

# SAFEGUARDING IN FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES, AND SHARED LEARNING

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## Introduction

Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) occurs when power imbalances—the result of structural inequities along the lines of gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, etc.—are exploited and abused. In international humanitarian and development settings, the mere presence of an international non-governmental organization (INGO), which often controls access to vital services, can create these power imbalances. As such, INGOs have a responsibility to prevent SEAH and respond swiftly when SEAH incidents occur.

A healthy organizational culture is a cornerstone of preventing SEAH in INGOs. When organizations foster an organizational culture based on mutual respect and safety, SEAH incidents are less likely to occur. Further, when organizations create a culture where reporting of abuse is not only encouraged but is accessible, safe, and reports are handled in a serious manner, it can help mitigate the power imbalances that enable exploitation and abuse by signaling to all that such conduct will not be tolerated.

Essential to an organization's culture are its *values*—the set of principles or standards core to an organization's mission. In its [\*\*\*Selection of Promising Practices on Organizational Culture Change\*\*\*](#), UNHCR explains that “at its roots, every organizational culture is guided by a certain value system and set of principles that define how individuals use the authority and power they hold. These systems and principles vary from organization to organization, particularly since all organizations approach and define workplace culture differently.”

In faith-based organizations (FBOs), these organizational values are often influenced by faith principles. This case study examines and highlights how organizational values within FBOs influence their safeguarding activities and approach. Five InterAction Member organizations participated in this case study: World Vision United States, Islamic Relief USA, Habitat for Humanity International, Food for the Hungry, and Episcopal Relief and Development. Each organization has a unique affiliation with its respective faith and uses this affiliation in creative ways when approaching safeguarding programming.

## About the From Pledge to Action Project

In March of 2018, InterAction launched its [\*\*\*CEO Pledge on Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment by and of NGO Staff\*\*\*](#). The Pledge contains 16 commitments by CEOs of INGOs to implement practices and policies to protect staff and program participants from SEAH. To date, 140 CEOs of InterAction Member organizations and peers have signed the Pledge.

Shortly after the Pledge was released, InterAction launched the From Pledge to Action Project, which works with InterAction Members to operationalize their commitments to the Pledge.

## Organizational Values

Each organization interviewed for this case study has a unique set of organizational values that informs its approach to programmatic decisions, including safeguarding. The chart below outlines each organization’s values and the connection that these values have to the organization’s respective faiths:

ORGANIZATION	VALUES	FAITH CONNECTION
<b>World Vision</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We are Christian.</li> <li>2. We are committed to the poor.</li> <li>3. We value people.</li> <li>4. We are stewards.</li> <li>5. We are partners.</li> <li>6. We are responsive.</li> </ol>	<p>“It [faith] gives us such a strong foundation; our faith is embedded in a set of core values, these are shared global documents and global values. Each is rooted in scriptural understanding... Anything about our mission and core values is rooted in the biblical understanding of helping the poor and the oppressed.”</p> <p>– V.P. for H.R. and Corporate Services, World Vision U.S.</p>
<b>Islamic Relief USA</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Excellence.</li> <li>2. Sincerity.</li> <li>3. Social Justice.</li> <li>4. Compassion.</li> <li>5. Custodianship.</li> </ol>	<p>“We remain guided by the timeless values and teachings provided by the revelations contained within the Qur’an and prophetic example.”</p> <p>– Islamic Relief USA Mission and Values Statement</p>
<b>Episcopal Relief and Development</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Faith.</li> <li>2. Dignity.</li> <li>3. Relationship.</li> <li>4. Leadership.</li> <li>5. Excellence.</li> </ol>	<p>“The words of our core values have created and continue to shape our culture as one of recognition, reverence and stewardship for the abundance God has provided to all, and appreciation, celebration and joy for the roles entrusted in us.”</p> <p>– Episcopal Relief and Development Theory of Change</p>

ORGANIZATION	VALUES	FAITH CONNECTION
<b>Food for the Hungry</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We follow Jesus.</li> <li>2. Our work is relational.</li> <li>3. We invest wisely and focus on results.</li> <li>4. We serve with humility.</li> <li>5. We pursue beauty, goodness, and truth.</li> </ol>	<p>“Food for the Hungry has five core values that we uphold. Those values are biblically based, and they are what we use to guide and carry out our work as we respond to ending all forms of human poverty worldwide”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>–Safeguarding Lead, Food for the Hungry</i></p>
<b>Habitat for Humanity International</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Humility—Remembering that our mission is bigger than ourselves, we recognize that we always have more to learn and that success depends on others.</li> <li>2. Courage—We do what is right, even if it is difficult or unpopular, by having honest conversations, valuing diverse perspectives, and boldly acting to further Habitat’s mission.</li> <li>3. Accountability—We take personal responsibility for Habitat’s mission by acting with integrity, putting forth our best work, and learning from success and failure.<sup>1</sup></li> </ol>	<p>“We declared our values around two years ago...to do so, we did a broad participatory process, also informed by our faith perspective...God calls us to humility, to step out in courage, and calls us to account.”</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>– Vice President of Culture and Spiritual Practice, Habitat for Humanity International</i></p>

Each organization has a distinctive relationship with faith and varying degrees to which faith influences and informs its organizational values. For example, World Vision, Food for the Hungry, and Episcopal Relief and Development include explicit references to their faith in their first values. At Food for the Hungry, leadership made an intentional decision to make the first organizational value “We Follow Jesus.” Food for the Hungry’s Safeguarding Lead explained that this value appears first because it is foundational to who Food for the Hungry is as an organization:

<sup>1</sup> These are working definitions and Habitat for Humanity International anticipates amendments as the organization lives further into these values.

“We believe we are ambassadors of Jesus and the work he did when he walked the earth—the work that we do, the values that we hold—are because we are ambassadors of him, that spills into our thoughts, words and deeds in what we do.”

Both Food for the Hungry and World Vision are clear that their values and mission are biblically based. Similarly, at Episcopal Relief and Development these values shape its culture of “recognition, reverence and stewardship for the abundance God has provided to all.” These biblical verses and references help to clearly lay out the organization’s ideological framework, which informs policies and practice.

While Habitat for Humanity’s mission and principles (see *Annex A*) are explicitly tied to Faith, their core values are *informed* by faith. This is because the organization’s values were created through an appreciative inquiry process with Habitat’s staff, which represent a wide range of religions. Similarly, Islamic Relief USA does not make any references to Islam specifically in its mission but does reference Quranic teachings in its values.

These organizational values form the basis upon which organizations are able to build upon to inform their programmatic activities, including safeguarding.

## Faith and Approach to Safeguarding

Organizations varied in how—and the extent to which—their faith affiliation and principles informed their approach to safeguarding. For example, the Safeguarding Lead for Food for the Hungry explained that “In upholding those values, standards, and learnings—all of those things combined give guidance to our approach in safeguarding and what it means to protect the most vulnerable. All people are treated with dignity and respect, and we strive to be humble servants as a result of the work we do to uphold safeguarding.”

Other organizations echoed the sentiment that faith principles, which call upon followers to protect the most vulnerable, inform the organization’s approach to safeguarding. For example, the Global Head of Safeguarding for Habitat for Humanity International explained, “there is no way we can live into our mission and values if we are not following safeguarding, and in order to follow safeguarding we need to embrace our values.” Habitat’s Vice President of Culture and Spiritual Practice added,

“Our [safeguarding] work has expanded our understanding of what love and action looks like. Before placing greater emphasis on safeguarding, love and action could have been ‘okay, I am going to build a house, I am seeing a family move from a bad situation to a positive one.’ What fully embracing safeguarding has done is that people see that love in action is the way that we treat each other and create a culture and space of how we treat each other. Our mission has gotten bigger as a result of furthering our stance on safeguarding.”

The Safeguarding and Compliance Officer for Islamic Relief USA said that Quranic Principles made protection of women a priority at the organization, emphasizing that “In the Quran it specifically says that women are the center of the family, they are the matriarch and that you need to protect women at all costs. So, with those faith principles in mind, that guides a lot of our work and why we do so much women-centric programming.” She later added that “in some ways it makes [doing safeguarding] easier because there is the inherent need to protect vulnerable groups through the faith principles.”

The Director for Gender Initiatives at Episcopal Relief and Development explained that the organization’s affiliation with the Episcopal Church and churches within the Anglican Communion influences its approach to safeguarding

in that “a lot of our priorities are shaped by the church, and child safeguarding is a top priority for the church. We collaborate with the Global Mother’s Union, for example, as we work with partners to integrate effective safeguarding practices and policy into early childhood development programs.<sup>2</sup> Our approach to programming is very much faith-leader driven. We have a violence against women and girls toolkit in Liberia and it is a *faith leader* toolkit, which allows Muslim and Christian faith leaders, including youth leaders, to interrogate how their own biases and interpretation of scripture can normalize or worsen gender based violence and other forms of inequality and discrimination. At Episcopal Relief and Development, it is a faith-based process, working through the diocese.”

At World Vision, the fundamental faith principle that all people are precious in God’s sight drives the organization’s safeguarding work. The Senior Vice President for International Programs explained that “our safeguarding work and everything we think about in terms of safeguarding comes from and is sustained out of this reverence for God and each other—it is really central to all that we do. The dehumanization of people, from child labor, gender violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, racial injustice, sexual exploitation—those things go against this truth, and it really grieves us and so we frame all of our work in this way: we are accountable to God to do so above all, our board, our donors, and our participants in the programs we implement. We have zero tolerance towards abuse towards our children or adults because of that.”

While safeguarding violations are contradictory to the central mission of all humanitarian and development organizations, many interviewees expressed that faith adds an additional dimension to this. Safeguarding violations do not just go against their organizational values and mission, but also those of their organization’s faith—adding another dimension to the accountability that staff may feel to prevent SEAH within their organization’s programs.

## Integration of Faith Into Safeguarding Activities

Organizations varied greatly in how they integrate faith into safeguarding activities. Some organizations very explicitly link safeguarding and faith to help staff feel more personally and spiritually responsible for the issue. Other organizations left explicit references to faith out of safeguarding activities, intending to include staff from a different faith background than the organization’s own.

For example, World Vision U.S. intentionally integrates faith into all areas of staff engagement—safeguarding included. The Senior VP of H.R. and Corporate Services explained, “Whether the topic of safeguarding or another topic that we care about it is a continuous reinforcement loop—what is published in devotionals, what we pray about in chapel, how we frame up the issue, how we are always seeking to understand the issue through our accountability to our higher power—God revealed through Jesus Christ.”

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<sup>2</sup> Mother’s Union is a Christian women-led organization that demonstrates its faith in action to stop poverty, inequality and injustice. It is a federation of over 600 independent Mothers’ Union charities around the world, supporting over 4 million members in 84 countries: [What we do | Mothers’ Union \(mothersunion.org\)](https://www.mothersunion.org)

## SAFEGUARDING DEVOTIONALS AT WORLD VISION

In 2020, World Vision hosted a global “Safeguarding Week” for all staff focused on increasing awareness about safeguarding. The Global Faith and Development team worked alongside the safeguarding team to create a devotional guide for the week, which staff could access through the Safeguarding Intranet page. One devotional reads:

“Our faith in Jesus Christ compels us to ensure that all children are cared for, protected and participating. Because of this fundamental belief, each child is made in God’s image with inherent value, dignity, and potential. Matthew 25:40 “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” All safeguarding comes from and is sustained out of this reverence for God and one another.”

This devotional helps to set the stage so that staff can link safeguarding back to scripture and see why it is an important topic for World Vision.

At Food for the Hungry, the Safeguarding Policy has an explicit connection with faith from the onset, reading:

“Food for the Hungry believes that all people are made in the image of God and should be treated with respect, honored for their intrinsic value, and cared for in ways that glorify God. We envision all relationships restored, every person nurtured, and communities transformed.

Unfortunately, abuse and the exploitation of vulnerable people, especially children, who participate in the programs of organizations like FH, is a very real and growing problem around the world. Stories of abuse are in the news headlines every day. It is FH’s duty and responsibility to protect children, vulnerable communities, and our employees.

FH holds a zero-tolerance policy and will not tolerate abuse and/or exploitation by employees or anyone conducting business on behalf of FH. FH is committed to instituting safeguarding measures through prevention, reporting, and response.”

Habitat for Humanity International, on the other hand, chose not to call out or draw any clear connections between faith and safeguarding in its safeguarding policies and procedures. Rather, it approaches safeguarding as both a core industry standard and a moral imperative. The reasoning for this, Habitat’s Global Head of Safeguarding explained, is that “we didn’t want it to be exclusionary of anyone... The organization might have a particular [faith] stance but the reader can have something else. Within training materials, we call out the moral imperative of safeguarding and we consistently call out our values.” This moral imperative does not explicitly reference faith either, which Habitat feels allows the individual staff member to make that connection—whether based on personal faith or not—themselves if they see fit. However, the moral imperative *is* explicitly tied to both Habitat’s mission and values, which are based upon faith values. As a result, the implicit connection to faith is there.

Further, Habitat for Humanity International has recently been articulating a theology of Imago Dei, which claims that every human being is created in the image of God and has inherent value. “Every human on planet earth reflects God in some way regardless of their ethnicity, gender, social/economic class, religion, capability or any other category people have created. This foundational principle is the basis of Habitat’s mission and for safeguarding,” explained Habitat’s Vice President of Culture and Spiritual Practice.

## FBOs Implementing Safeguarding Programs In-Country

### Episcopal Relief and Development

Episcopal Relief and Development works with Faith leaders to roll out child safeguarding policies and procedures. Starting in 2019, the organization began a series of consultative meetings with the Archbishop in the Central African Province in Zambia to jumpstart a child safeguarding policy.

The meetings started by asking the Archbishop and other clergy in attendance to reflect on their early childhood experiences and worked with them to identify the nexus between child protection, violence against women, violence, and poverty. Following the self-reflection exercises, the attendees come to a consensus regarding the steps to effectively roll out the child safeguarding policy and plan within the church community. After this point, participating attendees are viewed as champions of change, who can participate in opportunities to scale up the learning in other dioceses throughout the region.

Our approach and strategy is more anchored in the experiential model of learning of self-discovery and reflection. Our relationship is not hierarchical or top-down, but rather is bottom up approach, with consensus building, self-reflection and discovery happening simultaneously. Once the bishops can have their own self-discovery and reflection moment going through their own self experiences that is the “aha moment” that can unfold many things. So it is not much to do about how the child safeguarding policy is rolled out, but more about the systematic approach. Rolling out will be different from country to country, so we don’t go in and say ‘you need to XYZ.’ Because as long as we generate that demand and buy-in, the church leaders know how to roll it out.”

– Senior Programs Officer, Episcopal Relief and Development

### World Vision and Islamic Relief

**Channels of Hope** is a World Vision program that entails an interactive process to create a safe space for faith leaders, their spouses, and faith communities to become active participants in the well-being of children through science-based information and insight from religious texts. Channels of Hope has curricula around child protection, Ebola, gender, HIV and AIDS, and maternal newborn child health. In 2020 alone, the Channels of Hope for Child Protection program was implemented in 34 countries and has been adapted for differing faith contexts, including ecumenical Christian, Buddhist, and Muslim communities. For example, in South Sudan, World Vision works through Faith leaders as entry points to promote community acceptance of survivors and children born of rape and to improve locally managed systems to prevent and respond to sexual violence. Among community members, the intervention increased reporting of GBV incidents, saw more survivors seeking health services, and changed attitudes toward GBV and the role of women in church and society.

Islamic Relief also implements World Vision’s Channels of Hope approach to engage with faith leaders in Mali, Pakistan, and Lebanon. In Mali, Channels of Hope worked with faith leaders to deliver awareness-raising and sensitization sessions on the principles of child protection. Using Islamic teachings, Imams preach against harmful practices such as child labor, physical and sexual abuse, and female genital mutilation (FGM). Similarly, in Pakistan, Channels of Hope is “changing social norms and attitudes around child protection and safeguarding” by engaging local Islamic scholars.

## Benefits of Implementing Safeguarding Programs as an FBO

The interview asked participants, “what are some of the benefits your organization has experienced with integrating a faith-based perspective into safeguarding activities?” Respondents provided a variety of answers, but several key themes are laid out below.

### Strong connection with local organizations

Many organizations responded that being an FBO put them in a good position to discuss sensitive issues such as safeguarding with local organizations and communities. Some interviewees felt that because the areas where INGOs do programming tend to have religious populations, local communities felt more comfortable working with a faith-based organization, even if they did not share the same faith. Interviewees also felt that they had particularly strong connections with local FBOs and institutions, regardless of religion, because they shared similar core values and missions:

“I think we are better placed as a Faith-Based Organization because we share the same values and principles that align with the faith organizations or partners that we work with.”

– Senior Program Officer, Episcopal Relief and Development

“As an FBO ourselves, we also work with local mosques and other religious institutions in communities. Our engagement helps us when it comes to safeguarding and implementing programs, even though we have different religious views.”

– Safeguarding Lead, Food for the Hungry

### It is more than a compliance issue

Although the INGO sector has made huge progress on safeguarding in recent years, much of this change was fueled by a desire to comply with donor and international standards. While compliance is important, true transformation of organizational culture and norms requires organizations to look at safeguarding as more than a compliance issue.

The FBOs interviewed for this study indicated that safeguarding is not only a matter of compliance for their respective organizations, but that it is more crucially a matter of upholding organizational values and faith principles. Several organizations acknowledged that while safeguarding is a core standard that every organization must uphold, FBOs can feel an extra layer of accountability. One organization explained that in addition to being accountable to donors, their board, and their program participants, they are also accountable to God. Another explained that being an FBO “makes it much easier to justify why safeguarding is so critical and so important with the vulnerable populations that we work with and the context that we work in. It’s almost like if we weren’t, it would be shocking.” Another added that the protection of vulnerable groups is core to their faith, which makes it easier



to get Senior Leadership on board with implementing safeguarding programs. As FBOs guided by faith principles, there is little disagreement that the protection of vulnerable groups falls within the organization’s mission.

“We believe in the safeguarding of all communities and people who we work with, not because a law requires us to behave in these ways, but because God calls us to treat all people with dignity and respect, and strive to ensure they are not exploited, abused, neglected, harassed or taken advantage of by anyone who works for F.H. This aligns with our values and who God has called us to be.”

– Safeguarding Lead, Food for the Hungry

## Framework

Interviewees also explained that faith can help give staff a framework to understand their obligations to safeguarding. The Senior VP of International Programs at World Vision U.S., explained, “[Our faith] definitely helps give us a framework in which staff can hang all this on and embrace and own and see it in terms of their Christian faith and core values. It has helped us to drive change and improvement in this area.”

Similarly, Food for the Hungry makes a conscious effort to tie all areas of programming and operations back to its “Heartbeat,” the name for the organization’s values, vision, and purpose. By also connecting safeguarding back to the Heartbeat, it helps staff see the connections between safeguarding, their work, and their faith. As Food for the Hungry’s Safeguarding Lead explained, integrating a faith perspective into safeguarding activities “shows who we are as an organization and that [safeguarding] is critical to why we do the work that we do as an FBO.”

## Challenges

The interview also asked respondents “are there any challenges that you think being an FBO brings to your approach to safeguarding?” Although each organization interviewed expressed advantages that come with being a faith-based organization working on safeguarding, many felt that they also faced unique challenges. Overarching themes that emerged from this question are outlined below.

### Humanitarian Halo

Joel Charny, former U.S. Executive Director for [Norwegian Refugee Council](#), explained in an interview with NPR that “there is an assumption that humanitarians have a halo over them. There is a tendency to give us the benefit of the doubt, that what we’re doing is inherently good. That needs to be challenged.” Similarly, in a recent [New York Magazine article](#) outlining the pervasive nature of sexual harassment within the U.N., a longtime U.N. Manager remarked, “This idea that we are special is undermining us. We are special, yes, but the organization is also made up of human beings, and human beings screw up.”

For a long time, this halo effect stalled progress on addressing SEAH within the INGO sector—in faith-based and secular organizations alike. However, many organizations interviewed for this study expressed that while they struggle with the same “humanitarian halo” as other INGOs, there is an added layer as an FBO. Interviewees explained that some staff tend to hold onto the idea that other staff are unlikely to commit SEA because, as an FBO, the organization employs “good” people. One interviewee explained:

“I know there have been studies that show FBOs are less compliant in safeguarding because we believe the best in each other, and there has been a significant hump to get over of folks thinking it is not a significant issue within our operations because we hire good people, and it is faith-based. It is nonsensical to folks, because they just can’t believe that type of evil exists—I don’t know another word to use beside evil within safeguarding violations.”

Another remarked:

“Often one of the challenges that I see is, because we are faith-based, there is the inclination to assume that everyone is good and are abiding by their faith principles, which very clearly state not to harm anyone. And so sometimes it can be difficult to break through that barrier and help people understand that, while the majority of people are good—you can’t not be prepared for when something bad happens.”

Another organization added:

“As a [faith-based] organization, we become overly optimistic and we put on this hat that because we are a [faith-based] organization it doesn’t happen to us, it can’t because our staff are [followers of faith]. Sometimes that optimism can and has gotten us into trouble. There are consequences for our actions, just because we are a [faith-based] organization and one of our staff abuses a child, there are still consequences for those actions—that has to be upheld, addressed and there has to be justification for that. I think sometimes the hindrance is just getting a bit of an ego and thinking that can’t happen to us.”

Overall, many organizations felt that as an FBO, the assumption that staff are “good people” who would not commit SEA can contribute to a lethargic response on safeguarding matters. However, some felt that it went further than this, adding:

“I think when [some] said that we assume the best in people, maybe I’d use stronger language. I think there was an assumption when we had the first couple of conversations with the Senior Leadership Team there was a little bit of ‘we are immune to this, this can’t possibly happen because we are a [faith-based] organization. I had actually been with some people that had experienced [SEAH] in the field and was able to say; well it happened to X person in X place... it took a little convincing that it actually happens within a [faith-based] organization. So, I don’t know if that is assuming the best in people or assuming we are immune to it in some ways, which is a little naïve. I think people have recognized it is naïve, but I think it was an unspoken assumption that people hadn’t verbalized.”

## **Sensitivities to difficult conversations**

Although all organizations struggle with discussing SEAH with program participants in contexts where such subjects may be considered taboo, several interviewees expressed that they found it particularly difficult to broach the topic among staff in FBOs. As one respondent explained, “because of our faith-based nature, which in some cultural contexts can mean more conservative, it has been harder to talk about safeguarding because of its explicit nature. One senior leader said [regarding SEAH], ‘maybe this is a bit salacious...’ Non faith-based people can be very conservative as well, but I am not hearing that same type of feedback from my non-faith based peers.”

## **Outside expectations**

Some FBOs felt an added pressure to prevent safeguarding violations, feeling that the general public and sector puts additional expectations on FBOs to be free from SEAH. One interviewee explained, “If there is an unfortunate

event involving an FBO, there is often an added layer to the disappointment and outrage. The perception is that not only should these things not be happening at all when you are serving and helping people, but they especially shouldn't be happening in an FBO that claims to have a higher standard. It adds another layer of disappointment and challenge if and when incidences happen and there is an FBO involved.”

Despite these additional expectations on FBOs, safeguarding incidents are likely to occur in all types of organizations. One interviewee added, “whether you're a FBO or not, everyone is struggling with the topic of safeguarding and how to build capacity, build awareness, and educate not only themselves but the communities they serve. I think there is an assumption somehow that FBOs are supposed to know it all, or they do know it all, or they should because they are a FBO. In reality, we are struggling just as much as the next guy. Being a FBO doesn't make it easier.”

## Key Takeaways

### Utilize your organizational values to enhance your safeguarding efforts

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews is the foundational role that organizational values play in building strong safeguarding culture. Many organizations felt that their organizational values helped provide staff with a framework through which they could understand how safeguarding is essential and integral to the mission of the organization. A Senior V.P. of International Programs at World Vision U.S. explained, “whether or not you are faith-based, the values that your organization can point to, and which staff are expected to live into, are critical. It is the core values of the organization that truly inform why you are doing the work and guide the way in which that work is carried out.”

### Safeguarding needs to go beyond compliance

Safeguarding needs to be integrated throughout an organization to be successful. It is not one person's job, but rather all staff must take active steps to ensure safeguarding measures are mainstreamed throughout all programs. Many organizations interviewed for this study explained that protecting vulnerable groups is a core principle of their organization's faith values, which helped make the issue personal for staff. Although secular organizations may not be able to rely on faith principles to make the issue personal for staff, central to the mission of all humanitarian and development organizations is ensuring the safety of vulnerable people. Safeguarding is a foundational piece of this mission in all organizations.

### Collaboration

A key theme that emerged throughout the interviews was the continued need for faith-based and secular organizations to collaborate and share resources. All of the organizations that were interviewed for this study acknowledged that no one organization has a perfect approach to safeguarding, and that shared learning and resource-sharing are critical in moving the sector forward. Additionally, interviewees recognized that even if one organization has strong safeguarding systems in place, if the organization they are working next to does not, it does little to strengthen the sector as a whole.

This need for collaboration goes beyond safeguarding. Islamic Relief' USA's Safeguarding Lead explained that “there should be a lot more collaboration between secular organizations and FBOs to utilize their strengths. The best way to learn about a community of faith is through other faith members and leaders, and if we don't do that we aren't really getting anywhere.”

## Limitations

While this case study explored several key aspects of safeguarding in FBOs, it is by no means a comprehensive study of FBOs and their work on safeguarding. With the exception of Islamic Relief USA, all of the organizations interviewed for this case study are Christian organizations. This study is therefore missing the voice and perspective of FBOs from a wide diversity of religious backgrounds. Additionally, all of the organizations interviewed are headquartered in the U.S. All of the interviews, with the exception of one, were done with headquarters staff. The findings of this study are thus not inclusive of voices in-country, which may have a different relationship with faith and FBOs than individuals working at the headquarters level.

## Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the organizations that participated in this study, including Food for the Hungry, Islamic Relief USA, Episcopal Relief and Development, World Vision U.S., and Habitat for Humanity International.

## Annex A: Organizational Mission Statements and Principles

To learn more about the participating organizations, please refer to the information below:

### WORLD VISION U.S.

#### *Vision Statement*

Our vision for every child, life in all its fullness.

Our prayer for every heart, the will to make it so.

We look forward to a world where every child experiences Jesus' promise of life in all its fullness.

Where they are protected, cared for and given the opportunities to become all God meant them to be.

Where they grow strong in communities free of need and full of promise. Where families are valued, creation preserved and the most vulnerable live in security and confidence.

Where they become responsible citizens of well led nations. Where peace and justice reign and all have the right to contribute.

Where they flourish in a world where the treasure of our hearts and the measure of our wealth is the happiness and well-being of all children.

In such a world, we all taste the joy of the Kingdom of Heaven.

#### *Mission Statement*

World Vision is an international partnership of Christians whose mission is to follow our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in working with the poor and oppressed to promote human transformation, seek justice and bear witness to the good news of the Kingdom of God.

We pursue this mission through integrated, holistic commitment to:

- Transformational Development that is community-based and sustainable, focused especially on the needs of children.
- Emergency Relief that assists people afflicted by conflict or disaster.
- Promotion of Justice that seeks to change unjust structures affecting the poor among whom we work.
- Partnerships with churches to contribute to spiritual and social transformation.
- Public Awareness that leads to informed understanding, giving, involvement and prayer.
- Witness to Jesus Christ by life, deed, word and sign that encourages people to respond to the Gospel.

## HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

### *Mission*

Seeking to put God's love into action, Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope.

### *Vision*

A world where everyone has a decent place to live.

### *Principles*

Demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ.  
Focus on shelter.  
Advocate for affordable housing.  
Promote dignity and hope.  
Support sustainable and transformative development.

## EPISCOPAL RELIEF & DEVELOPMENT

### *Mission Statement*

Episcopal Relief & Development is the compassionate response of The Episcopal Church to human suffering in the world. Hearing God's call to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being, Episcopal Relief & Development serves to bring together the generosity of Episcopalians and others with the needs of the world.

Episcopal Relief & Development faithfully administers the funds that it receives from the church and raises from other sources. It provides relief in times of disaster and promotes sustainable development by identifying and addressing the root causes of suffering.

Episcopal Relief & Development cherishes its partnerships within the Anglican Communion, with ecumenical bodies and with others who share a common vision for justice and peace among all people.

### *Mandate*

Our mandate comes from Jesus' words found in Matthew 25:

Lord, when was it that

We saw you hungry and gave you food?  
We saw you thirsty and gave you something to drink?  
We saw you a stranger and welcomed you?  
We saw you sick and took care of you?  
We saw you in prison and visited you?

'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

—Matthew 25: 37-40 (NRSV)

## ISLAMIC RELIEF USA

### *Mission*

Islamic Relief USA provides relief and development in a dignified manner regardless of gender, race, or religion, and works to empower individuals in their communities and give them a voice in the world.

### *Vision*

Working together for a world free of poverty.

### *Values*

These traits express the belief and define the culture of the organization. We remain guided by the timeless values and teachings provided by the revelations contained within the Qur'an and prophetic example.

Excellence, Sincerity, Social Justice, Compassion, Custodianship

## FOOD FOR THE HUNGRY

### *Vision*

All forms of human poverty ended worldwide.

### *Purpose*

Together we follow God's call responding to human suffering and graduating communities from extreme poverty.

## Annex B: Key Definitions

**Faith-based organization:** “Organizations that derive inspiration and guidance for their activities from the teachings and principles of the faith or from a particular interpretation or school of thought within that faith.” They comprise a range of religious, charitable organizations affiliated with one or more faith and spiritual traditions, which may include:

- Religious congregations (such as churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples);
- Charities sponsored or hosted by one or more religious congregations;
- Non-profit organizations founded by a religious congregation or based upon faith and spiritual traditions;
- Coalitions that include organizations described above.

**Safeguarding:** The responsibility of organizations to make sure their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and adults at-risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. This term covers physical, emotional and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by staff and associated personnel, as well as safeguarding risks caused by program design and implementation. Many organizations now also use this term to cover harm caused to staff in the workplace.

**SEAH:** Sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

**PSEAH:** Prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.