Digital SHEA and Safeguarding Risks during ActionAid's COVID-19 Response

Guidance Note for all Staff and Representatives

Developed by the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team, August 2020

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1. Introduction

To ensure our work continues while social distancing and quarantine measures are in place, ActionAid has shifted much of its work to online or digital spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital innovation is central to ActionAid's global strategy: online platforms and digital spaces are an essential part of ActionAid's work – both during COVID and beyond.

In this document, digital solutions and technology refers to: the use of the internet and online spaces for running programmes that were traditionally face to face; the use of digital tools e.g. use of personal phones to gather data; and new ways of online working for staff who are now mostly working from home e.g. exclusive use or additional reliance on Teams and WhatsApp.

While digital solutions and technology provide great opportunities, it also increases risks - including the risk of online sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse. We know that COVID 19 has exacerbated different forms of violence and abuse and online harm is no exception. Crises such as pandemics push risky behaviours underground and so we must be vigilant to preventing harm taking place on online platforms, and take action if it does.

ActionAid recognizes the risk that staff/representatives could carry out online sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse. ActionAid has a responsibility to protect staff and representatives (including partners, volunteers, contractors and others), community members, young people and children that it engages with on online spaces. As we practice social distancing, quarantine measures and frequent handwashing, we also must model responsible and safe behaviour online.

N.B. representatives refers to partners, volunteers (including board and assembly members), consultants, contractors/suppliers/vendors, interns, visitors (e.g. donors), dependents accompanying staff while working for ActionAid, and other individuals acting as representatives of ActionAid.

2. How to use this Document

This Guidance Note looks at areas of digital/online engagement between staff/representatives and:

- Children
- Young people
- Communities and adults-at-risk
- Other staff/representatives

This Guidance Note identifies the risks that emerge from these ways of working and makes recommendations on how to embed safe SHEA and safeguarding approaches and reduce the risk of our staff/representatives carrying out harm.[1]

Sections specifically referring to Covid-19 are highlighted in green, for ease of reading.

This document is a reference tool. If you are interested in one particular area, for example child safeguarding, please feel free to go straight to the section relating to children so you can get the information you need.

For templates and examples, please go to the appendices which provide practical tools you can use to promote safety online for different groups.

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[1] ActionAid has developed policies to protect staff, children, young people and communities from online exploitation and abuse. These policies include the SHEA and Safeguarding policies, IT policy, and the Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy which addresses bullying of staff. Together, these policies help ensure that anyone engaging with ActionAid staff online are safe. Other SHEA and safeguarding minimum standards in place to protect staff, children, young people and communities from online exploitation and abuse when engaging with partners include best practice MOU's, due diligence and partner review tools.

3. Key Messages and Terms

Key Messages

- ActionAid staff/representatives working on digital platforms/spaces have a responsibility to ensure that digital platforms are safe and that we reduce the risk of online harassment, exploitation and abuse taking place. All are encouraged to use this guidance note and appendices as tools to create safe online spaces.

- All ActionAid online programmes, activities and digital spaces (including research and data gathering) must be designed safely so that we do not cause harm to those we engage with.

- Young people, children and communities AAI works with should be informed and equipped with skills on how to keep safe online when engaging in AA online spaces/platforms.

- AA staff/representatives should be informed and equipped with skills on how to keep safe online including safe use of digital tools. Rules on online platform engagement must be developed to encourage positive behaviours and mitigate against the risk of online harms.

- Reporting procedures should be communicated to children, young people, community members, and AA staff and representatives to facilitate reporting of safeguarding concerns. ActionAid will respond robustly to any incidences of online sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse carried out by staff/representatives.

Key Terms

Child	A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18.
Young people	Young person is anyone aged 15-30. ActionAid's definition of 'young person' focuses on the socio-political identity of young people.
Sexual abuse	Sexual abuse is defined as "the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal conditions"[2]. For example, sexual assault, rape or attempted rape.
Sexual exploitation	Sexual exploitation is defined as "any actual or attempted abuse of power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting commercially, monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another"[3] For example, asking a rights holder to engage in sexual activities in exchange for assistance (e.g. getting on a distribution list) or making a job or promotion conditional on the applicant having sex with the recruiter.
Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It can occur as a one-off incident or as a pattern of behaviour, and can be physical, verbal, or nonverbal. For example: o Physical – unwanted physical contact, entering someone's physical space o Verbal – inappropriate jokes, whistling/cat calling, comments about someone's sex life or physical appearance. o Non-verbal – staring, inappropriate texts, emails etc o Sexting - sharing of sexual, naked or semi-naked

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[2]https://www.unhcr.org/protection/operations/405ac6614/secretary-generals-bulletin-special-measures-protection-sexualexploitation.html

[3] http://pseataskforce.org/en/overview

	images or videos of themselves or others or sending of sexual messages. It is online abuse if a child or young person is pressured or coerced into creating or sending these types of images.
Child abuse and exploitation	Child Abuse and exploitation is: o Physical abuse – e.g. assault, inappropriate physical punishments o Sexual abuse – any sexual activity, or actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, with someone under the age of 18 o Psychological abuse – threats of harm or abandonment, humiliation, o Neglect – preventing access to education, food or other life necessities, and any emotional or physical care needs. o Exploitation – e.g. online sexual exploitation of children.
Online harassment, exploitation and abuse	Any form of harassment, exploitation and abuse that happens on the internet. These include: o Online grooming for sexual exploitation o Sexting o Commercial sexual exploitation e.g. obtaining child abuse material online, accessing dark web forums e.g. to profit from sexual exploitation and abuse. o 'Revenge porn' - this involves the sharing of sexually inappropriate and explicit images of a person without their knowledge and consent. Other forms of online harms (not Safeguarding related) include: o Cyber bullying/harassment o Hacking o Sharing discriminatory or extremist materials (e.g. racist abuse) o Identity theft o Cyber-stalking. o Hate speech which is gendered, and which poses a specific risk for feminist/women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders, e.g cyber misogyny. This document will not cover these in detail as it is focused on SHEA and Safeguarding risks, but it is important to be aware of and vigilant against these harms.
Grooming	Deliberately gaining a child's trust for the purpose of carrying out sexual abuse or exploitation. Offenders often also groom adults to enable abuse of the children in their care.
Adult at-risk abuse	An adult at-risk is someone over the age of 18 who, for physical, social, economic, environmental or other factors can be more vulnerable to harm (e.g. people with disabilities). Forms of abuse include: neglect, financial abuse, domestic abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and psychological abuse. For example, a rights holder experiencing harm because of their involvement in an unsafe programme.

4. Principles for Online Engagement for AA Staff, Representatives including Partners

- Do no harm. Safety is key when interacting with children, young people, communities, and other staff/representatives on online platforms.

- Respect and listen to one another. Always be professional in any online interactions with staff/representatives, children, young people or communities and show respect and care at all times.

- Observe and maintain confidentiality. AA staff/representatives should maintain confidentiality around children, young people or communities' personal data and information shared on online platforms.

- Report all SHEA and safeguarding concerns to the appropriate staff, in line with the global SHEA and Safeguarding policies.

- Data Protection – we will comply with local and international data protection laws when gathering, storing, or sharing any data relating to individuals, AA activities and SHEA and Safeguarding (e.g. in our fundraising, communications and incident management approach) during COVID-19. As part of ActionAid responsibilities to rights-holders and communities, we will keep all rights-holders and communities informed when processing their data during COVID-19.

5. Key Online/Digital SHEA and Safeguarding Risks during COVID-19

Below are some examples of online/digital safeguarding risks that may arise with the increased or new use of online platforms for AA activities during COVID 19. These include but are not limited to:

- Online sexual exploitation or abuse of children and young people (including online grooming, sharing indecent images of children).
- Online sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse of community members (e.g. staff sending explicit messages or images to community members or using online spaces to ask for sexual favours in exchange for humanitarian assistance during COVID-19). It is important to understand that sexual exploitation during COVID 19 is not only limited to forced sexual intercourse, but this also includes acts of intimidation of a sexual nature that are intended to cause discomfort and embarrassment, particularly in the digital sphere.
- Online sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse of staff (e.g. staff sending explicit messages to another or sharing inappropriate images online). Please note, cyberbullying e.g. a staff member sending aggressive emails to bully, humiliate, threaten or intimidate a fellow staff member would be managed by HR under the Anti Bullying and Harassment Policy.
- Online sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse by rights holders/programme participants towards each other (e.g. online harassment, sharing inappropriate content) in online spaces that ActionAid has created/'owns'.
- Increased access to potentially harmful content as there is increased working from home/reliance on online spaces (e.g. staff accessing pornography, content that is extremist or discriminatory in nature using organizational equipment, or children accessing material that is inappropriate).
- Inappropriate collection, use and sharing of information (e.g. unsafe collection of content that puts communities at risk, staff accessing and sharing fake news on work related digital platforms).

As we engage with children, young people and the communities we work with, we need to ensure that all our activities are carried out in a way which seeks to minimise these risks. Safer measures for programming, research and data gathering such as risk assessments and development of robust research protocols are essential in identifying the areas/risks of abuse (please see the *SHEA and Safeguarding and Safer Programming in ActionAid's COVID-19 Response Guidance Note and related Risk Assessment Tool* and the *AAI Feminist Research Guidelines, April 2020*).

Risk mitigations must be incorporated into online engagement activities:

- All staff/representatives should be trained on SHEA and Safeguarding risks in online engagement.

- Staff should engage with partners to ensure that we have a joint approach to managing these new risks.

- Community members (including children and young people) should be informed of risks so they can support in identifying risks and co-creating safe solutions, where possible.

6. Engaging with Children on Online Platforms during the COVID-19 Response

As we move towards increased use of online platforms during COVID 19, we must ensure that these spaces are safe for children (anyone under the age of 18). In 2017, UNICEF reported that 1 in every 3 internet users is a child – this has huge positives but also creates risks. It demonstrates the importance of digital literacy, and the need for guidance on how to stay safe online.[4]

While these online platforms provide huge opportunities for sustaining and promoting children's rights (e.g. child participation and freedom of expression) these same tools also increase children's exposure to online risks. When engaging with children on online platforms, it is important to note the risk of online safeguarding harms and the importance of putting safe measures in place.

As AA staff and representatives, we must recognise that we have increased power and privilege during the COVID-19 pandemic and that with the current use of digital spaces to interact, we must remain vigilant to prevent exploitation and abuse of children. We must use our values to strengthen inclusive and equitable participation online and ensure that power imbalances are not heightened and no child is put at risk.

SHEA and Safeguarding Risks when Engaging with Children on Online Platforms

SHEA and safeguarding online risks to children include:

- **Contact risks** – for example, grooming of children. AA Staff/ representatives may deliberately try to gain a child's trust for the purpose of carrying out sexual abuse or exploitation. This can happen online through messages, promises of gifts, and other actions intended to build a trusting relationship that can lead to abuse or exploitation.

- **Content risks** - children may access content that is inappropriate to their age. AA staff/representatives must ensure that they publish content that is suitable and age appropriate for children they engage with. Staff/representatives must ensure that content does not pose psychological, physical and emotional harm to children. AA Staff/representatives/partners must never access inappropriate content relating to children when engaging with them on online platforms. Staff must report any suspicious behaviour or behaviour that gives rise to harm, using the safeguarding reporting channels.

- **Conduct risks** – for example, staff/representatives behaving in inappropriate ways such as sending sexually explicit messages. AA staff/representatives should always conduct themselves professionally when engaging with children on online platforms. Children should also be informed of and understand the rules of engagement with AA staff/representatives/partners and one another during online engagement during COVID-19.

ActionAid remains committed to preventing the proliferation of child sexual abuse images or other materials and will work to inform staff/representatives on the dangers of child sexual abuse. ActionAid is committed to ensuring that staff/representatives will not profit from child sexual abuse material and any staff who are found to be producing and disseminating child sexual abuse material will be disciplined according to the AAI Child Safeguarding policy and referred to the appropriate authorities. ActionAid will continue to monitor digital assets for usage of child sexual abuse material and will block live-streaming content for child sexual abuse material. All offenses of child sexual abuse will be coordinated with national authorities and will adhere to national laws on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

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[4] UNICEF, State of the World's Children Report, 2017

Inclusive Approaches for Online Engagement with Children during COVID-19

Different age groups of children experience different forms of vulnerabilities, due to their different levels of understanding and development. For example, children who are infants up till age 3 years may be more vulnerable based on their young age and their full dependence on adults as compared to teenagers. We also recognize that some children may be more vulnerable than others for a range of factors (for example because of their gender, ethnicity, refugee or disability status).

Risks should therefore be identified to ensure that any engagement does not put any group of children at risk of harm, or risk compounding their vulnerability. In our online engagement with children, we have a responsibility to protect the welfare of all children and ensure we do not contribute to wider oppression, marginalization or harm.

When engaging with children we must ensure that we create inclusive approaches where all children are included. Inclusive approaches embrace the diversity of children and allows them to contribute their unique perspectives while fostering a positive environment in which every child is welcomed, respected, supported, valued, and encouraged to be their full authentic selves at all times by eliminating both implicit and explicit barriers to communication and participation.[5] When facilitating child participation, we must ensure that the best interest of the child is upheld, that participation is voluntary, safe and sensitive to risk and that adults are providing supervision and oversight at all times.

Online Programming with Children during COVID-19

Child friendly safer programming ensures that AA programmes and activities are designed with a child-safety lens so as not to cause intended or unintended harm to children. This includes risks assessments being carried out and complaints mechanisms set-up so that SHEA and Safeguarding risks are addressed early, and children can raise concerns if harm takes place. Safeguarding risks assessments should be carried out to identify online risks when engaging with children on online platforms, and measures put in place to mitigate these risks.

When developing complaints mechanisms with communities, children should be actively involved in setting up child friendly complaints mechanisms which adhere to health directives to contain the spread of COVID-19. These complaints mechanisms will facilitate a platform for them to report both safeguarding and non-safeguarding complaints (please see the *Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms for SHEA and Safeguarding during COVID-19 Guidance Note, June 2020*).

As a preventative measure, children should be equipped with skills on how to keep safe on the internet and online spaces. For example:

- ensure they are informed about their rights

- ensure they understand the concept of consent and feel confident to say no

- encourage them to think about appropriate behaviours when engaging with peers and AA staff /representatives online

- ensure they know how to raise concerns

- give them key tips on staying safe online e.g never to give out their personal information or anyone else's that they know online, to use logos or images rather than photos of themselves.

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[5] Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy, Save the Children US 2019 – 2021. Available at https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/advocacy/diversity-equity-inclusion-strategy-2021.pdf

This can be done through awareness creation with use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) material such as posters and by staff who engage with them. ActionAid will support partners with information on safe and responsible internet usage for children (please see ***Appendix F: Risks and Benefits of Social Media Platforms***, *Appendix G: Key Messages to be Shared with Parents and Caregivers).*

Example of AA Online Programming Activities with Children:
Content gathering through child sponsorship lite touch approaches

Suggested Safeguarding Measures
- *Organizational equipment is always used when possible when content gathering. If not possible, then personal phones can be used but there must be agreed measures in place e.g. all staff trained again re safeguarding and content gathering (e.g. not sharing anything on personal social media, not taking inappropriate images etc.).*
- *Senior staff sign off on staff using personal phones; content collected on there are put onto AA sites and then removed from personal phones immediately (please see* Appendix A: Safeguarding form for Collecting Content using Personal Mobile Phones*).*
- *Written informed consent must be obtained from parents/guardians of the children to be engaged in the activities. Communities to be engaged must also consent before participating.*
- *Fundraising countries to advise the supporters against posting any photo or details of their sponsored child on any social media platforms for the sake of the child's protection and privacy.*

Content Gathering relating to Children during COVID-19[6]

Staff are encouraged to practice the following in the content gathering, storage and dissemination of communication material concerning children during COVID-19:

- Data should be gathered and stored in line with local and international data protection laws after collection.

- Full parental or guardian informed consent must be received before gathering or using content relating to children. The child's consent should also be sought, and they also can refuse to participate in AA activities. The parents/caregivers should be well informed of what the engagement entails and understand what their children's participation entails. They should also be informed of what safety measures AA has put in place to ensure the child's safety while online. With government directives such as lockdowns and reduced physical contact to contain the spread of COVID-19, the consent may be obtained through electronic ways of signing up or face to face which strictly observes COVID-19 health and safety recommendations. *(Please refer to the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy for more information, and a sample consent template).*

- As much as possible, organizational equipment should be used to take videos or images of children when content gathering. If not possible, then personal phones may be used but agreed measures **must** be in place to reduce the chance that this could be abused for negative purposes (e.g. line managers must sign off on the use of personal mobile phones). Staff must not use personal mobile phones for content gathering without risks being identified and measures in place to reduce risk of abuse and exploitation. (Please see *Appendix A: Safeguarding form for Collecting Content using Personal Mobile Phones*).

- Never gather content that could shame, humiliate or degrade the child, put them at risk or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discrimination and exploitation. Staff/ representatives must be trained on safeguarding and content gathering alongside the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy before content gathering with personal mobile phones. Line managers must be informed immediately where staff find any content published by AA that contravenes child safeguarding practices and the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy.

- Photos or videos taken during any AA work - including during the COVID-19 response - should not be taken for personal use or posted on AA staff/representatives' personal social media accounts. Content gathered should only be put up on AA sites and immediately deleted from personal phones. Avoid storing data on personal phones as these could be lost, stolen or seized. All content posted online should have downloads disabled and GPS metadata removed from images to be used.

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[6] Refer to the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy for more information.

Risk Mitigations for AA Staff/Representatives engaging with Children on online platforms[7]

Dos

- ✓ Report inappropriate messages from children or their guardian/family to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point. This may include messages that are sexual in content or requiring a compromise of one's role.

- ✓ If you receive any indecent/inappropriate images or videos of children <u>do not reshare them</u> as this can constitute illegal activity. Report to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point, or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.

- ✓ Use AA owned mobile phones and digital devices to communicate with children and their families. Do not use your personal profile picture as a logo for your profile picture for the AA owned mobile phones. Use the AA logo instead.

- ✓ Obtain consent from a child's parent/guardian before engaging with them. Engage with the child through their parent/guardian's mobile phone.

- ✓ Share rules of engagement with participants on the online platforms and make sure everyone is aware of how they can report if they want to raise a concern.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not contact children or their families on your personal mobile phone unless authorized by your Line Manager.

- ✗ Do not make discriminatory, degrading, sexist or other harmful or derogatory comments to children, their parents/guardians.

- ✗ Do not share your personal mobile phone or other contact details.

- ✗ Do not save the full names of the child on your phone. Use a code for their names.

- ✗ Do not keep participants' contact details after the end of your engagement with them with ActionAid. Delete their details from your device.

(Please see ***Appendix C: Example of Safety Guidelines for Children, Young People and Communities including Adults at-risk on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp***).

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[7]How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020

AA Staff/Representatives Using Telephone Communication with Children during the COVID-19 Response (e.g. for programmatic engagement, interviews or research)[8]

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Examples of Key Questions

☎ How often will you be in contact with the children in AA programmes? E.g. once a week and twice a week for higher risk children.

☎ Who will be in touch with the children? What checks have you done to ensure they are safe to do this?

☎ How will you be in touch with the children? E.g. by phone, in person, both?

☎ How will you record updates and needs of children, including decisions on what to do next in case of a concern?

☎ What happens if you cannot contact a child?

☎ How will you escalate concerns of children? How will you share information with external agencies i.e. in case of a referral?

☎ When undertaking research with children, have you included and addressed these considerations as part of your Research Protocol?

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Dos	Don'ts
✓ **Obtain consent** from the parent/caregiver and child before engaging with the child over the telephone.	✗ **Do not engage with children without obtaining consent** from their parent/caregiver and themselves. Whenever possible, let the child be in the presence of someone they trust as you engage them.
✓ **Explain who you are and your reason for calling.** Agree with the child and family on how often the calls will be made. Call within the office working hours**.**	✗ **Avoid calling outside office working hours.** Let the child and family know how/whom they can contact in case of a SHEA and safeguarding emergency concern outside working hours.
✓ **When possible, use AA owned mobile phone or digital devices** to communicate with the child or their guardian.	✗ **Avoid using your personal mobile phone to contact children unless authorization is given** e.g. by your Line Manager.
✓ **Make sure you report any inappropriate messages you may receive** from a child or their parent/caregiver.	✗ **Do not investigate any concerns or probe the child or their parent/caregiver.** Immediately report your concerns with your Safeguarding Focal Point.
✓ **AA staff/representatives should engage with children through their parents' or caregiver's mobile phone**. Direct	✗ **Do not engage with children through their personal phones or digital devices.**

[8] Refer to the AAI Feminist Research Guidelines, April 2020:
https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/feminist%20research%20guidelines%20online.pdf

communication with a child through their own phone is strongly discouraged.	
✓ **Make time to talk and listen.** Speak slowly, clearly and calmly and communicate with empathy and warmth through modulating the voice in a way that shows care when talking with a child. Listen attentively and demonstrate listening by using affirmative sounds. Provide the child time to express themselves.	✕ **Do not rush through the phone conversation** to get the information that you need without acknowledging the child's feelings and state of mind.
✓ **Be aware of potential signs of tensions, abuse at home** (e.g. guardians/parents in the background shouting or taking the phone from the child).	✕ **Do not ignore if the child over the phone seems to be in an unhealthy environment**. There is a need to be reassuring with the child and cautious that the communication does not worsen the situation. ✕ **Do not proactively try to identify or seek out child abuse survivors as this can put them at risk**. If you suspect harm, raise this after the call with your Focal Point or to the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team for guidance on how to safely follow up. Be available in case a child asks for support.
✓ **It is strongly advised to have AA female staff or representatives to communicate over the phone with girls**	✕ Contact between girls and AA male staff or representatives should be considered the last resort (if no other options are available): • No sensitive topics should be discussed. • The male staff should explain in detail the purpose, timing of the calls to the parents or guardians at the start but also have regular contact with them after checking with the girl to avoid suspicion. • These communications should be particularly monitored to deter abuse. • An AA female staff or representative should check on the girls on a regular basis (to be decided based on the regularity of the call with the male staff) as a form of spot check and to facilitate reporting.

✓ **Children with disabilities:** some children with disabilities (girls/boys with hearing, speech impairments or intellectual challenges) might require support from their guardians throughout the call to be able to hear or understand the questions and express themselves fully. However, ask them directly rather than their caregiver!	✗ Do not assume the voices and participation of children with disabilities. Engage them and involve their guardians/caregivers in the communication.
✓ **Ensure you have trained staff or identified experts who can handle sensitive discussions or questions around child abuse or violence in any form (e.g GBV).** Ensure that referral mechanisms are mapped in case of needed additional support or referral.	✗ **Staff/representatives should not initiate sensitive discussions unless they have expertise in that area.** If staff/representatives have concerns, they should seek support of others who have expertise and can provide safe support.
✓ **Ensure you archive conversations and delete contact information** of children and their families once a programme comes to an end.	✗ **Avoid sharing with others conversations or contact details** of children and their families at the end of the programme cycle unless with their consent e.g. for referral for expertise support.

Peer-to-Peer Concerns

There is the risk of children carrying out bullying or other harmful behaviours towards each other on online spaces. Staff/representatives should be aware of this risk and put measures in place to prevent it e.g by raising the topic, encouraging children to respect and care for each other, create ground rules to ensure everyone agrees on positive behaviours. These ground rules may include:

- Be friendly and nice to each other, and particularly welcoming to new children.

- Listen to, understand and encourage each other.

- Do not be hurtful to each other and do not bully anyone.

- Respect your peers and each other's differences.

- Report anything that makes you feel sad or uncomfortable to an adult you trust, or one of the AA reporting mechanisms.

(Please see *Appendix C: Example of Safety Guidelines for Children, Young People and Communities including Adults at-risk on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp*).

Tips for Setting Up Online Platforms for Children[9]

When establishing online platforms for children to engage in AA activities e.g. a WhatsApp group, consider the age of the children and cultural appropriateness. For instance, older children (young people) should not be in the same online groups as younger children as mixing ages (and sometimes genders) may increase the risk of peer-on-peer bullying and online sexual abuse.

For projects with a large group of children, consider setting up a group for girls and another group for boys, as well as another group for children according to age groups/range e.g. children aged 7-11 years in one group, another for 12 -18 years. This will help to reduce the risk of peer-on-peer abuse as it reduces the actual/perceived power or authority between young people.

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[9] How to Keep Children, Youth and Caregivers Safe when Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for all War Child Representatives, 2020.

Encouraging Children to Report SHEA and Safeguarding Online Concerns during COVID-19

Examples of Key Questions

★ Are children encouraged to report? What does this look like in each context?

★ What are the barriers to children reporting and child abuse cases being reported during COVID-19?

★ Have you mapped child friendly reporting mechanisms in the community? How are you assessing them to make sure they are safe, child-friendly and put the rights of the child first?

★ If they don't exist, how will you create a safe child friendly reporting mechanism for the children you engage with?

★ Have you mapped child friendly referral mechanisms/support services for child survivors of harm during COVID-19?

Children should be informed and equipped with skills on how to keep safe on the internet and online spaces. They must be informed of the reporting mechanisms available to them when engaging with AA staff and representatives on online platforms.

When engaging with children, talk to them openly about different ways they can report and what AA can do to make this safe. For example, children should be encouraged to report to an adult they trust if AA staff or representatives make them do something that is uncomfortable or if they have any concerns about the behaviour of AA staff /representatives, or any other concerns. For example, a child could go to the project staff member that they regularly engage with. The project staff member will then raise the concern with the SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point for action.

7. Engaging with Young People on Online Platforms during the COVID-19 Response

ActionAid is committed to actively engaging with young people (anyone aged 15-30) to shift power and promote their role in transforming society. This includes promoting young people's ownership of their digital footprint. To ensure that our work with young people is safe, we must ensure that we have strong safeguarding measures in place and they can work with us free from the risk of harm.

As engagement with young people increasingly moves online, the risk of online harm increases. When engaging with young people on online platforms, AA staff/representatives must be aware that young people have high levels of digital literacy and are at their prime age of growth and development - including sexual exploration; while this is positive, it can also make them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation online. While they have more choice on what they do online, young people do not necessarily have the life experience or power to keep themselves safe. As such, AA staff and representatives must use safe approaches when working with young people to mitigate the risk of online exploitation and other harmful behaviours. We should ensure that young people we engage with are aware about consent and appropriate behaviours so that they are encouraged to report if they experience anything that is not in line with AA's values.

SHEA and Safeguarding Risks when Engaging with Young People on Online Platforms

Young people have more access and choice on what they do online than children. As such, risks arise. These include:

- **Contact risks** – this may include behaviours such as grooming of young people which takes advantage of the fact that young people are at their prime age of growth/sexual exploration. As such, AA Staff, partners and representatives may deliberately build a trusting relationship with the young people for the purpose of carrying out sexual abuse or exploitation.

- **Content risks** - young people may access content that is pornographic, discriminatory, violent or extremist. They may share this content oblivious that it could result in harm to others or criminalization.

- **Conduct risks** - may include adoption of risky behaviours where young people create or share sexual content without recognition of the impact (e.g. sexting, sending images of themselves to others etc.)[10] AA staff/partners/representatives should conduct themselves professionally when engaging with young people on online platforms and young people should understand rules of engagement on online platforms for AA activities.

It is important to note that young people who engage in advocacy activities through online channels can be at risk of violence, cyberbullying, or state intervention (e.g. arrest/imprisonment). This may be an additional risk for specific groups of young people e.g. young people who identify as LGBTQI. Before engaging with young people who may be more at risk, staff/representatives must ensure that such risks are identified and that they work closely with the young people involved to discuss the risks and put mitigation measures in place.

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[10] Refer to the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy.

Inclusive Approaches for Young People during COVID-19

As an organization that actively engages with young people, we support all young people to have their voices heard on issues affecting them, and to actively participate in AA activities and decision-making spaces. We will work with young people to create and design measures to protect marginalized young people e.g. those living with disabilities and those identifying as LGBTQI, from discrimination or harm of any kind when engaging on AA online platforms.

For example, we will ensure that any online spaces are accessible for young people with disabilities, or for those who do not have access to certain online spaces (e.g. not able to access phones, do not have regular access to computers). AA staff/representatives should carry out risk assessments *with* young people, and encourage open dialogue and co-creation of processes where it safe to do so, to encourage collective 'ownership' of spaces and ensure that all AA spaces are diverse and open to all.

Online Programming with Young People during COVID-19

Many young people, particularly activists, will have experience in keeping themselves safe online – engagement with them should build on their learning and experience, respect their knowledge, and ensure that there are shared and agreed approaches to keeping safe (please see ***Appendix F: Risks and Benefits of Social Media Platforms***).

Young people should be informed and equipped with skills on how to keep safe on the internet and online spaces when engaging with AA staff and representatives or in online AA activities. These may include informing them about their rights, how to raise concerns, consent and appropriate behaviours so that they are aware of what they should expect and what is unacceptable behaviour, and information on the available complaints mechanisms when engaging with AA staff, partners and representatives on online platforms.

Safer programming helps ensure that any programmes and activities are safely designed so as not to cause harm to young people. For example, using risks assessments and complaints mechanisms to ensure AA programmes and activities are safe from sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

Safeguarding risk assessments should be carried out to identify online risks when engaging with young people on online platforms and measures put in place to mitigate the same. (Please see the ***SHEA and Safeguarding and Safer Programming in ActionAid's COVID-19 Response Guidance Note and related Risk Assessment Tool***).

When developing complaints mechanisms, young people should be involved in the creation of complaints mechanisms. *(Please see the **Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms for SHEA and Safeguarding during COVID-19 Guidance Note, June 2020**).*

Keeping Safe Online Tips for Young People

Dos

- ✓ Use a logo, picture of a flower or anything else unidentifiable as your profile picture when using online platforms like WhatsApp for AA activities.
- ✓ Respect others privacy and confidentiality when engaging with them online.
- ✓ Report any behaviour of AA staff/representatives that make you uncomfortable or content of concern shared on the online platforms.
- ✓ Verify sources of your information before sharing.
- ✓ If under the age of 18, please seek permission from your parent/guardian before engaging with AA staff/representatives on online platforms.
- ✓ Tell your friends about staying safe online! Be the champion of online safety.

Don'ts

- ✘ Avoid sharing other people's contact details, photos, videos or other personal information with anyone outside the online platforms.
- ✘ Do not take screenshots of conversations for sharing with others.
- ✘ Avoid contacting other participants outside the online platform. Having access to their number while together on an online platform does not give you permission to contact them.

Examples of AA Online Programming Activities with Young People	SHEA and Safeguarding Measures
• *Capacity development of young people through online learning and support*	• *Consent is obtained from parents/guardians or the young people themselves before engaging with them in activities or recording sessions.* • *Set-up of rules of engagement for peer-to-peer engagement and staff to young people engagement e.g. practice professionalism.*
• *COVID-19 response funds made available for youth constituencies within AA*	• *Creating awareness to young people that humanitarian assistance is free and that AA staff and representatives are prohibited from engaging in or promoting any form of abusive, exploitative or harmful behaviour towards young people in exchange for humanitarian assistance.*
• *Digital documentation of rights violation of young people*	• *Obtain written informed consent from young people, their parents/guardians when documenting any rights violations that they report. Explain to them that confidentiality will be observed with necessary authorities being involved and information shared on a need-to-know basis.* • *Involving the young people in the development of complaints mechanisms to report safeguarding concerns and informing them of the available reporting mechanisms.*
• *Young people participating in social media campaigns (i.e. using Twitter, Instagram, Facebook) on holding duty bearers accountable and discussions on COVID-19 related issues*	• *Obtain written informed consent from young people, their parents/guardians when engaging them in AA activities.* • *Set-up of rules of engagement for peer-to-peer engagement and staff to young people engagement e.g. practice professionalism.* • *Use of friendly apps such as Jitsi where young people identifying as LGBTIQ can safely be engaged without risk of online harm.* • *Young people should be equipped with skills on how to keep safe on the internet and online spaces.* • *Informing young people of their rights, how to raise concerns, consent and appropriate behaviours so that they are aware to report when need be.* • *Involving young people in the development of complaints mechanisms and informing them of the reporting mechanisms when engaging on online platforms for AA activities.*

Content Gathering relating to Young People during COVID-19[11]

The following is best practice when carrying out content gathering activities (gathering, storing, disseminating) with young people during COVID-19:

- A risk assessment must first be conducted to assess whether and how to tell the stories and anonymise the identity of any young people identified as vulnerable/at-risk.

- Full parental or guardian informed consent must be received before gathering or using content relating to young people under the age of 18 years. Consent should be obtained directly from young people who are over the age of 18 years. Young people's consent should also be sought when they are being photographed or interviewed. They can also decline participation in AA activities. During the pandemic, consent may be obtained through electronic ways of signing up or face to face while strictly observing COVID-19 health and safety recommendations.

- Never gather content that could shame, humiliate or degrade the young person, put them at risk or perpetrate any form of emotional abuse, discrimination and exploitation. Content should always portray young people in a positive manner, showing strength and empowerment.

- As much as possible, organizational equipment should be used to take videos, images of young people when content gathering. If not possible, then personal phones may be used but agreed measures **must** be in place to reduce chances of abuse and exploitation.

- Photos or videos taken during any AA work-including during the COVID-19 response- should not be taken for personal use or posted on AA staff/partners/representatives' personal social media accounts. Content concerning young people should be stored in the approved AA databases to provide security and effective controls over access. All content posted online should have downloads disabled and GPS metadata removed from images to be used.

- Data should be gathered and stored in line with local and international data protection laws.

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[11] For further reading, please refer to the AAI PSEA Policy. Please also refer to sections of this Guidance Note to learn more on content gathering as pertains to other groups e.g. children, communities etc.

AA Staff/Representatives Telephone Communication with Young people during the COVID-19 Response (e.g. for interviews and research)

> ### Examples of Key Questions
>
> ☎ How often will you be in contact with the young people? E.g. once a week and twice a week for higher risk young people.
>
> ☎ Who will be in touch with the young people?
>
> ☎ How will you be in touch with the young people? E.g. by phone, in person, both?
>
> ☎ What are the preferred platforms of communication used by the young people?
>
> ☎ How will you record updates and needs of young people including decisions on what to do next in case of a concern? Do the young people know how to identify and report SHEA and safeguarding online concerns?
>
> ☎ What happens if you cannot contact a young person you have concerns about?
>
> ☎ How will you escalate concerns of young people? How will you share information with external agencies i.e. in case of a referral?

Dos	Don'ts
✓ **Before engaging over the telephone, obtain consent** from the parent/caregiver and the young people themselves if they are under the age of 18 years. If the young people are over 18 years, then obtain consent directly from them.	✗ **Do not engage with young people under 18 years without obtaining consent** from them and their parent/caregiver or with young people over 18 years of age without obtaining consent from them themselves. Remember to explain who you are and your reason for calling. Call within the office working hours.
✓ **Explain who you are and your reason for calling.** Agree with the young person/his/her family (if under 18 years) on how often the calls will be made. Call within the office working hours**.**	✗ **Avoid calling outside office working hours.** Let the young person and his/her family (if the young persons is under 18 years) know how/whom they can contact in case of a SHEA and safeguarding emergency concern outside working hours.
✓ **Use age appropriate language** when speaking to young people. Reflect on their age, gender, and other factor that will influence them and change your language/tone accordingly.	✗ Do not use jargon, do not use acronyms except if widely known by the young people, do not be patronizing.
✓ **Be aware of potential signs of tensions, abuse at home** (e.g. relatives, parents or guardians in the background shouting or taking the phone from the young people).	✗ **Do not** ignore if the young people over the phone seem to be in an unhealthy environment. There is a need to be reassuring with the young people and cautious that the communication does not worsen the situation.

	✗ **Do not proactively try to identify or seek out young people who may have experienced any form of abuse or violence (e.g. GBV) as this could put them at risk**. Be available in case a young person asks for support.
✓ **Make sure to be non-judgmental about young people's beliefs and ideas when you talk to them;** this is a critical time of their development, and all engagement should be supportive and non-judgmental.	✗ **Do not discriminate, blame or stigmatise young people** (e.g. young people identifying as LGBTQI).
✓ **It is strongly advised to have AA female staff or representatives to communicate over the phone with young women**	✗ Contact between young women and AA male staff, partners or representatives should be considered the last resort (if no other options are available): • No sensitive topics should be discussed • The male staff should explain in detail the purpose, timing of the calls to care givers or parents (where the young woman is under 18 years old) at the start but also have regular contact with the family after checking with the young woman to avoid suspicion. • These communications should be particularly monitored to deter abuse • An AA female staff or representative should check on the young women on a regular basis (to be decided based on the regularity of the call with the male staff) to facilitate reporting.
✓ **Young people with disabilities:** some young people with disabilities (young people with hearing, speech impairments or intellectual challenges) might require support from their guardians throughout the call to be able to hear or understand the questions and express themselves fully. However, ask them directly rather than their caregiver!	✗ Do not make assumptions about the experience of young people with disabilities. Engage them and involve their guardians/caregivers in the communication if need be.

✓ Ensure you have trained staff or identified experts who can handle sensitive discussions or questions around sexual violence. Also ensure that referral mechanisms are mapped in case of needed additional support or referral.	✗ No sensitive discussions or questions around GBV should be discussed with young people, unless the staff/representative/partner has expertise in that area and readily available support in that area in case of need to refer e.g. for psychosocial support.
✓ Ensure you archive conversations and delete contact information of children and their families once a programme comes to an end.	✗ Avoid sharing with others conversations or contact details of children and their families at the end of the programme cycle unless with their consent e.g. for referral for expertise support.

Risk Mitigations for AA Staff/Representatives engaging with young people on online platforms[12]

Dos

- ✓ Report inappropriate messages from young people or their guardian/family to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point.

- ✓ If you receive any indecent/inappropriate images or videos of young people **do not reshare them** as this can constitute illegal activity. Report to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point, or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.

- ✓ Use AA owned mobile phones and digital devices to communicate with young people and their families.

- ✓ Create age appropriate groups for young people.

- ✓ Share the rules of engagement with participants of the online platforms and inform them of the available reporting mechanisms in case of a need to report any concern.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not contact children or their families on your personal mobile phone unless authorized by your Line Manager.

- ✗ Do not share your personal mobile phone or other contact details with young people.

- ✗ Avoid grouping children with different wide gap age groups together even in online platforms.

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[12]How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020

Peer-to-Peer Engagement

There is the risk of young people carrying out bullying or other harmful behaviours towards each other on online spaces. AA staff/representatives must be alert to the potential that young people will use online platforms to carry out harmful behaviours or entrench power imbalances. These behaviours include bullying or sharing inappropriate sexual images.

ActionAid recognizes how hidden power manifests on online and digital platforms, and we are committed to removing barriers to young people's participation. To prevent such behaviour, this topic should be raised, and young people encouraged to discuss this and to work together to create safe spaces for all. To support this, peer-to-peer ground rules may be essential to reduce the risk of harm and help create safe environments.

These ground rules may include:

- Be polite to and support each other. Respectfully challenge any discriminatory or harmful language, and be self-aware about the language you use.

- Respect each other's differences, privacy and confidentiality.

- Do not share exchanges from the platform outside unless members are in consensus allowing the same. Confidentiality is key in the platform.

- Report anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or unsafe to an AA staff member, or by using the reporting channels you have been told about.

(Please see *Appendix C: Example of Safety Guidelines for Children, Young People and Communities including Adults at-risk on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp*).

Encouraging Young People to Report SHEA and Safeguarding Online Concerns during COVID-19

> **Examples of Key Questions**
>
> ★ Are young people encouraged to report? What does this look like in each context?
>
> ★ What are the barriers to young people reporting and their safeguarding cases being reported during COVID-19?
>
> ★ Have you mapped young people friendly reporting mechanisms in the community? How are you assessing them to make sure they are safe, young people friendly and put the rights of young people first?
>
> ★ If they don't exist, how will you create a safe young people friendly reporting mechanism for the young people you engage with?
>
> ★ Have you mapped young people friendly referral mechanisms/support services for young people survivors of harm during COVID-19?

Young people must be encouraged to report and made aware of the complaints mechanisms available to them. Staff/representatives should work with young people to create complaints processes that they feel ownership of and safe to use.

Young people may report any SHEA and safeguarding concerns to the project staff that regularly engage with them or using complaints reporting mechanisms set up for them in the community (please see the _**Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms for SHEA and Safeguarding during COVID-19, June 2020)**_.

Alternatively, young people may also directly report to the SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point, Country Director, send an email to AAI SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org) or AAI Whistleblowing Service (whistleblowing@actionaid.org).

When young people report any online SHEA and safeguarding concern, we must consider their rights, choices, dignity, confidentiality and safety at all times to ensure that themselves, their family and community do not come to any further harm as a result of choosing to report an incident.

8. Engaging with the Community, including Adults at-risk, on Online Platforms during COVID-19 Response

COVID 19 has led to new and online approaches to programming with communities, as face to face interactions become more complex and riskier. Online engagement in digital spaces brings several opportunities to improve dialogue and engagement with rights-holders and constituencies of ActionAid. We recognise the value of online/digital spaces as part of connecting marginalized communities to the rest of the world and ensuring they have access to appropriate sources of information, as well as essential aid. However, we also recognise that power dynamics and unsafe processes can lead to harm in digital spaces.

ActionAid recognizes that new ways of working - with increased focus on digital engagement – could lead to higher incidents of abuse of power, where representatives exploit the vulnerability of communities during COVID-19. ActionAid owes a duty of care towards all rights holders and communities, including adults at-risk, when engaging with them online.

SHEA and Safeguarding Risks when Engaging with the Community on Online Platforms

Several SHEA and safeguarding risks emerge when engaging with communities and adults at-risk on online platforms during COVID-19. These include:

- Online sexual harassment by staff/representatives (e.g. sending explicit messages or images to community members).

- Online sexual exploitation (e.g. staff/representatives using online spaces to ask for sexual favours in exchange for humanitarian aid during COVID-19).[13]

- Unsafe online spaces created by AA leading to harm to community members (e.g. failures to risk assess or engage with the local community mean that people who participate in AA online platforms are stigmatized).

Risk assessments must be carried out to identify such risks and mitigation measures put in place to mitigate the same. (Please see the ***SHEA and Safeguarding and Safer Programming in ActionAid's COVID-19 Response Guidance Note and related Risk Assessment Tool***).

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[13] Some of these online abuses can take the form of cyber misogyny. Cyber misogyny is a series of behaviours that is particularly gendered in nature, which is then transposed into the digital realm and internet space. Cyber misogynistic violence including harassment and abuse which contributes to the scourge of gender-based violence and the normalisation of violence against women and girls.

Inclusive Approach to online engagement with Communities during COVID-19

Under the AA Feminist Leadership Principle of 'Inclusion', AA recognizes the need for inclusion when working with diverse groups of people including the most marginalised groups. Inclusion creates ways for everyone to be equally heard and involved in conversations and spaces. During the COVID-19 response, AA will create avenues for adults at-risk and other marginalized groups (such as people with disabilities) in the community to be involved in community conversations.

We will work with the community to create initiatives that break barriers of participation (e.g. access to different online platforms) and ensure that the voices of the marginalized including adults at-risk are being heard and included in humanitarian interventions. This approach also reflects ActionAid Human Rights Based Approach especially the first principle: 'We put people living in poverty first and enable their active agency as rights activists'. By promoting the rights of all to access online spaces safely, we live out our commitment to sharing power with communities and enable communities to hold us to account and help break the cycle of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Examples of AA Online Programming Activities with Communities and Adults at-risk	SHEA and Safeguarding Measures
Using online spaces (e.g. radios, SMS, social media, crowdsourcing, chatrooms) in reaching out to communities to provide information as well as reaching out to communities for live discussions on pandemic response related to mental health, public services, access to services, etc.).	• *Ensure that even in the digital space, staff and representatives' behaviour reflects ActionAid's values, adheres to the PSEA policy and ActionAid's Code of Conduct, and always upholds and promotes the rights and welfare of rights holders and the communities we work with, including adults at-risk.* • *Reminding staff to promote the PSEA policy in all activities.* • *Representatives should use PSEA messaging in all interventions that are aimed at promoting aid, in digital spaces. Messages should remind communities of PSEA provisions.* • *Consent is obtained from the community before engaging with them in activities or recording sessions.* • *Creating awareness to communities that humanitarian assistance is free and that AA staff and representatives are prohibited from engaging in or promoting any form of abusive, exploitative or harmful behaviour towards communities in exchange for humanitarian assistance.* • *Ensure that contact-tracing initiatives aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 is not used to promote activities aimed at sexual exploitation and abuse of communities.* • *Contact tracing interventions will not expose communities to sexual exploitation and abuse.*
Use of digital tools to collect evidence and advocate for access to humanitarian action (e.g. through the SMS bulk messaging services in Kenya, information is disseminated and used to collect evidence).	• *Creating awareness to communities that humanitarian assistance is free and that AA staff, partners and representatives are prohibited from engaging in or promoting any form of abusive, exploitative or harmful behaviour towards communities in exchange for humanitarian assistance. This also involved reminding communities that transactional sex is strictly prohibited by ActionAid along with any other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, including exchange of assistance that is due to rights holders.* • *Involve communities in the development of complaints mechanisms to report safeguarding concerns and informing them of the reporting mechanisms.* • *Ensure that community complaints mechanisms are available in several forms and communicated in local languages.* • *Assess different online tools/spaces to ensure they are relevant and safe for different contexts and communities. (Please see __Appendix F: Risks and Benefits of Social Media Platforms__).*
Using digital mediums to promote and facilitate reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse	• *Representatives and staff should maintain an understanding of the risks associated with online reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse. Communities may require a face-to*

face medium when reporting sexual exploitation and abuse. This should be facilitated with infectious disease protocols in place and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

- *All staff and representatives raise all concerns and complaints relating to sexual abuse and exploitation Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.*
- *SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points work with SHEA and Safeguarding Stakeholder Panels to respond robustly when any concerns relating to sexual exploitation and abuse of rights holders or community members are raised, through digital and face-to-face mediums. Ensure that procedures for reporting and investigating suspected cases of abuse and exploitation are followed and ensuring they are in line with the PSEA policy and local laws, even under COVID-19. This includes reporting to appropriate authorities for investigation and follow up.*
- *Where face-to-face reporting is not possible, digital reporting mechanisms will not encourage harm towards survivors who report abuse.*
- *During COVID-19, representatives should work with community leaders to encourage safe, inclusive and accessible digital reporting mechanisms for community members, especially community members who experience SHEA.*
- *Using the survivor centered approach, communities who report harm will be treated with dignity and reports will be managed safely and confidentially.*
- *Reporting mechanisms that are digital in nature will be promoted in local languages.*
- *Focal points who receive reports of sexual exploitation and abuse from community members and rights-holders will be provided with skills to receive disclosures in the digital space.*
- *Staff, representatives and focal points should communicate to communities that their reports of sexual exploitation will be taken seriously and that their concerns will be listened to. ActionAid will also provide redress to survivors.*
- *Data gathered from survivors and communities which relate to complaints and reports of sexual exploitation and abuse, will not be used to expose survivors to harm.*
- *ActionAid partners, especially partners who are on the forefront of the COVID-19 response, by the nature of their work, interact with at-risk communities and will therefore be aware of sensitive information concerning rights holders and community members, including adults at-risk. ActionAid will work with partners to ensure that partners have a robust reporting mechanism for partner staff and community members to access, in the digital medium*

Content Gathering in the Community during COVID-19 Response[14]

The following are practices to be followed during collection, storage and dissemination of communication material concerning community members and adults at-risk during COVID-19:

- Content gathering must uphold the dignity and agency of community members and adults at-risk. Data will therefore be gathered, stored, and shared in line with local and international data protection laws.

- Seek the adult at-risk's free, prior, and informed consent where possible. Rights holders and community members need to fully understand why they are being interviewed/photographed. Always ensure that you have documented consent for adults. Never photograph, video or interview a reluctant rights holder or adult at-risk.

- Assess the risks of capturing photos of adults at-risk, particularly the risk of exposure to exploitation. Also, given the stigmatisation associated with COVID-19, when photographing adults at risk or the community, please consider their dignity and the risk of stigmatisation and social alienation.

- AA staff, partners and representatives should be briefed on SHEA and safeguarding including a briefing on the AAI PSEA policy and Code of Conduct before content gathering from the community during COVID-19.

- If the adult at-risk cannot give informed consent ensure that full parental or guardian informed consent is received before gathering or using any content relating to adults at-risk (e.g. interviews, images or footage of adults at-risk) and that they understand the purpose of this activity and how the images or footage will be used without posing any risk to the adult at-risk. Never photograph, video or interview a reluctant adult at-risk, even with parental or guardian consent.

- Never gather content that could shame, humiliate or degrade an adult at-risk, put them at risk immediately or at a later date, or perpetrate any form of abuse, discrimination and exploitation.

- Payment and/or gifts must not be given following content gathering as it can be confused with payment for information.

Recommended Best Practice

A risk assessment must first be conducted to assess whether and how to tell the stories and to anonymise the identity of any community member, particularly adults at-risk, who is identified as:

- A survivor of sexual abuse, exploitation, trafficking or abduction.

- An offender/perpetrator of physical or sexual abuse.

- Living with any illness, condition or identity that is known to attract social stigma. The adult at-risk and/or their guardian may want to provide this but AA still has a duty to assess whether doing so could cause harm.

For support on this, please contact the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org)

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[14] Refer to the AAI PSEA policy for more information on content gathering from the community. Also, refer to various sections on children, young people etc. in the Guidance Note for further information on content gathering.

9. Data Gathering for Research Work during COVID-19

Data gathering for research also poses risks. AA staff/representatives leading data gathering activities must ensure that the activity does not cause harm or expose individuals to risk of online abuse or exploitation. When data gathering for research during COVID-19 key questions to ask are:

- Have you carried out a SHEA and safeguarding risk assessment to ensure data gathering is done safely and that both rights holders, AA staff, partners and representatives are not at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation?

- Have you developed a Research Protocol and had it reviewed by peers before the research takes place?

- Have you shared the research questions with local SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points and/or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team?

- Have you obtained written informed consent from parents/guardians, children, young people, the community and adults at-risk before engaging them in data collection or taking their photographs?

- Have you discussed with the rights holders about how their data and photographs will be used or who owns the data after collection?

- Are you aware of the risks associated with sharing photographs during COVID-19 that could pose a stigma-risk to communities?

- Does the collected data adhere to the AAI Child Safeguarding Policy i.e. does not shame, humiliate or degrade the child or put them at risk of any form of emotional abuse, discrimination and exploitation?

- Have you developed a secure system to store the data in case the analysis is challenged and an external source requests to view it?

- Is your data stored in line with local and international data protection laws and general best practice?

- Are you using organizational equipment to collect data? If not, are measures in place to authorize safe use of personal phones to gather data e.g. has your Line Manager signed off to the use of personal mobile phones in the collection of data?

- Is data gathered stored in secure, password protected files, and encrypted and coded as necessary to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of children, their communities and schools participating in research? Data should be immediately deleted from personal phones after uploading on official AA sites. Avoid storing data on personal phones as these could be lost, stolen or seized.

- What measures will you take to ensure independent researchers/research institutions act in full compliance with/adherence to ActionAid's SHEA and Safeguarding Policies to reduce the risk of online abuse and exploitation?

- Have you identified researchers who are trained in GBV and can handle sensitive discussions or questions around GBV?

- Have you identified referral mechanisms in case of needed additional support or referral when SHEA and Safeguarding concerns are raised during the data gathering?

- Do the researchers know where to report SHEA and safeguarding related concerns?

*(For more information, please refer to the **[AA Feminist Research Guidelines, April 2020](#)**).*

AA Staff/Representatives Telephone Communication with Communities and Adults at-risk during the COVID-19 Response (e.g. for interviews and researches)

Examples of Key Questions

☎ How often will you be in contact with the community members and adults at-risk in AA programmes? E.g. once a week and twice a week for adults at-risk.

☎ Who will be in touch with the community and adults at-risk?

☎ What means will be used to get in touch with the communities and adults at-risk? E.g. by phone in person or both.

☎ How will you record updates and needs of communities including adults at-risk? including decisions on what to do next in case of a concern?

☎ What happens if you cannot contact a community member/adult at-risk?

☎ How will you escalate concerns regarding communities including adults at-risk? How will you share information with external agencies i.e. in case of a referral?

Dos	Don'ts
✓ **Before engaging over the telephone,** identify yourself, explain the purpose of the call and obtain consent before continuing with the call.	✗ **Do not engage with communities and adults at-risk without introducing yourself, explaining the purpose of the call and obtaining consent** from the parent/caregiver -if need be- when engaging an adult at-risk. Call within the office working hours.
✓ **It is advisable to use the organization's owned mobile phone or digital devices to communicate.**	✗ **Do not use your personal mobile phone unless authorization is given** e.g. by your Line Manager.
✓ **Make time to talk and listen.** Listen attentively and provide them time to express themselves.	✗ **Do not rush through the phone conversation** to get the information that you need without making time to talk and listen.
✓ **Be aware of potential signs of tensions, abuse at home** (e.g. relatives, spouses in the background shouting or taking the phone from the adult at-risk or community member).	✗ **Do not ignore if the adult at-risk or community member over the phone seem to be in an unhealthy environment.** There is a need to be reassuring with the community member and adult at-risk and cautious that the communication does not worsen the situation. ✗ **Do not proactively try to identify or seek out GBV survivors** in the community. Be available in case a community member or adult at-risk asks for support.
✓ It is strongly advised to have AA female staff or representatives to communicate	✗ Contact between female community members and female adults at-risk and AA male staff, partners or

over the phone with female community members or female adults at-risk	representatives should be considered the last resort (if no other options are available): • No sensitive topics should be discussed. • The male staff should explain in detail the purpose, timing of the calls to care givers or parents if need be (where the female is under 18 years or is an adult at-risk) at the start but also have regular contact with the family after checking with the females to avoid suspicion. • These communications should be particularly monitored to deter abuse. • An AA female staff, partner or representative should check on the female community members and female adults at-risk on a regular basis (to be decided based on the regularity of the call with the male staff) to facilitate reporting.
✓ **Community members with disabilities and adults at-risk:** some community members living with disabilities or adults at-risk e.g. with hearing, speech impairments or intellectual challenges might require support from their guardians throughout the call to be able to hear or understand the questions and express themselves fully. However, ask them directly rather than their caregiver!	✗ Do not assume the voices and participation of community members living with disabilities and adults at-risk. Engage them and involve their guardians/caregivers in the communication.
✓ **Ensure you have trained staff or identified experts who can handle sensitive discussions or questions around GBV.** Also ensure that referral mechanisms are mapped in case of needed additional support or referral.	✗ **No sensitive discussions or questions around GBV should be discussed with community members/adults at-risk,** unless the staff/representative/partner has expertise in that area and readily available support in that area in case of need to refer e.g. for psychosocial support.

Guidance for AA Staff/Representatives engaging with community members on online platforms[15]

Dos

- ✓ Inform the community of the available complaints reporting mechanisms in case they need to report concerns.

- ✓ Use only AA owned mobile phones and digital devices to communicate with the community.

- ✓ Share the group rules with members on online platforms.

- ✓ Report concerns about inappropriate behaviour by staff/representatives towards community members or adults at-risk to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point.

Don'ts

- ✗ Do not share your personal mobile phone or contact community members on your personal mobile phone unless authorized by your Line Manager.

- ✗ Do not force community members to be part of an online platform e.g. a WhatsApp group. Be mindful that data may be an additional cost and should not be prioritised over basic needs.

- ✗ Do not spread rumours or fake news on community online platforms. Verify the information before sharing.

- ✗ Do not share inappropriate images, or content that could offend or distress in any way

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[15]How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020

Community Reporting of Online SHEA and Safeguarding Concerns during COVID-19

Community-based complaints mechanisms must be available in the community to enable reporting of SHEA and Safeguarding concerns, and any other concerns. It is advisable to develop the mechanisms jointly with the community and ensure that they can raise concerns without fear of retaliation or being put at risk of contracting COVID-19. The reporting mechanisms may vary from complaints boxes, help desks, to use of SMS and hotlines to report (please see the ***Community-Based Complaints Mechanisms for SHEA and Safeguarding during COVID-19, June 2020).*** Communities can also directly report to the SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point, Country Director, send an email to AAI SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org) or AAI Whistleblowing Service (whistleblowing@actionaid.org).

While COVID-19 may result in increased usage of digital platforms for reporting, survivors may prefer the option of face to face reporting. Survivors in communities may want to engage with a SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point or someone at a help desk, who can take a face to face report. Not all adults at-risk are comfortable with digital reporting so where possible countries should enable face-to-face reporting procedures which adhere to COVID rules on health and safety.

Country SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points will support with addressing the case and identifying the available referral mechanisms in their countries in case external support is needed. Any concerns raised relating to sexual exploitation or abuse of rights holders or community members, including adults at-risk, by ActionAid staff/representatives will be addressed as a priority, in line with our SHEA and Safeguarding approach. ActionAid will ensure that the safety, dignity and rights of the survivor are respected at all times.

Incident management protocols for SHEA and Safeguarding investigations remain applicable during COVID-19.

Best Practice

All staff and other representatives are required to report if:

- Any ActionAid staff or other representatives have concerns that a rights holder or community member, including adults at-risk, has been or it at risk of being abused, exploited, or harmed in any way, including on online platforms. They **must** report this immediately.

- A **rights holder or community member, including an adult at-risk** says that they or another person is experiencing or is at risk of experiencing sexual exploitation or abuse - whether carried out by ActionAid staff and representatives, or others. This includes on digital platforms which facilitate community engagement during COVID-19.

- A staff member or other representative suspects that someone connected to ActionAid is or may be about to carry out sexual exploitation and abuse towards **rights holders, community members, adults at-risk or others**.

- A staff member or other representative suspects that someone external to ActionAid (e.g. a Teacher or Community Leader) is or may be about to carry out sexual exploitation or abuse towards **rights holders, community members, adults at-risk or others**.

- Individuals do <u>not</u> have to report their own experience of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse.

If a staff member or other ActionAid representative does not report an incident or suspicion, they are in breach of the AAI Code of Conduct and SHEA and Safeguarding policies and may face disciplinary proceedings.

10. AA Staff/ Representatives Engagement on Online Spaces during COVID-19

As AA staff and representatives increasingly work online and engage on digital platforms during COVID 19 the risk of online SHEA and safeguarding harm increases. Even as we work remotely, we must still uphold our values and do everything we can to create a safe online working culture

(Please see *Appendix B: Example of Safety Guidelines for AA Staff, Partners and Representatives on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp, Teams, Appendix D: Setting Guidelines for Online Participants and Appendix E: Safe Online Spaces and Remote Working during COVID-19*).

Online SHEA and Safeguarding Risks for AA Staff and Representatives

The following are examples of online SHEA and safeguarding risks for AA staff and representatives that may arise with the increased or new use of online platforms during COVID 19:

- Online sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse of staff by other staff/representatives (e.g. senior staff sending inappropriate texts/messages of junior staff with threats of the junior staff losing employment if they do not respond to the messages.)

- Inappropriate collection, use and sharing of data (e.g. sharing pornographic images, fake news on work related platforms, misusing digital data and sharing it on personal social media accounts or sharing inappropriate images of children).[16]

- AA staff/representatives receiving inappropriate messages from community members (*these need to be reported to your SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point so we can protect your rights/safety)*

- Cyberbullying (managed through HR processes. Refer to the **AAI Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy***).*

Roles and Responsibilities of staff during COVID-19

<u>All staff</u>

AA staff and representatives are expected to conduct themselves in safe and appropriate ways during COVID-19 response pandemic and live by the following guidelines:

- We will treat each other with respect and decency

- We will do everything we can to prevent sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse in all its forms and ensure that our work does not deliberately or inadvertently cause harm as we work remotely.

- We will report any concerns relating to sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse, and familiarise ourselves on how to report suspected harm.

- We will live out our duty of care towards each other as AA staff and representatives and build a culture free from sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse.

- We will commit to uphold the highest level of personal and professional conduct and be zero tolerant to all forms of sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse.

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[16] Staff must avoid sharing inappropriate images of children even for a good reason – e.g. sharing as part of evidence for an investigation – as this can amount to a criminal act. For guidance on safe handling of such materials, contact the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team.

<u>Line Managers</u>

- Ensure that staff are aware of this guidance note, appropriate uses of Teams and other online spaces, and safe ways of working online (e.g. through regular team meetings, 1:1s).

- Ensure that staff and representatives engaging with children, young people, communities and adults at-risk are trained on SHEA and safeguarding including online SHEA and safeguarding risks during COVID-19, and SHEA and Safeguarding policies and procedures.

- Check in with staff regularly – ask them about their wellbeing, ways of working, and any support they require. Create an environment where they are comfortable to raise any SHEA and safeguarding.

- Support staff who report online SHEA and safeguarding concerns. Seek support from country SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points, HR and the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team to address concern.

<u>HR</u>

- As part of your support to teams during this time, check in with staff and Line Managers regularly – ask them about their and their team's wellbeing, ways of working, and any support they require so they feel able to raise any SHEA and safeguarding concerns.

- Promote AA's SHEA and Safeguarding approach (e.g share information about online SHEA and safeguarding risks) and encourage Line Managers to do the same.

- Work with staff to ensure everyone has access to strong internet connections, safe online workspaces and psychosocial support or other support due to disability/health needs which could be aggravated by working remotely.

- If a staff member raises an online SHEA and safeguarding concern, work with them and their Line Manager to find the best support option.

- Seek support from country SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points and/or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team as needed.

How staff/representatives can report online SHEA and Safeguarding Concerns during COVID-19

> ### Key Questions to support this
>
> ★ Do AA staff and representatives know where to report any SHEA and safeguarding concerns during COVID-19?
>
> ★ Is your list of Safeguarding Focal Points up to date and contact details known to all AA staff and representatives?
>
> ★ What are the barriers to AA staff and representatives reporting during COVID-19? How can you remove these barriers?

ActionAid staff members and other representatives can report SHEA and Safeguarding concerns in their ActionAid country to any of the following channels in person, via email, or telephone:

- SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Point
- Country Director
- Line Manager
- HR Representative

If ActionAid staff/representatives have concerns about first reporting in country <u>or</u> if they want to raise concerns (i.e. appeal against) how a process has been managed in country, they can report directly to:

- AAI Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org).
- AAI Whistleblowing Service (whistleblowing@actionaid.org).

Appendix A: Safeguarding form for Collecting Content using Personal Mobile Phones

AGREEMENT FOR USE OF PERSONAL MOBILE PHONES/OTHER PERSONAL DEVICES FOR CHILD SPONSORSHIP CONTENT GATHERING DURING COVID-19

By signing this agreement, I _____ of ActionAid _____/ActionAid representative of_____ certify that I fully understand what is expected of me when gathering content from children as provided by the ActionAid SHEA and Safeguarding policies and Child Sponsorship guidelines.

ActionAid's SHEA and Safeguarding policies encourage as much as possible the use of organizational equipment for content gathering. With COVID-19 directives (such as restrictions on mobility to contain its spread), use of organizational equipment for content gathering may not always be possible. ActionAid recognizes that mobile phones may be convenient in content gathering during COVID-19 response however it also recognizes that safeguarding risks exist with the use of personal mobile phones to gather content. To safeguard the rights of communities and children, I agree to the below:

- I agree to use the content gathered relating to ActionAid's work with my personal mobile phone for work related purposes only.
- I will not use any content gathered to exploit, harass, humiliate, or otherwise harm children, community members, other AA staff/representatives or others.
- I agree that I will not share content gathered on my personal social media accounts like Twitter, Facebook, Instragram, Youtube etc.
- I agree to immediately delete content on my personal device and authorized backup platforms I use e.g. Google photos and one drive after uploading on to official ActionAid sites and within forty-eight (48) hours of content gathering.
- I understand that informed consent of a parent/guardian must be obtained before content gathering, including when using my personal mobile phone.
- I agree that my Line Manager must authorize the use of my personal phone or other devices to gather content during the pandemic. I understand that ActionAid owns right to content gathered during ActionAid activities and will hold me accountable for any use or misuse of content gathered, stored, and shared from my personal mobile phone.
- I understand that I must report any form of exploitation or abuse against children or community members including reporting content gathering that is not carried out in line with the requirements of the ActionAid Child Safeguarding Policy and the Child Sponsorship requirements.
- I will turn off any location/GPS recording options for any content gathered on my phone.
- The above applies to any content shared with me to my phone by other staff/ volunteers and community members.

I certify that I have read this agreement and fully understand the contents herein.

Staff/ Volunteer Name: _____

Identification Number: _____

Signature: _____

Line Manager: _____

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____

Appendix B: Example of Safety Guidelines for AA Staff, Partners and Representatives on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp, Teams

❖ Purpose of the Online Platform

Have selected moderators for the online platforms. The moderators will outline the overall objective of the group and group guidelines to the members. This will include mentioning that the space is safe and welcoming to everyone.

❖ Group Guidelines

★ Be polite, respectful, and professional with each other.

★ Only share information that is relevant to the objective of the group. Spam, unverified information, and fake news are not allowed.

★ Report to the moderators any messages in the group that are inappropriate or make the group members uncomfortable.

★ Report anything that worries or concerns you (including bullying) using the reporting channels you have been told about.

★ Do not share inappropriate content, unverified material or material that is not in line with AA values (e.g. violent or discriminatory material).

Appendix C: Example of Safety Guidelines for Children, Young People and Communities including Adults at-risk on Online Platforms e.g. WhatsApp

❖ **Purpose of the Online Platform**

Have selected moderators for the online platforms. The moderators will outline the overall objective of the group and group guidelines to the members. This will include mentioning that the space is safe and welcoming to everyone.

❖ **Group Guidelines**

★ Be polite, and respectful with each other.

★ Only share information that is relevant to the objective of the group. Spam, unverified information, and fake news are not allowed.

★ Always communicate clearly and in a language that can be understood by all. Sending direct messages to other members is discouraged.

★ Quickly report to the moderator any messages in the group that are inappropriate or make the group members uncomfortable.

★ Report anything that worries or concerns you (including bullying) using the reporting channels you have been told about.

★ Do not share inappropriate content, unverified material or material that is not in line with AA values e.g. content that discriminates against marginalized groups in the community.

★ Respect everyone's privacy in the group and never share their personal information (including contact details, pictures) without their consent or parent's/guardian's consent for children under 18 years or adults at-risk (if need be).

★ Do not take or share photos of yourself in the online space or with anyone in the group.

★ Do not share exchanges from the platform outside unless members are in consensus allowing the same. Confidentiality is key in the platform.

★ Breaches of the guidelines will lead to disciplinary measures depending on the severity of the breach.

★ Do not share your full names.

❖ **Expected AA Staff, Partner and Representatives' Behaviour in the Online Platforms**

Staff involved in online platform with children, young people and communities including adults at-risk should always treat you with dignity and respect. They should never:

★ Flirt with you or make sexual comments.

★ Act in a manner that puts you at risk or in harm.

★ Use offensive or disrespectful language against you or others.

★ Ask you to be their friend or meet you alone offline.

★ They will share information on SHEA and Safeguarding including referral pathways and available reporting mechanisms during COVID-19.

❖ **Reporting Online Concerns**

If you are worried about the behaviour of a group member, AA staff, partner or representative, report anything that worries or concerns using the reporting channels you have been told about.

Appendix D: Setting Guidelines for Online Participants

ActionAid's online spaces should be safe for all using them. Safety helps participants feel secure enough to realise their rights, face challenging questions, and find radical new answers. In this way, safe spaces are also **brave** spaces - places where we have the courage to explore our values and ideas.

Online spaces can be made safer by establishing clear boundaries and communicating the values and behaviours that should be adhered to while in that space. Using an opening message or group guidelines is a good way of doing this.

Tips for creating guidelines and rules for online spaces

Large blocks of text can be hard to process on mobile phone screen, so ensure that the sentences are broken up with line breaks or that each paragraph is sent as a separate message.

Use emoji and other visual prompts to break up text and highlight information.

Ensure that language is simple and appropriate, especially when working with children, youth, across languages, or where participants might have lower standards of literacy.

Think about what behaviours you want to encourage and which values you want to promote in the group. The examples given below are a useful framework, but you may also wish to add or delete from the list to make it more relevant to your space.

Be positive-guide people towards positive goals as well as telling them what not to do.

Think about how you will use your platform to communicate your guidelines. In Facebook, Twitter, and on some message boards/chat clients, you can use group descriptions and pinned posts to keep your guidelines visible. On messaging apps like WhatsApp, you may need to repeat or remind participants of rules.

Sample welcome message for participants in an online space

Welcome to the [name of group]! This space is for [purpose]. We're really glad to see you here and look forward to hearing what you have to say.

👉Before getting started, here are some guidelines for using the group👈

👋Welcome new people when they join the group.

👂Listen to, understand, learn from, and encourage each other.

💛Be respectful to each other, respect your peers and their rights, and respect each other's differences.

💡This is a safe space to share questions and ideas. ❔ There are no silly questions!

⛔Do not say or share anything with the intent to cause harm and never share violent or sexual material in this group.

✅Treat everyone you speak to here kindly; ✖ do not bully or harass anyone.

🚦You have a right to feel safe! 💬Report anything that worries or concerns you (including bullying by your peers) using [reporting mechanism].

💻Posts must be truthful (ie. informative posts must have a reputable source; no fake news); helpful, and appropriate (ie. not intending to or likely to cause harm).

🔐Be careful who you share your personal information with, as people online are not always who they claim to be. Respect other people's privacy and confidentiality.

The purpose of these guidelines is to keep the group running smoothly and safely; if a participant seriously or repeatedly breaks the rules, they may be removed from the group.

Thank you so much for reading through this introduction 😊, and please ask if you have any questions. Your feedback is always welcome, so please contact [group coordinator] directly any time with questions, suggestions etc. Why not get started by telling us your name and a bit about yourself?

Sample Text in Facebook Group 'About' Section

Sample Text communicated over WhatsApp

TODAY

Welcome to the [name of group]! This space is for [purpose]. We're really glad to see you here and look forward to hearing what you have to say.
👉Before getting started, here are some guidelines for using the group👈

12:20 ✓✓

👋Welcome new people when they join the group.
👂Listen to, understand, learn from, and encourage each other.
💛Be respectful to each other, respect your peers and their rights, and respect each other's differences.
💡This is a safe space to share questions and ideas. ❓There are no silly questions!

12:24 ✓✓

⛔Do not say or share anything with the intent to cause harm and never share violent or sexual material in this group.
✅Treat everyone you speak to here kindly; ❌do not bully or harass anyone.
🚦You have a right to feel safe! 💬Report anything that worries or concerns you (including bullying by your peers) using [reporting mechanism].

12:25 ✓✓

📰Posts must be truthful (ie. informative posts must have a reputable source; no fake news); helpful, and appropriate (ie. not intending to or likely to cause harm).
🔐Be careful who you share your personal information with, as people online are not always who they claim to be. Respect other people's privacy and confidentiality.

12:25 ✓✓

The purpose of these guidelines is to keep the group running smoothly and safely; if a participant seriously or repeatedly breaks the rules, they may be removed from the group.

12:26 ✓✓

Thank you so much for reading through this introduction 😊, and please ask if you have any questions. Your feedback is always welcome, so please contact [group coordinator] directly any time with questions, suggestions etc.

12:26 ✓✓

❓Why not get started by telling the group your name and a bit about yourself? ❓

12:27 ✓✓

Appendix E: Safe Online Spaces and Remote Working during COVID-19

As ActionAid staff and representatives adjusting to the reality of mass remote working as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it's important that our behaviours reflect our Feminist Principles and our commitment to SHEA and Safeguarding. These are challenging times for everyone, but by following these simple guidelines we can do our best to stay digitally secure and safe and prevent SHEA and Safeguarding concerns from happening in digital spaces. Even in our new spaces and new work engagements, the Feminist Leadership Principles and the SHEA and Safeguarding values remain applicable and are an intrinsic part of our culture.

Practice Safe Online Behaviours

Firstly, we need to be mindful that safe behaviours on internal and external digital platforms reflect the way we work in physical spaces. Our Feminist Principles continue to guide how we work together and interact. The default is to always be respectful in our dealings with each other and not to share or write anything that could be offensive, inappropriate or harmful to others. It is important that we use digital space constructively and positively, and that we are using these platforms to promote and harness awareness of our values.

Be cautious about the online content we share and the impact that it might have, or how it may trigger others. What may be funny or amusing to some could be insulting or inappropriate for others. Be sensitive to the fact that your intentions might not be as clear in a digital setting as a face-to-face space. Our values and policies apply in digital spaces so make sure that you familiarise yourselves with the Code of Conduct, SHEA and Safeguarding policies, and IT policies.

Be careful about spreading fake news and disinformation – don't share stories that you are unsure about. Just because something appears on a news website doesn't make it true.

A good rule of thumb here – before sharing digital content (for e.g. a social media post, an online article/blog, image, video etc.), ask yourself:

• Is it true? • Is it kind, will it trigger someone? • Is it necessary?

Appropriate use of IT Equipment and Data Protection

This is also a good time to remind ourselves of various useful policies as they apply to our use of technology. Please take a few moments to refresh your memory of the work from home guide which can be found here – even though we may be working in a decentralised way, we remain on ActionAid's network and have a responsibility to comply with data protection laws and handle sensitive information appropriately. It's also worth noting that our rules on the use of IT equipment are still in place. Please continue to use your computer in the same way as you would in a busy office.

It is important to use our technology safely and sensibly. One of the areas that we would like to flag is the accessibility colleagues may have to your Teams meeting recordings. If your recordings are confidential please do not set the permissions to be viewable to "company" – as that means anyone with an actionaid.org e-mail can listen to the recording. See more recording tips here. We had also highlighted some areas we would like you to be aware of, especially when using Zoom for your meetings, please see the considerations here. When sharing information in Teams and SharePoint please be aware if your spaces are public/private

and if the content you are adding should be accessible to those colleagues and guests who have access.

Reporting your concerns

If you are concerned about anything you see or hear in any ActionAid space, online or otherwise, please report this to your line manager, HR, your SHEA and safeguarding Focal Point or the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team (safeguarding@actionaid.org).

Finally, while many of us are fortunate to be in a safe and secure environment while working at home, some of us may not be. We know that domestic violence and abuse have increased in prevalence during the lockdown. Please be reassured that our usual reporting procedures remain in place and we can support you.

While these times are certainly challenging, by committing to our ActionAid values in digital and physical spaces, taking care of ourselves and each other, and collaborating towards fulfilling our mission, we can emerge safely and reinvigorated.

For more information contact:

• Internal Communications - Stevie.Benton@actionaid.org

• Digital - Priscilla.Chomba@actionaid.org

• Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team safeguarding@actionaid.org

• For HR-related queries, please contact your HR rep who works with your hub/team.

Appendix F: Risks and Benefits of Social Media Platforms[17]

Platform	Age group	Risks	Benefits	Possible Uses	Mitigations
WhatsApp	Legal age 16+ (Young people are more likely to have access to WhatsApp than children. Parental/guardian consent must be given for children and young people under 18 years to use the platform for AA activities)	The risk admin/facilitator can be identified by all as you cannot hide your number/profile picture Sharing location & tracking a child Sharing personal photos and videos Unable to report content that is inappropriate Inability to know if others have shared your contact details Fake user profiles can be created with no verifications for proof of identification	Set up small groups/class groups that existed before Broadcast message function Created two or more admins per group Universal usage-already well-established platform Possible to send 'broadcast message to a group without sharing the contact details of the participants End-to-end encryption of messages Block sender function	Remote case management Remote PSS activities Remote education Sharing PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) & Safeguarding messages with the community Feedback and complaints	Ensure a risk assessment is done and mitigation measures put in place before using this platform Admin/facilitator to share group rules of engagement with everyone Under 18s to join WhatsApp groups using their parent/caregiver's number Inform children on how to keep safe online e.g. never to give out their personal information online i.e. where they stay, how old they are, don't have a photo of themselves on their WhatsApp number, to report any concerns
Facebook	Legal age 13+ (Young people and the community are more likely to have access to Facebook. Parental/guardian consent must be given for young people under 18 years to use the platform for AA activities)	Not anonymous for staff or user Ability to see profiles of all users Used by perpetrators to groom and exploit due to anonymity of user's profiles Fake user profiles can be created with no verifications or proof of identification Few controls over the content which can be violent, illicit, indecent and extreme	Ability to create a page for communications on COVID-19 messaging and PSEA Parents/caregivers have access (open)	Lobbying and advocacy work Sharing PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) & Safeguarding messages, COVID-19 messages with the community	Ensure a risk assessment is done and mitigation measures put in place before using this platform Do not use messenger – only us as static one-way channel of comms Report and block illicit/violent content
Twitter	Legal age 13+ (Young people and the community are more likely to have access to Twitter. Parental/guardian consent must be given for young people under 18 years to use the platform for AA activities)	Not anonymous for staff or user Ability to see profiles of all users Fake user profiles can be created with no verifications or proof of identification Risk of cyberbullying and trolling	Ability to create a page for communications on COVID-19 and PSEA Parents/caregivers have access	Comms for COVID-19 messages to parents/caregivers and community groups Lobbying and advocacy work	Ensure a risk assessment is done and mitigation measures put in place before using this platform Report and block illicit/violent content
YouTube	Legal age 13+ (Young people and the community can access it. Parental guidance needed for access by children and young people under 18 years)	Risk of children easily accessing inappropriate material i.e. access to sexual content, content on drugs etc. despite restrictions by YouTube to contain violent or upsetting images	Universal usage – already well established platform Parents/caregivers have access Ability to create a channel for content on COVID-19 messaging and PSEA	Communication channel to send messages, upload educational and awareness materials to reach project participants	Ensure a risk assessment is done and mitigation measures put in place before using this platform Ensure parent/guardian permission for access by under 18s

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[17] How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020.

Appendix G: Key Messages to be Shared with Parents and Caregivers[18]

✓ Talk to your child/ren about online safety and that it is important to stay safe online.

✓ Have open and honest conversations with your children - ask them regularly if they have discovered anything new or exciting online or anything which concerned them.

✓ Try to limit screen time and only let children visit age appropriate websites.

✓ Explain to your child/ren that it is not safe to put their personal details online because people they do not know may get access to them - if you would not give the information face-to-face, don't put it online.

✗ Avoid posting pictures or other personal information of your children online to protect their identity.

✓ If an AA staff/representative contacts you, or your child outside of the online platform or they ask you to do something which makes you feel uncomfortable you should report this in confidence to our Safeguarding Focal Point - they will listen to you and respond to your concern.

✓ Save the contact details of our SHEA and Safeguarding Focal Points - their job is to listen to any concerns that you might have about our staff/representatives and how they behave towards children. You should save their contact details in your phone somewhere safe so that you can report any concerns you might have.

✓ Advise your children to use devices in open areas of the home when engaging with AA staff/representatives or on online platforms.

✓ AA staff/representatives should engage with your children through your phone mobile. Direct communication with your child through their own phone is strongly discouraged. For children under the age of 16, WhatsApp groups should be set up using the number of the parent or caregiver.

✓ Check the privacy settings on the games and apps your child is using and make sure their profiles are turned on to the strictest privacy setting.

✓ Use available technologies to set up parental controls on devices.

✓ Co-view and co-play with your child online.

✓ Build good habits and help your child to develop digital intelligence and social and emotional skills.

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[18] How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms: Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020.

Related Policies and Documents

This Guidance Note is to be used in conjunction with the following:

- AAI Code of Conduct.
- AAI Feminist Leadership Principles.
- AAI SHEA and Safeguarding Policies
- AAI IT Policy.
- AAI Bullying and Harassment at Work Policy for IS Staff.
- AAI Whistleblowing Policy.
- AAI Feminist Research Guidelines
- General Data Protection Regulation.
- Safe Online Spaces and Remote Working during COVID-19

References

- AAI Antibullying Policy
- AAI Feminist Research Guidelines
- AAI SHEA and Safeguarding Policies.
- AAI Shifting Power to Young People, 2019
- COVID-19 and its implications for protecting children online April 2020. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/COVID-19-and-Its-Implications-for-Protecting-Children-Online.pdf
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- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy, Save the Children US 2019 – 2021. Available at https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/advocacy/diversity-equity-inclusion-strategy-2021.pdf
- Girls' Education Challenge – Keeping in contact with girls safely, Standards Operating Procedures for COVID-19 Communication, April 2020.
- Girl Effect, Digital Safeguarding Tips and Guidance, 2018, available from https://prd-girleffect-corp.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Digital_Safeguarding_-_FINAL.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWVYO5R6RMTXA2NA&Signature=UW20vuctnIcA5JBz4LuQCjRMngY%3D&Expires=1591895277
- Guidance Note on Community Based Complaints Mechanisms under COVID, June 2020
- How to Keep Children, Youth & Caregivers Safe When Using Online Platforms:
- Guidance Note for All War Child Representatives, 2020
- IASC, 2020, Interim Technical Note, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during COVID-19 response
- SHEA and Safeguarding and Safer Programming in ActionAid's COVID-19 Response, April 2020

For any questions about this Guidance Note please contact the Global SHEA and Safeguarding Team on safeguarding@actionaid.org