

BECOMING A SURVIVOR CENTERED ORGANIZATION – CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL'S EXPERIENCE



Introduction

Crossroads International is a leading Canadian volunteer cooperation agency which has been advancing equality for women and girls and eradicating poverty in some of the world's poorest countries in Africa for over 60 years. Crossroads invests in local partner organizations in nine countries who are best positioned to meet the needs of their communities. With them, we pilot innovative approaches, and to empower women and girls to become leaders and live free from violence. Every year Crossroads engages hundreds of experienced volunteers and staff North and South who apply their expertise locally to address poverty and inequality. The organization's 50+ employees are based in Canada, Senegal, Ghana and Tanzania, and Crossroads' volunteers fulfil over a 100 mandates per year.

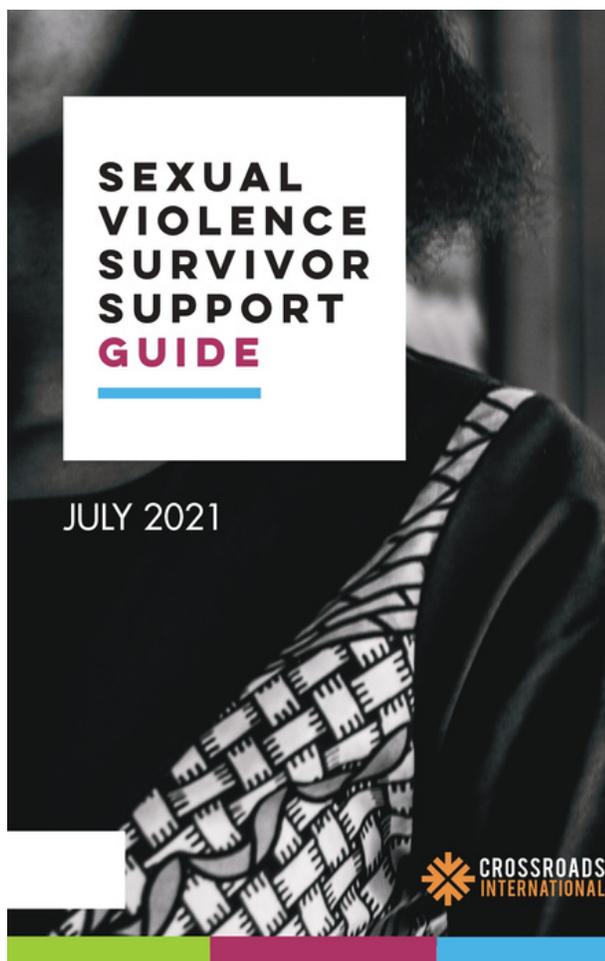
In October 2019, Crossroads launched an organizational Policy and Code of Conduct to mitigate, investigate and respond to sexual

exploitation and sexual abuse. These governing documents apply to employees, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, board members and partner organizations (referred to as stakeholders) and align with labour legislation in Ontario and Quebec, the Cooperation Canada Leaders' Pledge, the Global Affairs Canada eligibility requirement and encompass best practices at the national and international levels.

In April 2020, Crossroads launched its new Volunteer Cooperation Program (VCP) 2020-2027. The 2020-2027 VCP included a significant increase in volunteers, in the number of local partner organizations as well as an expansion into new countries of operation and growth in staff numbers. In this context, Crossroads was cognizant of the need to ensure that the approaches, tools and processes for the prevention, investigation

and response to sexual violence needed to be realigned to reflect the new organizational structure for the VCP. Additionally, Crossroads' staff, partner organizations and volunteers required capacity-building on the Sexual Violence Code of Conduct and Policy, and associated tools and processes needed to be created.

Anticipating organizational growth would result in an increase in VCP volunteers, staff, project participants and partner organization members reporting incidents of sexual violence, as well as seeking a range of support services and options, including, but not limited to physical health services, mental and emotional support services and legal options, the organization recognized a critical need to create a Sexual Violence Survivor Support Guide.



Crossroads' Sexual Violence Survivor Support Guide

Crossroads' support guide for survivors of sexual violence

represents a commitment on behalf of the organization to respond to sexual violence and increase equitable access to support and accompaniment for survivors of sexual violence where incidents happen as a direct result of Crossroads' work. It outlines a roadmap of organization-wide steps for providing support to survivors of sexual violence, detailing key principles, along with guidance for various stakeholders including an organigram of responsibility, a survivor support checklist, and an incident report template. More specifically, the guide covers principles of safety, confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination. It discusses how information management, reporting lines, medical and psychosocial care, and interactions with law enforcement should be handled, and highlights the importance of trust and flexibility in the process.

INTENTIONS BEHIND THE GUIDE

A first intention for Crossroads in the creation of the guide was to recognize and fulfill on our duty of care to all the people we work with, employ, and engage with. This duty is further amplified by the power imbalances inherent in our programs, projects, and activities.

As light has been shed on sexual violence within our sector, Crossroads wanted to demonstrate and deliver on its commitment to creating and maintaining a **respectful, trusted, and inclusive workplace** with programs and operations free from sexual violence globally.

The guide was created and rolled out to ensure proactive measures are in place to prevent and mitigate risk of sexual violence and do no harm in the communities we serve.



PROCESS

Over the course of approximately six months, Crossroads initiated and completed the development of the Sexual Violence Survivor Support Guide and rolled out relevant training to employees and volunteers. In fact, the guide was part of a larger consultancy which also included the creation of a Sexual Violence Investigations Guide, a Sexual Violence Incident Registry and Monitoring Framework, a Sexual Violence Prevention and Mitigation Guide for partner organizations, capacity-building and train the trainer sessions on the relevant guides for numerous audiences including leadership, staff and volunteers with designated responsibilities in relation to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), staff and volunteers with responsibility for volunteer and partner training. A final report providing an analysis of remaining organizational gaps in relation to PSEA as well as recommendations for sustainable continued practices was also provided.

The process began with the creation of a terms of reference document for the hiring of a consultant having expertise in the development of tools related to PSEA, specific to the international development sector. Candidate applications were reviewed, interviews held and once the consultant was hired, a workplan was agreed upon to develop the required tools and provide the necessary training. The consultant worked closely with the Manager, Human Resources and the Training and Security Officer to ensure the tools and training sessions reflected the organizational structure, culture and the needs of the multiple stakeholders involved. A budget of approximately \$40,000 was allocated for the entire consultancy. A simplified version of the consultant's workplan can be found in the table below.

Deliverable	Timing
Survivor Support Guide	May-June
Capacity-building sessions on Policy, Code of Conduct, Survivor Support Guide	July
Recommendations on Support Models (including costing)	Removed from workplan
Investigations Guide, Incident Registry, Monitoring Framework	August-October
Capacity-building sessions on Investigations Guide	December
Prevention & Mitigation Guide for Partner Organizations	November-December
Train the Trainer Sessions (for staff and volunteers to support Partner Organizations)	January - February
Final Report	March-April

A separate smaller consultancy was initiated to support the creation of individualized country guides detailing the legal, social, and cultural context pertaining to sexual violence and offering key recommendations and resources available to survivors in that country. The creation of the country guides budget was about \$2,000 for the consultancy (creating templates and overseeing the volunteer support advisor work), plus the three months spent by our infield volunteer support advisor doing research for the creation of the country guides.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the guide was developed, training was provided to all staff and volunteers in mandate via Zoom in separate English and French sessions. The training was mandatory and was delivered in two parts with the first workshop focusing on key concepts related to PSEA whereas the second workshop centered on survivor support.

Upon engagement with Crossroads, staff and volunteers are provided with the organization's Prevention of Sexual Violence Code of Conduct and accompanying policy, and, following the review of both documents, the code is signed and kept on file. A brief explanation of the organization's work in this area is provided to employees at that time and they later attend the two-part training. New volunteers receive the training as well as one of the mandatory pre-mandate training sessions. Annual refresher training is planned for all employees and longer-term volunteers. The guide and related resources are also made available to employees and volunteers on their relevant intranet sites.

Board members have been made aware of the organization's work related to PSEA but have not received training on survivor support. Training was delivered to pertinent board members on the organization's Sexual Violence Investigations Guide.

The consultant developed and led training targeted at volunteers and staff who work directly with partner organizations. These sessions outlined the key content required in an organization's policy and code of conduct on the prevention of sexual violence and facilitated discussion on how to support the creation of such documents at the partner level.

CHALLENGES

Not surprisingly, a key challenge was keeping the work on schedule with numerous and often emerging organizational priorities in play.

A second challenge was the context at the time of the work. The COVID-19 pandemic brought novel and evolving demands to the organization, including a significant impact on the ability to place volunteers and the modalities in which they could fulfil mandates. In addition, the previously mentioned growth with the new VCP meant many new staff members were familiarizing themselves with the organizational environment and learning their roles.

A third challenge is to share this new information with our field partners. We have favored a knowledge transfer approach through employees and volunteers in the field. By providing training of trainers (ToT), we have been able to build the capacity of people working with partners, as well as partners themselves. This approach also allows content to be customized to the country context and the needs of each partner. However, the main difficulty with this strategy is monitoring and compliance, which we are working on with the country and regional teams.

These challenges were also seen as opportunities to bring diverse perspectives, consider new ways of working and involve parties from many different contexts.

An ongoing challenge has been the continued advancement of the PSEA work within the organization. Multiple pieces are progressing simultaneously, however, a group for oversight has not yet been finalized.

The complexity of the organization and its work also brought challenges tied to working in several cultures, multiple languages, and time zones and with the interests of a broad variety of stakeholders to consider, from program participants to board members, partner organization staff to volunteers, and employees across five offices.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We learned that it was helpful in the beginning to have a variety of leaders and staff members involved to bring diverse and informed perspectives to the work and support the capacity building of newer staff. Discussions were in-depth and fruitful, offered excellent context for the eventual development of tools and incorporated an iterative, learning approach to ensure tools and trainings truly responded to organizational needs.

In the main, leadership support was present and vital to ensuring continued progress. However, with the roll-out of training, some sessions were better attended than others, and some teams had higher participation rates. While participation was mandatory for all staff, additional advance planning and communication would have been beneficial to ensure prioritization of the training and address challenges related to employee vacations, staff missions in African locations and connectivity issues.

A third learning is the benefit of having accountability for this work in the roles and job descriptions of those responsible. Tasks related to PSEA must be in the workplan of at least one staff member, and the support of a working group is vital to ensure the work is integrated across the organization and varied expertise is brought to decision-making.

Key Messages



Crossroads brought a survivor-centered approach to its Survivor Support guide. Survivors are recommended to speak to anyone with the organizational context in whom they have trust. This necessitates ensuring all staff are trained to respond to survivors of sexual violence from day one and strives to support survivors by having assistance provided by staff and volunteers of varied backgrounds, increasing the chances of reporting.

At the same time, an organizational chart has been created, disseminated, and incorporated in training sessions which documents the roles in the organization having responsibility for survivor support of various stakeholders, investigations, and reporting to Global Affairs Canada and to the Board of Directors. This recorded designation of responsibility is critical in ensuring that there is no lack of clarity impeding response if and when incidents occur.

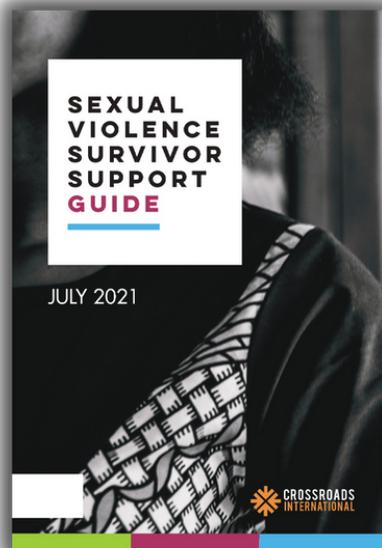
Crossroads' journey in conceiving of and creating tools for survivor support has been replete with openness, learning, and collaboration, and we are confident that these values will continue to serve the organization well as we further our endeavours in this domain. We are hopeful that our experience can be of benefit to other international cooperation and humanitarian organizations aiming to advance the extinction of sexual exploitation and abuse.

OUTCOME

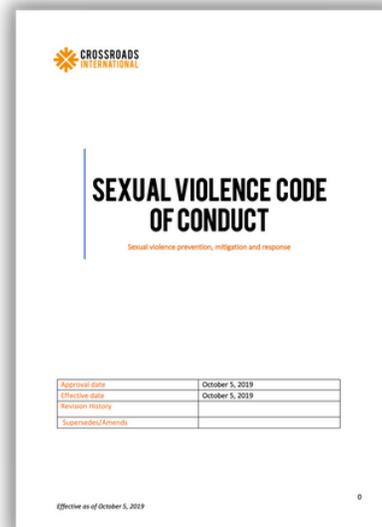
The organization looks forward to a time when structures will be in place to ensure 100% of staff and volunteers are consistently trained and knowledgeable about the prevention of sexual violence, and partner organizations also feel equipped to carry out such work.

RESOURCES

GUIDE



CODE OF CONDUCT



COUNTRY GUIDES

[GUIDE FOR COUNTRY SPECIFIC SEXUAL VIOLENCE INFORMATION](#)

[DATA COLLECTION TEMPLATE](#)

[BURKINA FASO](#)
[COTE D'IVOIRE](#)

[GHANA](#)
[SENEGAL](#)

[TOGO](#)
[UGANDA](#)

[ZAMBIA](#)