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## [Safeguarding Bulletin Edition 10](#)

Suggested Reading: [Tip sheet: Safe programming in South Sudan | Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub \(safeguardingsupporthub.org\)](#)



## Safeguarding Case Scenario

Ann is a caseworker with a small charity (NGO) that helps refugees access public aid. In addition to Ann, the staff includes Adam, another caseworker; Jenny, the administrative assistant/bookkeeper; and Philip, the supervisor. Everyone reports to Philip who, in turn, presents monthly reports to the Board of Trustees. The staff work long hours together in a small office, so they get to know each other well and start to share information about their personal lives. Some of the reasons Ann decided to work for this charity are the friendly and informal working environment and the care everyone shows towards each other. When her cat is run over by a car, she feels comforted by her colleague, Adam, when he puts his arm around her shoulder. Slowly, however, it seems that Adam is finding excuses to make physical contact with her: leaning over her shoulder to see case files on her computer screen, putting his hand on her back when he passes her in the coffee room, or touching her arm when she discusses cases with him. One day Ann asks Jenny if she ever has similar experiences with Adam. Jenny shrugs and responds that he is a bit “handsy” and a bit “touchy feely.” One evening, Adam and Ann are the last two in the office. They are standing together and chatting when he suddenly leans in and tries to kiss her. Ann decides this is too much. She asks for a meeting with Philip and tells him her concerns. According to the organisational human resources grievance policy, Philip is supposed to inform the board of any incidents of this nature. Instead, Philip speaks to Adam at a football match and asks him to avoid Ann because she is “a bit hyper-sensitive.” Adam stops talking to Ann and makes a point of never being alone with her. Ann quits a few months later and takes a job in a larger NGO.

### **Key issues:**

- In very small organisations, the limited number of personnel and the close working conditions make it difficult to maintain confidentiality. People may not consider that discussing the situation with a friend – who happens to be a colleague – is the same as breaking confidentiality.
- Small organisations can foster a degree of relational intimacy that can blur lines between their professional and personal lives. This can contribute to inappropriate behaviour and/or a reluctance to handle allegations according to formal procedures and good practice.
- Human resources and grievance policies only work when they are implemented. Addressing concerns raised according to good practice and policy provides safety and support for both the individual sharing the concern and the potential wrongdoer.

### **Analysis:**

- Clear policies need to outline inappropriate behaviour and the actions to be taken when inappropriate behaviour arises.
- Safeguarding policies, codes of conduct, and/or sexual harassment policies must clearly define and provide examples of harassment and misconduct to reduce the likelihood that incidents are addressed inappropriately.
- Policies and procedures need to be accompanied by training for staff – even in small organisations.
- Organisations need to ensure that all personnel understand: The meaning of terms such as misconduct, harassment, abuse, and exploitation; the ways in which different forms of inappropriate behaviour manifest themselves and the formal actions that must be taken when they arise.
- Staff need clear referral pathways. Small organisations must have pathways that allow reports to be shared with someone outside of the direct working team – for example, a member of the board of trustees or a named individual in a partner agency. With a referral pathway that explains options for reporting outside of the team, Ann may have been able to retain greater confidentiality, and a formal assessment of Adam’s behaviour may have taken place.

(Ref: *Safeguarding report-handling mechanism: Case studies*; [www.Bond.org](http://www.Bond.org))

## **Safeguarding Focal Person Profile**



**Elizabeth Gyni Felix** works for International Rescue Committee in South Sudan.

She is inspired to wake up every morning to render her services and knowledge to her community, and to provide basic needs for her family. When she isn't working, she is reading newspapers, and supporting the vulnerable as a humanitarian aid worker. She answered a few questions about safeguarding:

**Why is safeguarding important in your job?**

Safeguarding is important in my job because staff and clients should feel safe when accessing services. Staff should not take advantage of the power dynamics or vulnerability of our clients or fellow colleagues. Our clients should be treated with dignity and respect. Safeguarding is important because it protects our clients from all acts that are exploitative and abusive (physical, verbal, emotional, mental, economic, and sexual).

**What do you think are the most important qualities a SG person should have?**

- They should understand the Safeguarding Policy.
- They should be able to explain the basics of safeguarding, the survivor-centred approach, and how to report safeguarding concerns and violation.
- They should keep information confidential.

**Can you tell us about a recent safeguarding initiative/improvement that your team have implemented?**

IRC safeguarding focal persons in all field locations provide awareness and support to staff to enable them to adhere to the safeguarding policies and raise concerns as necessary.

**Can you tell us a common misconception staff may have about safeguarding and could you demystify?**

The staff are from different cultural backgrounds which differ from each other, for example, the safeguarding policy says early marriage is not allowed but some cultures allow early marriages, which brings misconception between the policy and the local laws. The continued raising of awareness, and staff training has helped to correct the misconception to some extent.

**Share any quote or advice you would like to give to our readers.**

“The government should include a safeguarding act in the constitution”.

# [The Health Pooled Fund Safeguarding Toolkit](#)

The HPF safeguarding toolkit is an essential resource to include in your staff induction training to eventually improve safeguarding practices within your organisation.

[The toolkit can be found by clicking here.](#)



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