

International Development Committee

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

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From Stephen Twigg MP, Chair

Stephanie Draper
Chief Executive
Bond
8 All Saints Street
London, N1 9RL

13 June 2019

Follow-up to IDC evidence session on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for your letter of 22 May clarifying Bond's position on the role of whistleblowing, following the IDC's evidence session on sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector on 7 May. I would also like to extend my congratulations to you on your appointment as Bond Chief Executive earlier this year. I hope you are settling in to your new role.

The Committee does have some concerns about the approach that the Bond NGO working groups appear to have taken on whistleblowing. We agree with your assertion that "whistleblowing is a key component of an effective suite of reporting and accountability tools". Our expectation, therefore, was that whistleblowing would be addressed as part of the working group's efforts to improve reporting mechanisms. We are concerned that when you say, "the working group prioritised reporting and complaints mechanisms more broadly", this means that whistleblowing has been downplayed in its importance rather than recognised as one of the reporting mechanisms that will facilitate complaints, bring safeguarding issues to light, and include a process for appeal to ensure that concerns are dealt with appropriately. Reports of exploitation and abuse may come from victims and survivors, but they may also come from witnesses, advocates, community members or from staff and volunteers. If victims and survivors need the support of an intermediary to raise concerns, it is important that such people are also protected from retaliation. All those who report abuse – whether they are themselves a victim or speaking on behalf of one – need to be able to do so safely in a fair process which respects the rights of those who report and of those who are accused.

You wrote that the working group did not think an audit of whistleblowing practices was necessary in addition to the Violence Against Women and Girls Helpdesk Research Report on the "Effectiveness of Whistleblowing Approaches". We would be grateful for some information on what NGOs have done to change or improve their approaches to whistleblowing on the basis of this research.

In the evidence session on 7 May, there was also some discussion on what NGOs had been doing to improve complaints mechanisms and enable more reporting from beneficiaries. We would like to know how many of Bond's members have functioning complaints mechanisms, what efforts have been made to improve complaints mechanisms since February 2018, and how the impact of those improvements is being measured. Does Bond intend to measure the numbers of reports received by its member organisations as an indicator of whether efforts to improve complaints mechanisms are working?

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen Twigg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Twigg MP
Chair of the Committee