

Course: Introduction to Safeguarding in the International Development Sector

Week 2: Different forms of harm – definitions and indicators

Main forms of Harm

1. **Physical abuse** results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction. There may be single or repeated incidents. Examples include smacking, hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating, or deliberately making someone ill.
2. **Emotional abuse** includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child or vulnerable adult can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies. Acts of emotional abuse may include restriction of movement, patterns of belittling, denigrating, scapegoating, threatening, scaring, discriminating, ridiculing, or other non-physical forms of hostile or rejecting treatment.
3. **Sexual abuse** is the involvement of a child or vulnerable adult in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child or vulnerable adult is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent, or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. The activity is intended to gratify the needs of the perpetrator. It includes being touched in a way that is inappropriate; being forced to look at sexual pictures or videos; being forced to watch someone do something sexual; being forced to make sexually explicit pictures or videos and have them shared through technology; made to do something sexual to someone that may feel uncomfortable or wrong. Perpetrators may sexually groom children or vulnerable adults by enlisting the trust of caregivers to enable easy access to the child or vulnerable adult.
4. **Sexual or commercial exploitation** includes using children or vulnerable adults to work or perform other activities for the benefit of others where the perpetrator profits monetarily, socially, politically, or in other ways where there is an exchange of gifts, cash, or in kind for sex. This includes, but is not limited to, child labour, forced recruitment into armed groups, prostitution, trafficking, and pornography. These activities put at risk physical or mental health, education (e.g. depriving them from schooling or combining school with long hours at work in the case of children), moral, or social-emotional development (e.g. early or forced marriage).
5. **Neglect or negligent treatment** is the inattention or omission on the part of the caregiver to provide for the development of the child or vulnerable adult in all spheres such as health, education, emotional development, nutrition, shelter, and safe living conditions. This includes the failure to properly protect children and vulnerable adults from harm as much as is feasible.

Other sub-types of abuse:

- **Traditional harmful practices** are practices based on cultural beliefs and values that have harmful consequences to children or vulnerable adults (e.g. early or forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour-killing, scarring).
- **Spiritual abuse** is using text from spiritual books or quoting scripture as an excuse to perpetrate abuse and violence or to instil fear in children and vulnerable adults. It includes using spiritual authority to control or manipulate others.
- **Modern slavery** includes the crimes of human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices such as servitude, forced labour, forced and/or early marriage, the sale and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults, and debt bondage.

- **Financial and material abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation, and pressure in connection to wills, property, inheritance, and financial transactions, or inciting a child or vulnerable adult to do any of these things on another individual's behalf. It may also involve the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions, and benefits belonging to children or vulnerable adults.
- **Domestic abuse or intimate partner violence** is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse of adults, by intimate partners, previous intimate partners, or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

The following forms of harm may happen in the workplace, but not exclusively:

- **Discriminatory abuse** exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunities to some groups or individuals. It can be a feature of any form of abuse of an adult, but can also be motivated because of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, class, culture, language, race or ethnic origin. It can result from situations that exploit a person's vulnerability by treating the person in a way that excludes them from opportunities they should have as equal citizens, for example, education, health, justice and access to services and protection.
- **Bullying** is behaviour directed either against an individual or a group of individuals that creates a threatening or intimidating environment undermining the confidence and self-esteem of the recipient(s). It could be an abuse or misuse of power that humiliates or injures the recipient(s).
- **Harassment** means unwelcomed verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct that is related to a person's characteristics, whether they are actual or perceived, which include: age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, verbal or physical conduct or gesture of a sexual nature, or any other behaviour of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another. Sexual harassment is particularly serious when it interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Sexual harassment may be unintentional and may occur outside the workplace and/or outside working hours. While typically involving a pattern of behaviour, it can take the form of a single incident. Sexual harassment may occur between or amongst persons of the opposite or same sex.