



External Review of Safeguarding Arrangements at Trócaire – summary of report

GCPS Consulting, October 2019

Trócaire started a major push on enhancing its safeguarding systems in 2016. It is committed to ensuring that its safeguarding approaches are in line with best practice, as part of a strong accountability framework. In May 2019 terms of reference for External Safeguarding Oversight were drawn up. GCPS was commissioned to *“Undertake an initial review of Trócaire’s safeguarding arrangements and provide a report on the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements, identifying any gaps in the process and make recommendations for management consideration”*.

In the last two years many international development organisations have been reviewing their safeguarding measures. It is now a requirement that safeguarding is one of an organisation’s core risk management categories, placing responsibility and accountability at the highest level. Trócaire works collaboratively with the church, which gives a strong lead on safeguarding, particularly in relation to child protection.

The review was conducted against a framework based on international safeguarding standards. The framework considers what is necessary to ensure five key safeguarding elements: a safe environment and culture, safe people, safe programmes, safe response and safe communications. A review of documentation was carried out, followed by interviews with key personnel.

A clear and robust framework of policies and procedures was found to be in place to contribute to a safe environment and culture in Trócaire. A few clarifications and additions are recommended, but these are minor and are not a reflection on the rigour of the policy framework. The reviewers have found high levels of compliance with international safeguarding standards to ensure that risks are identified, addressed and mitigated. Governance and responsibility for safeguarding is clearly marked out in policies and procedures. Staff interviewed stated that they felt very well prepared compared with a few years ago, due to the Safeguarding team’s activities. People know who to speak to, and are able to challenge and raise issues. Comments included *‘It feels well run here’*. Where safeguarding issues and cases have arisen, they have been addressed with sensitivity and a thorough approach. Steps have been taken to ensure organisational learning from some difficult and time-consuming experiences.

The report proposes a number of recommendations which are intended to highlight further improvements to make safeguarding processes even more robust. They also reflect an acknowledgement of the considerable ongoing challenges ahead – supporting Trócaire’s all-important partners in effective safeguarding; clarifying the full meaning of safe programming; ensuring the streamlining of all safeguarding initiatives (including bringing together the current separation between the perceived “inward-facing” organisational focus and “outward-facing” programme focus, as mirrored in the different roles assigned to the OHR and IPAC committees); and keeping safeguarding at the forefront of all activities, including use of images in fundraising and media. At the same time there is the need to find ways of moving away from the current over-reliance on the Safeguarding team. This latter is likely to require extra resources and further devolution of responsibilities and is critical to the future sustainability of safeguarding in Trócaire’s vital and life-changing work at global level.