essential parts of prevention efforts.

Sexual violence pyramid

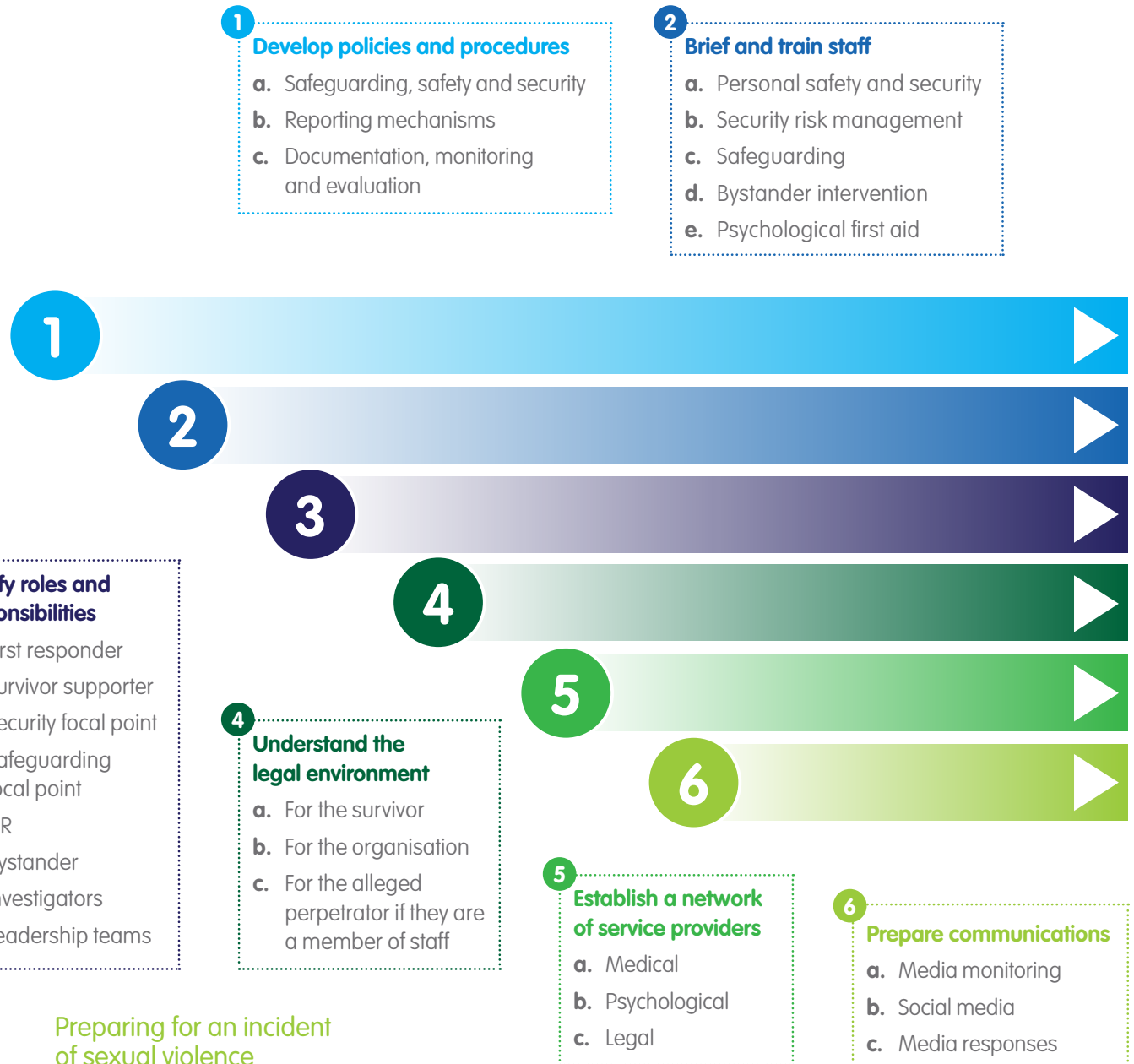


- Disciplinary actions, investigations and references**
  - Following allegations and concerns relating to safeguarding in the wake of the #AidToo movement, aid organisations must consider their ethical and duty of care responsibilities to limit opportunities for perpetrators to re-offend.
  - In addition to carrying out thorough background checks on prospective staff members, aid agencies should put in place policies that guide whether and how their HR departments share information with future employers on staff members who were subjected to disciplinary action for sexual violence offences.
- Organisational culture**
  - Each agency has a responsibility to create a culture of strong safeguarding practice to ensure that everyone feels safe, included, protected from harm (including all forms of sexual violence) and informed about how to raise concerns and access support when needed.
  - The way these messages are communicated and delivered within each office is important in creating an inclusive and supportive culture.

# Preparedness



Preparing to respond to a sexual violence incident is paramount to responding effectively in the event of an incident. Given the gravity of such incidents, a poorly prepared response can have life-threatening consequences.



Preparing for an incident of sexual violence

# Response, post-incident actions and aftercare



An organisation's short and long-term response to an incident of sexual violence can be divided into five primary stages:

- Immediate response
- Actions within 24 hours
- Actions within 24-72 hours
- Post-incident actions
- Aftercare

All response actions should be survivor-centred.

## Sexual violence incident response timeline

