

SEA survivor-centered assistance promotes respect, safety, confidentiality and non-discrimination, ensuring holistic care and support according to the needs and wishes of the survivors.

It is important to recognize that **children (persons under 18) are not able to make informed choices**, but we respect their wishes where possible.

15) Providing assistance to survivors²³

Why provision of assistance is important

When there is an allegation of SEA, it is essential to put the welfare of survivors and whistleblowers at the center of our response (and not just focus on the subject of the complaint). This approach helps avoid causing further harm. Remember that the purpose of any assistance, or referrals, is to meet immediate needs that cannot wait for an investigation to be conducted and concluded.

The most senior representative of the National Society in the field is responsible for ensuring that assistance is provided.

Actions

Be prepared: See Section 11 for guidance on referrals mapping, dissemination and training for volunteers and staff.

Information sharing with survivors: When allegations of SEA are made, clearly state and share the National Society approach to providing immediate support for the person reporting an incident of SEA (regardless of whether the allegations have been confirmed or not).

Consent: It is mandatory to ask adult survivors if they wish to report informally or formally; if their name and other identifying details may be revealed or not; if they seek an internal administrative investigation by the employer of the alleged perpetrator; and if they also wish to report the case to local law enforcement. Survivors may be referred to independent legal counsel, based on a vetted and updated local referral pathway (see Section 11).

A witness protection protocol should be developed through consultations with local women's associations; local legal experts on gender issues; other community-based organizations addressing the protection of people with disabilities, children and other marginalized groups; and local law enforcement. Witness protection measures should include measures to support a staff member who reports SEA and fears retaliation, for example the option to work in a different location and access to referral pathways.

23 Adapted from the ICRC Code of Conduct Policies: Prevention of and Response to Sexual Misconduct, Fraud and Corruption

Witness/whistleblower protection: Those affected, including victims/survivors, witnesses and subjects of a complaint, should be protected by a whistleblower/anti-retaliation policy. For example, **IFRC's Whistleblower Protection Policy** can be followed by any National Societies that do not yet have their own in place.

Assessment: A preliminary assessment of a person's needs arising directly from an incident, or an alleged incident, must be carried out as soon as possible. This should be coordinated by the relevant leadership in the field and at the National Office.

Assistance²⁴: It is important that National Societies help survivors gain access to support services through a number of actions. These can include direct transportation, costs for transportation, any fees related to the service as well as follow-up, etc. The type of assistance is likely to vary and could, for example, include sexual and reproductive health-care services, counseling or legal services. The duration of the period of assistance will also vary based on the nature of assistance needed.

Why do referrals need to be timely?

Referrals to health services need to take place within 48 hours to allow for prophylaxis in case of sexual abuse and within 72 hours in case of exposure to HIV.



²⁴ The acceptance of any assistance provided by the Red Cross and Red Crescent is without prejudice to the person reporting an experience of SEA or any other person's right to pursue criminal charges against the alleged perpetrator.