Cross-Funder Group on Safeguarding
Webinar Notes: Considering Your Approach

27 February 2019

I. Presentation: Diederik Slot, Regional Manager, Netherlands, Porticus

Background

Porticus is just starting their own safeguarding process. It has been a process which has taken a lot of work and time as the team is still learning. Porticus considers safeguarding as ensuring that in the work of their partners children and vulnerable adults can feel safe and protected against any harm. They have a separate portfolio on Child Protection, a set of programs and grants that ensure that children grow up safely in family environment and institutions. Porticus works with other funders to implement their safeguarding policy with grantees (NGOs and backbone organizations), ultimately impacting stakeholders in the communities working with children and vulnerable adults.

Porticus' Approach to Safeguarding

Porticus requires that each grantee design and implement a safeguarding framework; safeguarding policy is a precondition for granting for this population. They require a code of conduct, a risk assessment, procedures for safe recruitment and reporting incidents, staff training and an M&E plan and provide assistance through training and consultancies.

Safeguarding in Practice

Safeguarding policy implementation has been compulsory for all partners since 2017. There is a zero tolerance policy, however, there is also a temporary bypass procedure in the case of urgent grantmaking. They have created a network of in-house experts and assess grantees by looking at safeguarding results on the local level, reporting is seen as a learning mechanism. Lastly, Porticus provides ongoing training of all foundation staff on safeguarding.

 Pros and Cons

Pros

- Safeguarding framework creates awareness and is an instrument to combat powerlessness around abuse
- Is relevant for the most vulnerable populations
- Constant eek momentum activity

Cons

- Inclination to deny and have fear of bureaucratic processes
- Difficult to train stakeholders as it is timely and costly
- Partners do not always report out of fear for losing funding

Recommendations for Other Funders

It is recommended that other foundations have their own safeguarding policy of their own as we are role models. Everything should be in the interest of the child. This is a behavioral issue not administrative – what does it mean for change in reality. Learning should be the key element by all parties, including the donor. Covering up the abuse is as detrimental as the abuse itself. There is scarcity of evidence-based interventions.

II. Presentation: Steina Bjorgvinsdottir, Project Manager, Child Safeguarding and Organizational Development, Oak Foundation

Background

Oak Foundation sees protection and safeguarding of children is core to their mission and their trustees are fully behind their safeguarding work around human rights and child sexual abuse. In 2010 they started looking internally at their own safeguarding policies and put the first policy in place in 2012. This was revised in 2018 in addition to the creation of a designated staff position for this issue. In 2015, they started looking at their grantees' safeguarding policies. Transparency and openness has been key to their safeguarding work; they have posted all of this information on their website.

Critical Factors in Safeguarding Policy Development

They felt it important that they have their own safeguarding policy; show that the donor values the importance of having a safeguarding policy in place themselves. It is important that they ask more of grantees than just produce a paper but Oak wants to support their grantees to be safe organizations that protect children. They recognized some grantees would need extra financial support to be able to develop policies around safeguarding thus, they adopted a risk-based approach to safeguarding. Where risks for children are higher, they prioritized supporting grantees to put procedures into place.

Recognizing the diversity of grantees and contexts, Oak realized that they wouldn't be able to take this all on. Service providers have been identified in key geographic locations where Oak funds. These service providers ensure safeguarding is contextually relevant while adhering to Oak's overall safeguarding standards. This is still in the pilot phase and Oak hopes to work with other funders to better the safeguarding field.

Challenges

It is difficult to measure impact and success when considering large number of grantees and service providers in different locations. It is also difficult to know how much to require of grantees. They acknowledged early on that asking for a policy itself wasn't enough, however, asking for implementation of the policy is hard to measure. There is a lack of evidence to support the assumption that these policies and implementation work and what works best.

III. Presentation: Hayley Roffey, Partnerships Director, Global Fund for Children

Background

Global Fund for Children (GFC) sees themselves as a role model for child and youth organizations, thus they see their role in the need for a global safeguarding policy as essential although they are removed

from direct work with children themselves. GFC, like Oak and Porticus, believes they need to walk the walk in terms of safeguarding. GFC has had a designated safeguarding lead for the past year.

Critical Factors in GFC's Safeguarding Approach

GFC wants to ensure their funding and work doesn't harm children in their target communities and having a good safeguarding culture helps them to achieve their vision and mission. They are still very much new to this space in terms of safeguarding being approached as a whole by grantees. All staff, consultants, board members and trustees are trained and accountability is outlined within the organization. GFC recognizes their role as the donor and sees their grantees are the experts as they are the ones working directly with children. Safeguarding looks very different in various contexts – the word is even translated differently. It is important to create a culture where it is okay to make a mistake but the issue is lack of reporting. Staff need to feel comfortable to report, question and collaborate.

Successful Implementation

GFC works to ensure regional and local context is considered. The safeguarding lead works closely with regional directors to best tailor policy and training support and requirements to each context of local norms and customs. All safeguarding plans are for children and young people but take into account harm for local communities as a whole. Scenarios are the most powerful element of training programs. An annual implementation plan exists to help drive focused goals around safeguarding.

Challenges

Power dynamics can prove difficult in that grantees may not feel comfortable approaching funders. Additionally, it is difficult to know if policies are actually being implemented. Every partner completes an organizational capacity framework and this includes a question around safeguarding to gauge active implementation of safeguarding efforts. Board member training and updates are important to bring everyone on the same page. It is also important to engage staff and make sure they are convinced about the importance of safeguarding, even if they aren't working with children directly.

IV.   Q&A

Q: Would like to know more about Porticus' bypass procedure and what that includes.

A: If a partner organization really needs a grant urgently and doesn't have a policy in place yet, Porticus has the possibility to give the grant conditionally. The condition is that they will have a safeguarding implementation plan (e.g. recruitment, code of conduct, training) this will be put in place within six months. There is still discussion around this to see what happens if the partner doesn't deliver in time.

Q: Can you give examples of the types of things a non-UK/US grantee will have in their safeguarding policy?

A: (Oak) The content will remain the same and definitions should remain in the policy especially if the grantee is in a country that doesn't have legislation protecting children. Will look to see if there is a reporting framework within the policy, when, how, who and what related to reporting issues – there needs to be clear mandated requirements around reporting. Wouldn't want policy to be restricted by staff when

volunteers are engaged with children on the organization's behalf, for example. Any review of the policy needs to also be included as well.

Q: During the six month requirement which Porticus asks of bypass grantees, is there any support given?

A: Yes. They created a separate safeguarding budget to support partners' capacity development. Trainings work really well when they have several partners together for the training.

Q: How difficult has it been to find service providers to support partners in the field?

A: (Oak) It depends on the location. It was quite easy in the US, however, in other locations it was more difficult. Wanted to go with local organizations instead of INGOs and this was a bit difficult. Still struggling to find providers in Brazil (Portuguese language limitations).

Q: Is it possible for Oak to share the contact information of the consultants identified in East and Southern Africa?

A: Yes. We need to be mindful to not overwhelm them as they are still in the pilot stage. Oak hopes to ultimately build the wider field and will share once they have more experience. There is also a list of consultants and service providers on the Safeguarding community on the ARIADNE portal.

Q: Is there a toolkit which funders can use to see these new innovations?

A: The ARIADNE community set up around safeguarding is available to anyone interested. All key tools and resources exist on this platform. This list is growing and evolving so we welcome additions. It is important that funders share their tools as we have the same end goal of keeping children safe. It is also critical that organizations create their own policies as each situation is unique and each policy needs to fit within their unique context. UK-based Association for Charitable Foundations Safeguarding Framework is helpful in guiding work. This is also on the online community.

Q: I think that creating a safeguarding policy as a funder can be easier than asking grantees to implement policies particularly grantees working in environments where safeguarding is a fairly new concept. How do you balance what a grantee may produce / be able to implement with a potentially more rigorous policy signed off at the board level of a foundation?

A: Smaller NGOs may not always have the capacity to work with this in spite of assistance from outside sources. There should be awareness raised within the organization. New mindset is needed around vulnerable population they work with. Training is really important at the least. Risks, where to report, who to contact should all me clear. There is always some resistance in the beginning. It is important to understand the context in which the grantee is in and it is also important to note the capacity of the organization. There is no translation of the word safeguarding to Spanish or Arabic. Important to have partner drive this forward themselves. The paperwork is very crucial but grantees own understanding of safeguarding is more important than anything. Mainstreaming child protection into other sectors is another way of using their language to touch on issues of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Q: How do other foundations deal with reporting systems and connect this with local authorities responsible for taking action?

A: This isn't clear for all partners of Porticus that they need to report yet. In new grant agreements it is indicated.

V.   Next Steps

A survey among engaged and participating foundations will be developed and shared following the webinar.

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