



26 February 2018

The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Secretary of State
Department for International Development
22 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2EG

Dear Ms Mordaunt,

Re: Safeguarding Policies at Practical Action

Many thanks for your letter of 12 February. At Practical Action we are similarly concerned by the events uncovered in Haiti, and some of the wider allegations that have since emerged in the media. I can assure you that we provide a safe and trusted environment which safeguards everyone who we are in contact with, including staff, partners and beneficiaries.

Practical Action is a development agency, working in stable environments in fifteen countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. We help people living in poverty to get access to technology to enable them to improve their lives. Although we do respond to crises in the countries where we work, these responses are almost solely restricted to working with communities we already have long-term relationships with. The vast majority of our staff are nationals of the country they work in, and have remained with us for many years. Given the long-term nature of our work, it is vital that our staff build up trust with each other, our partners, and the communities we work with. This is core to our culture, our values, and our mission, and enables us to maintain a safe environment for our staff, partners and beneficiaries.

We continue to work very hard to ensure everybody upholds our values and we strive to embed this in the culture of our teams around the world. We have a staff code of conduct, which sets out the standards of behaviour that everyone is expected to abide by. We regularly review and monitor our HR policies and training to ensure that the people we work with are safe and our staff are working to expected values. We already had plans in place to strengthen staff training in the coming year as part of a programme of performance improvement, and will take the learning from the current situation to further strengthen our plans.

Our updated Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults policy was adopted by the Board of Trustees in June 2017 following scrutiny by the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. All staff must sign their understanding of, and agreement to this policy as a condition of continued employment. Partners must follow the same policies as a condition of receipt of funding from Practical Action.

Registered office: The Schumacher Centre, Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 9QZ, UK
T +44 (0)1926 634400 | F +44 (0)1926 634401 | E practicalaction@practicalaction.org.uk | W www.practicalaction.org

In 2017 we updated and adopted a new Complaints and Whistleblowing policy. All staff and partners have a confidential method to raise concerns or report misconduct to the highest level in Practical Action, no matter what has taken place, or where. We have specific phone numbers in every country to enable people to report misconduct anonymously and without fear, in local languages. People may also raise concerns or complain anonymously online.

Our Complaints and Whistleblowing policy sets out our clear processes for the reporting of serious incidents to the relevant authorities, and the protection of any victims of abuse. All whistleblowing incidents are reported routinely to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee along with reports of investigations and findings.

We have not had any substantiated case of serious sexual misconduct cases which result in staff dismissal or where we accepted a resignation from a staff member in the last ten years. To the best of our knowledge, there have not been any serious cases of sexual misconduct amongst any partner organisations. A small number of staff have been dismissed for small scale financial crimes during this period. We have written to the Charity Commission on two occasions in the past ten years to report serious incidents, neither of which were related to sexual misconduct.

We continue to actively encourage people to report incidents through the above mechanisms, and have used the recent events of the last weeks to highlight the importance of reporting. We will deal with any matters that come to our attention swiftly, and report any serious incidents to the relevant authorities.

We remain committed to strengthen our safeguarding mechanisms. We continue to invest in strengthening awareness of safeguarding issues amongst staff, partners and beneficiaries, and strengthening the right organisational culture. We are active members of BOND, and are working to share and learn from best safeguarding practice across the sector, and expect to participate in the planned passporting, or accreditation of humanitarian and development practitioners.

I hope that this assures you that we are taking all the right measures to assure safeguarding, and of a zero-tolerance to any breaches. If you have any further questions I would be more than happy to respond to them.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Smith Lomas
Chief Executive