

FISCAL YEAR 2021

GLOBAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT



**MERCY
CORPS**

Global Safeguarding Report FY 2021 Message from the CEO

In my first year as CEO, I have witnessed significant progress towards our commitment to ensuring physical and psychological safety within our teams and our programs — much of which is captured in Mercy Corps' Global Safeguarding Report for Fiscal Year 2021. Mercy Corps has published this annual report for the past three years to provide transparency around the number of allegations we receive, the resolution of investigations into those allegations, and our ongoing efforts to strengthen our prevention and response to safeguarding incidents.

This year, we confronted a terrible chapter of our history with the release of the independent report into the abhorrent actions of Mercy Corps' co-founder. We take full responsibility for our past and are committed to forging a sector-wide culture where harm is prevented and where survivors are heard and receive the support they need.

As we know, there is no finish line when it comes to safeguarding — it requires continuous effort and commitment on the part of everyone who works with us or on our behalf. We know that even more work is needed to ensure that our sector is safe and free of exploitation and abuse of any kind. Mercy Corps remains deeply and completely committed to being an accountable, survivor-focused agency where everyone is included and treated with dignity and respect.

In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of how we strengthened and restructured our ethics and safeguarding systems, the FY2021 Report also outlines our ongoing priorities and goals for FY2022. We will be vigilant about the physical and psychological safety of our team members, program participants, and the communities where we work.

By transparently sharing our efforts, our progress, and the challenges we still face in these pages, we intend to contribute to continuous improvement not only for Mercy Corps, but also for the broader aid and development sector.

With gratitude,



Tjada D'Oyen McKenna
Mercy Corps CEO

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INTRODUCTION

We are a global team of humanitarians working together

NOVEMBER 2021

Our mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty, and oppression by helping people build secure, productive, and just communities. In more than 40 countries around the world, over 5,600 Mercy Corps team members work side by side with people living through poverty, disaster, violent conflict, and the acute impacts of climate change. We're committed to creating global change through local impact — 85 percent of our team members are from the countries where they work.

We are deeply committed to the safety and well-being of the communities, program participants, partners, and team members across the countries in which we work. We strive continuously to create an inclusive and safe operating environment, where everyone is treated with care, dignity and respect.

We are committed to transparency and began publicly sharing data around our safeguarding allegations and investigations in 2019.¹ We will continue to share data and updates on our safeguarding progress through regular publications of our Global Safeguarding Report,² always prioritizing respect for and confidentiality of survivors.

¹ We consider safeguarding allegations to include allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, internal sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment), child safeguarding and human trafficking. For our full policies, see our website.

² Our Global Safeguarding Reports can be found on our website.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This publication outlines Mercy Corps' safeguarding strategy, status updates, and incident-related data for fiscal year 2021 (FY21).³ The report is divided into three main sections: our safeguarding commitment, governance and leadership, and our safeguarding approach. We provide an overview of our progress in FY21 and our priorities for FY22.

Detailed data on our case numbers is provided in the "Reporting and Response" section. In FY21, we received a total of 65 safeguarding allegations against Mercy Corps team members or partners. As of September 30, 2021, 61 of these cases have been closed: 22 were substantiated, 29 unsubstantiated, and 10 were inconclusive.

Safeguarding is a critical priority for Mercy Corps and we continue to take important steps to strengthen both our prevention of, and response to, safeguarding violations. Although we have made significant progress, we know much work remains to ensure that our sector is safe and free of exploitation and abuse of any kind.



³ Fiscal year 2021 includes the period from July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021.

OUR COMMITMENT

Any form of abuse, exploitation or trafficking directly contradicts the principles upon which our humanitarian work is based and can cause deep and lasting harm to children or adults who experience it. Mercy Corps has zero tolerance for abuse or exploitation and is committed to ensuring physical and psychological safety within our teams and our programs. We link safeguarding closely to agency initiatives around localization and internal diversity, equity and inclusion. We know that diverse, representative teams, where people feel comfortable speaking up and speaking out, are fundamental to safeguarding. We also understand we must continue to do more to engage and consult with communities where we work, and with local organizations that support and elevate the voices of survivors.

Safeguarding will always be a key priority and requires continuous effort on the part of everyone who works on our behalf. We are dedicated to prioritizing this effort, to doing all we can to prevent misconduct from occurring, ensuring the availability of safe and secure reporting pathways, and employing a survivor-centered response should an incident occur.

Over the past year, we have continued to examine our history and come to terms with the abuses perpetrated by our late co-founder. The results of the independent investigation into the extent of this abuse and the response of the Mercy Corps Board in 1992 and 1993 when the organization was first made aware of the abuse, can be found on our *website*. We are committed to doing all that we can to address this legacy and to ensure that anyone approaching the organization with allegations regarding exploitation or abuse is treated in a survivor-centered manner with the utmost respect and dignity. We acknowledge the strength and courage of survivors and thank all those who have helped us become a more ethical, safe, and effective organization by reporting their experiences or concerns.

SAFEGUARDING GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Mercy Corps has made significant changes around safeguarding and ethics over the past year. Our new CEO, Tjada D'Oyen McKenna, started in October 2020 and has prioritized the restructuring and resourcing of our ethics and safeguarding functions. We now have a stand-alone Ethics and Compliance Department, independent of both the legal and human resource departments. The department is led by a Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer (CECO) reporting directly to the CEO and to the Board of Directors. Steve Linick started as Mercy Corps' first CECO on October 15, 2020. He previously served as Inspector General for the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) between 2013 and June 2020. He brings extensive experience providing oversight for large entities and leading sensitive and complex investigations. As Inspector General, Steve was responsible for identifying operational risk within the Department of State and the USAGM, assessing the sufficiency of internal controls, and conducting investigations of waste, fraud, mismanagement, and misconduct.

The Ethics and Compliance Department oversees implementation of an ethics program designed to prevent, detect, and respond to illegal, unethical, or improper conduct and promote a culture of integrity and compliance. The Department includes the Intake and Investigations Unit, which is responsible for responding to all reports of ethics violations including fraud, corruption, safeguarding misconduct, and human resources (HR) complaints relating to the code of conduct policies. A dedicated Intake Coordinator now manages our hotlines and a Case Manager for Safeguarding oversees a team of trained sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) regionally-based lead Investigators and in-country Co-Investigators. We employ separate teams of investigators who respond to fraud and HR code of conduct allegations. In May 2020, the

safeguarding prevention team was moved from the People Team and consolidated within the Ethics and Compliance Department. This consolidation allows for greater efficiencies, independence, and integration of safeguarding prevention and response.

After a comprehensive governance review, significant changes have also been made to our organizational governance structure. A newly-established Board committee, namely, the Joint Ethics and Safeguarding Committee, has been assigned responsibility for safeguarding oversight at the governance level.

OUR SAFEGUARDING APPROACH

We define safeguarding as our responsibility to ensure team members, operations and programs do not harm those we work with or put vulnerable populations at risk of abuse or exploitation. Safeguarding at Mercy Corps is an umbrella term covering sexual exploitation and abuse of children or adults, physical or emotional abuse or neglect of children, human trafficking, and internal sexual misconduct.⁴ Underpinning all of our safeguarding work is a commitment to a survivor-centered approach. The safety, well-being, and perspectives of survivors are at the core of our efforts.

PREVENTION

Our fundamental safeguarding goal is to avoid any harm to our team members, participants or community members—to use every means possible to deter individuals from committing offenses, to prevent opportunities to cause harm, and to identify risk and mitigate it appropriately. To do this, we work to integrate safeguarding throughout our programs and functions. Key prevention priorities detailed in this section include: effective safeguarding policies; well-resourced and trained safeguarding expertise; safe recruitment, hiring and onboarding; capacity building and awareness raising; third party accountability, and ensuring appropriate resources to mainstream safeguarding. Underpinning all of this is our commitment to creating a diverse, inclusive, safe, and accountable agency culture. We strive internally and in our programming to minimize inequitable power dynamics, address the systems that perpetuate discrimination and abuse of power, and prioritize a culture of integrity and accountability.

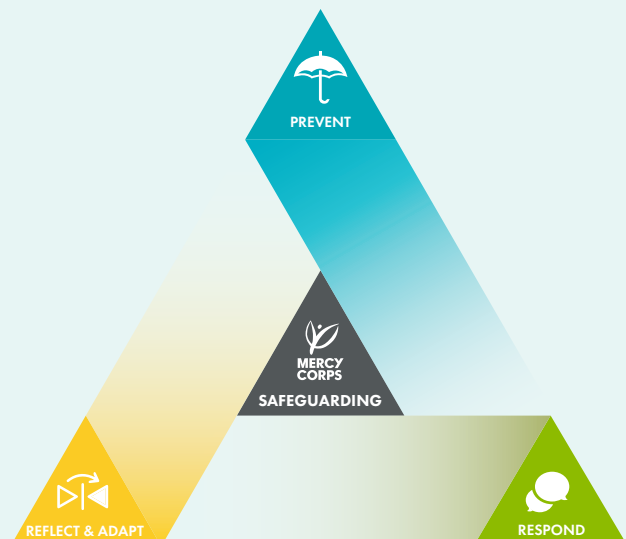
⁴ For definitions of these and other terms see Annex A on page 15.

Effective and Comprehensive Safeguarding Policies

Our safeguarding policies are living documents that we review and update regularly. We strive to ensure they are clear and effective, reflect the needs and voices of survivors, and are in alignment with global best practices and donor requirements. Our Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Participants and Community Members (PSEA), internal Sexual Misconduct, and Child Safeguarding Policies were updated in FY20, and again this year, to simplify language, clarify reporting obligations, and more clearly articulate our commitment to donor and regulator requirements and global safeguarding standards, including the 2019 Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.⁵

Our approach is founded on three broad pillars:

- › **Prevent**, detect, and deter through strong policies, safe hiring practices, onboarding, training and effective management, and mainstreaming safeguarding into our culture and throughout our programs;
- › A robust and trusted **response** system with a variety of safe and accessible, reporting channels and timely, thorough, survivor centered investigations.
- › Using **data**, lessons learned from each investigation, and evolving sector best practice, to **reflect and adapt** in order to continually strengthen our safeguarding systems.



In FY22, we are planning a comprehensive review of our safeguarding policies and core safeguarding standards. The review will be conducted by an external organization with particular expertise in PSEA, child safeguarding, and human trafficking/anti-trafficking. Our goal is to ensure that our policies are as robust and clear as possible, function coherently together, meet or exceed all donor requirements, and are at the forefront of sector best practice.

Trained Global and In-Country Safeguarding Expertise

Ensuring we have sufficient safeguarding expertise and support, both at the global level and in all of our locations, has been a key priority throughout FY20 and FY21.

Our global team now includes a Director of Safeguarding reporting directly to the CECO, a Senior Program Officer, Program Officer, a Mercy Corps Europe Safeguarding and Inclusion Advisor, and a Partnership Accountability Advisor, who focuses particularly on strengthening our approach to safeguarding with partners. We are currently recruiting a Safeguarding Advisor to support the development of a more coherent safeguarding proposal and program design process.

In addition to the global safeguarding team, we have trained in-country Safeguarding Focal Points and Champions who engage directly with teams and programs at a local level. Focal Points and Champions work with their teams to raise awareness, deliver face-to-face⁶ training, and build trust and confidence in our systems and reporting mechanisms.

⁵ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-six-core-principles-relating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>.

They are trained in survivor-centered principles and are available as a direct reporting channel for individuals with concerns. Focal Points and Champions create and maintain a database of community resources for survivors, assist in liaising with survivors when needed, and serve as a referral pathway for medical, psycho-social or other support.

Over the course of this past fiscal year, we were able to add significantly to the number of trained and active in-country support staff bringing the total from 86 up to 181 as shown in Figure 1, below.

Safeguarding Capacity, Building and Awareness Raising

We know that to effectively build safeguarding capacity, training must be mandatory, ongoing, contextual, and provide opportunities to ask questions. We believe such training is best delivered live, by someone from the local context. This is one of the key reasons we continue to invest in the local safeguarding support roles described above. Safeguarding Champions and Focal Points are tasked with delivering at least one training per month, ensuring that knowledge remains fresh and that new team members are reached. These awareness raising sessions are anchored in relevant program and cultural contexts and Champions and Focal Points are available to answer questions in group settings or individually. Training is delivered in person where possible and remotely where COVID-19 circumstances or other travel restrictions dictate.

Another key priority this fiscal year was continuing targeted safeguarding training and capacity building for country and headquarters-based leaders. Within the last year our Executive Team, Country and Regional Directors, European Senior Leadership Team and Humanitarian Leadership Response Team received externally-facilitated safeguarding training sessions. These trainings built capacity in the following areas: knowledge and practice around Mercy Corps' safeguarding policies and processes specific to each attendee's role; best practices and procedures for working with

MERCY CORPS ACTIVE IN-COUNTRY SUPPORT BY REGION

GLOBAL TOTALS	
Champions	119
Focal Points	35
Co-investigators	27

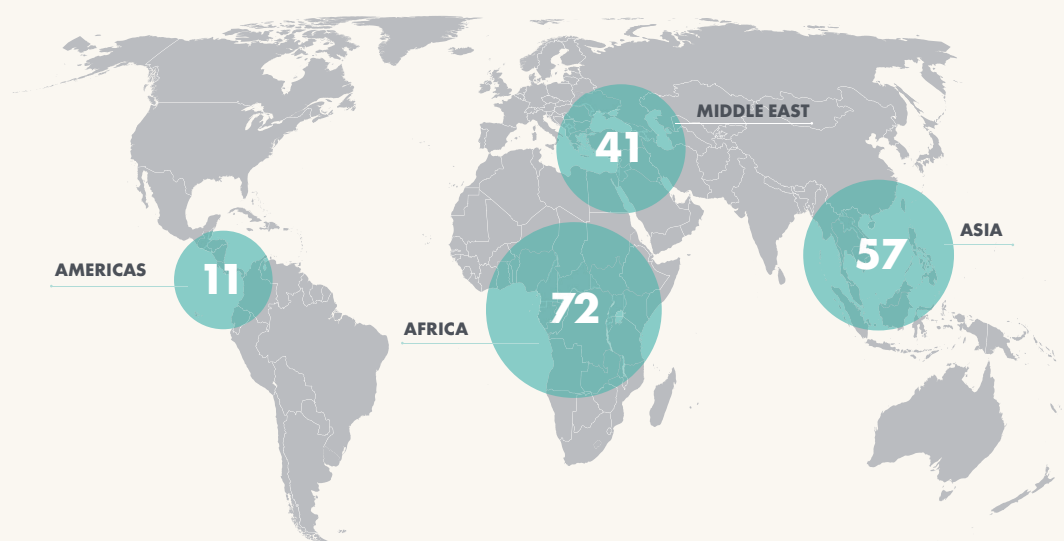


Figure 1. The total number of in-country safeguarding support staff broken down by region and type. Definitions of each role type can be found in Annex A. See Annex C for corresponding program size and the reach of each region.

⁶ Where in-person sessions are not available or safe due to COVID-19, remote, live sessions using alternative streaming methods are used.

survivors; investigations of sexual exploitation and abuse; referral/reporting cases to local services and authorities; and safeguarding risk assessments. Ongoing leadership training sessions are planned for FY22, including for the Program Quality Team, the Technical Support Unit, the People Team, and in-country Senior Management teams.

In addition to training, we employ a regular cadence of ongoing safeguarding and ethics communications across the agency, in a variety of languages, to ensure that team members are aware that leadership prioritizes safeguarding, that they trust and understand our safeguarding processes and know the importance of speaking out if they see something concerning, and can easily access reporting channels. These communications include video presentations, live streams, informal question and answer sessions, newsletters, emails, and quarterly updates. We recently launched a workplace video series called “Let’s Talk Ethics” in which challenging or complex ethics issues are discussed in an accessible manner for the benefit of team members.

Safe Recruitment, Hiring, and Onboarding

We are committed to preventing abusers from moving throughout our sector. We have signed onto the Inter-Agency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme, a collaborative effort of over 100 peer organizations to prevent known perpetrators of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment from moving to different organizations across the sector. We continue to strengthen our recruitment and hiring processes to ensure that we take all appropriate steps to keep people who have committed harm, or may

have a propensity to do so, out of our organization. All Mercy Corps position descriptions include safeguarding language and applicants must affirm that they have no substantiated allegations or investigations against them. We incorporate safeguarding questions into interviews and reference checks and continue to train hiring managers and recruiting personnel around safeguarding. Team members sign our code of conduct upon hire and must complete mandatory code of conduct training during their first 30 days of employment and annually thereafter. These interactive trainings include specific units on our different safeguarding policies. In order to pass, participants must demonstrate an understanding of expected standards of behavior, reporting obligations, and how to report concerns.

Third Party Accountability

We hold our partners to the same safeguarding standards as our team members and are committed to ensuring that all those with whom we work understand our safeguarding commitments and agree to abide by them. We endeavor to work alongside our partners to support local capacity around safeguarding prevention and response, ensuring that the needs of survivors are at the forefront. In January 2021, we hired a Safeguarding Partnership Accountability Advisor to focus specifically on strengthening safeguarding processes with partners. We have developed a more robust, comprehensive process and series of tools for vetting and monitoring our subrecipient organizations. We are currently piloting this approach in various regions and with various types of partners with a goal to roll it out across the organization in FY 22/23.

Resources to Mainstream Safeguarding Agency-Wide

Ensuring safeguarding is integrated into the design and execution of our projects and programs is a key priority. This work overlaps with the efforts of our protection and gender teams who work to improve the safety, dignity, and inclusive access of individuals and communities where we work. This year we added more clearly defined safeguarding risk analysis and budget considerations to our minimum program standards via our Program Management Policy. We are in the process of articulating Core Safeguarding Standards applicable across the agency and are working to recruit another team member specifically to support us in integrating safeguarding budgets more thoroughly into our program proposals and ensuring that safeguarding is taken into account throughout the life cycle of all projects.

Culture Building and Gender, Diversity and Inclusion

Our Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (GDI) and safeguarding initiatives are closely intertwined. An organizational culture that safeguards everyone who comes into contact with it—whether team members, partners, program participants, or members of the community we work with—can only be achieved when equity, inclusion and belonging are embedded in that culture. We believe that the work led by the GDI team is at the foundation of successful organizational safeguarding. Only on that strong foundation can we ensure everyone who interacts with Mercy Corps does so in a safe, respectful, and dignified way.

We have an agency-wide internal training program designed to help teams become learning oriented, adaptive, and high-performing by building a strong foundation of trust and psychological safety. This 12-week long training supports managers and their teams in utilizing practices that empower teams, build trust, demonstrate care, and foster inclusion.

Our GDI initiatives support our safeguarding efforts by:

- › Ensuring that our teams are more representative of the diverse communities where we work;
- › Supporting our teams globally to examine power and mitigate factors that lead to inequitable power dynamics through a comprehensive GDI diagnostic process;
- › Reforming Mercy Corps' organizational practices and policies to foster a more equitable and inclusive working environment for all team members, particularly those from historically-excluded groups.

⁷ Team members may also use a community accountability reporting mechanism if they choose and community members or participants are welcome to use the Integrity Hotline or other reporting avenues.

⁸ See Annex D for Mercy Corps' nine CARM minimum standards.

Reporting and Response

We have significantly strengthened our safeguarding reporting, response and investigation systems in FY21, including the complete restructuring of our investigation unit.

Reporting Mechanisms

Trusted, accessible and well-understood reporting channels are fundamental to safeguarding. We have continued to invest in and strengthen our internal and external reporting mechanisms, providing a variety of options for individuals to report concerns in ways that feel comfortable for them.

For community members and program participants, we provide accessible, locally relevant Community Accountability Reporting Mechanisms (CARMs).⁷ CARM implementation has been a key agency priority over the past two years and locally relevant, contextual CARM systems are now operational across our locations and programs. Our global CARM Policy outlines nine minimum standards for community accountability and clear requirements for partners.⁸ All Mercy Corps country programs and entities are required to meet the standards within this policy to ensure a consistent, quality approach to community accountability while maintaining responsiveness to community needs and perspectives.



We provide a number of internal reporting channels to ensure that team members have an option that works for them, in the language of their choosing. Team members may report directly to the Mercy Corps Integrity Hotline via email or the Integrity Hotline platform,⁹ which provides

a simple, multilingual end-user experience and allows for confidential or anonymous communication between reporters and investigators by phone, text, or email. Team members may also report safeguarding concerns directly to CARM, management, Human Resources, or Safeguarding Focal Points, who are required to report immediately to the Integrity Hotline. In FY21, our Safeguarding Focal Points were increasingly utilized as reporting avenues, demonstrating that they are successfully building team member awareness and trust, particularly for those who prefer to discuss their concerns in person with someone from their context.

We are aware from research in the sector,¹⁰ that many incidents of exploitation and abuse remain unreported and that survivors face significant barriers to reporting in many of our contexts. Our CARM systems are being utilized to report safeguarding concerns in some areas more than others. We know we have ongoing work to do to ensure that program participants and community members are aware of and trust our reporting mechanisms and that survivors in particular feel safe reporting. Deeper consultation and engagement with communities is a key priority for this fiscal year.

Incident Response and Investigations

We are committed to a timely, thorough, and survivor-centered response to all safeguarding allegations, and due process for subjects of complaint. We have made significant investments in our incident response capacity over the past two years. Our Intake and Investigations (I&I) Unit became functional in FY21, consolidating all response and investigative responsibilities into a single team within the Ethics and Compliance Department, reporting to the CECO. The I&I Unit optimizes case management strategies and is dedicated to a survivor-centered approach. A diverse, multilingual team of trained sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment investigators are based in regional hubs and report to our Safeguarding Case Manager.

The safeguarding investigation team is supported by our in-country Co-Investigators (See Figure 1, above).¹¹ Safeguarding Co-Investigators are an important part

⁹ The Integrity Hotline utilizes Convercent, a third party platform with 24/7 access and a flexible set of intake channels including web, phone, and mobile texting, accessible in multiple languages.

¹⁰ See for example: Safeguarding Resource Support Hub, Summary: Barriers to reporting on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment (SEAH). ¹¹ For cases involving Executive Team or Board members, we engage external expert investigators. We also do not interview children without engaging an appropriate expert.

of our investigative response and play a vital role in our ability to offer survivor-centered support and timely response in-country when needed. Co-Investigators undergo SEA specific investigations training and work under the direction of lead investigators. They engage with Safeguarding Focal Points to make connections between survivors and the support services identified in our community resource maps. Co-Investigators have proven to be an invaluable resource during the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, enabling us to manage remote investigations with on the ground support.

In addition to the restructuring of the investigative function, the Ethics and Compliance Department has strengthened investigative procedures and oversight. We have standardized donor and regulator notification processes, clarified procedures for conducting investigations, and strengthened our safeguarding case closure process to ensure follow-up on corrective measures. We have hired a dedicated Intake Coordinator and developed standard operating procedures to improve intake and case processing for reports of misconduct through our Integrity Hotline.

These improvements and investments in our response function are proving effective. In FY20, our average time to close a case was 144 days. In FY21, the average case closure period was reduced to 97 days. Our goal is to close cases within 90 days, although our commitment to a thorough and survivor sensitive process sometimes necessitates a longer time period. In addition, security issues and access challenges related to Covid-19 have caused some investigative delays.

Response and Incident-Related Data for FY21

In FY21, Mercy Corps received a total of 65 safeguarding related allegations against our team members or partners. We also received one report that we referred externally to a non-partner peer organization. Of the 65 safeguarding allegations, 12 were against Mercy Corps partners and 53 against Mercy Corps team members, including daily workers and volunteers. Three of the allegations involved

conduct of team members at other organizations, prior to their engagement with Mercy Corps.¹² A total of 10 allegations involved child survivors (seven non-sexual child safeguarding cases and three sexual exploitation/abuse cases).

In all allegations involving an identified survivor, we offered support to those survivors regardless of whether they wished to be involved in an investigation and whether or not the allegation involved a Mercy Corps team member or partner. Types of support provided included medical, psycho-social, transportation, emergency housing and support in accessing legal services.

As of September 30, 2021, 61 of the FY21 cases have been resolved. Two cases are suspended due to political and/or security circumstances which make investigation impossible. Two cases remain under investigation.

Of the 61 closed investigations, 22 were substantiated, 29 were unsubstantiated, and 10 were inconclusive.¹³ Figure 2 below details yearly reporting trends. The substantiated cases included five against partners and 17 against team members. All substantiated cases resulted in disciplinary action, including 16 terminations of employment or partner contract and three cases where the subject of the complaint had left Mercy Corps prior to termination. In all instances, team members became ineligible for rehire and partners became ineligible for renewal of contract. Their ineligibility status will be shared with prospective employers, including through the Interagency Misconduct Disclosure Scheme. In all substantiated cases involving exploitation or abuse of a participant or community member, the team member or partnership was terminated.

Of the 22 total substantiated cases, 11 involved internal sexual misconduct (team member to team member) of varying degrees, including undisclosed relationships. Seven cases involved sexual exploitation or abuse. Three cases involved child safeguarding. One case involved sexual misconduct of a staff member while employed at a prior organization (we characterize these incidents as "historical SEAH"). Figure 3 below breaks down the substantiated cases by type and fiscal year.

¹² In these cases we are not able to investigate the underlying conduct, but rather the existence of substantiated allegations at other organizations or with law enforcement. Where substantiated allegations or open investigations are found, the employee is terminated.

¹³ See Annex A for case resolution definitions.

TOTAL CLOSED CASES AND CONCLUSIONS BY FISCAL YEAR

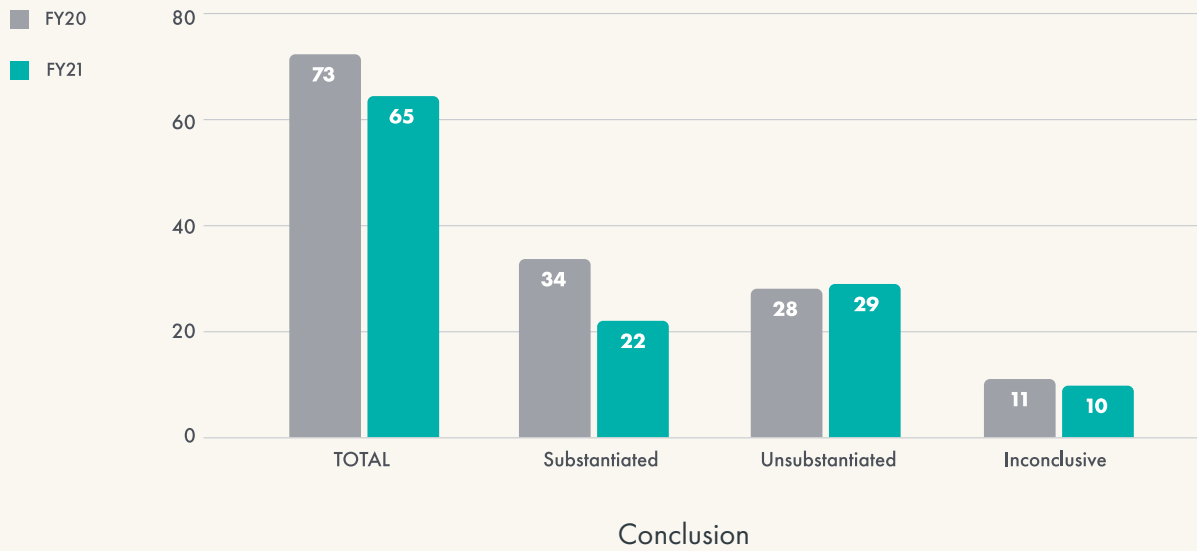


FIGURE 2: Total number of closed cases for fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 broken down by the case conclusions. For definitions of each case type listed, see Annex A.

TOTAL SUBSTANTIATED CASES WITH CASE TYPE AND SUBJECT OF COMPLAINT TYPE BY FISCAL YEAR

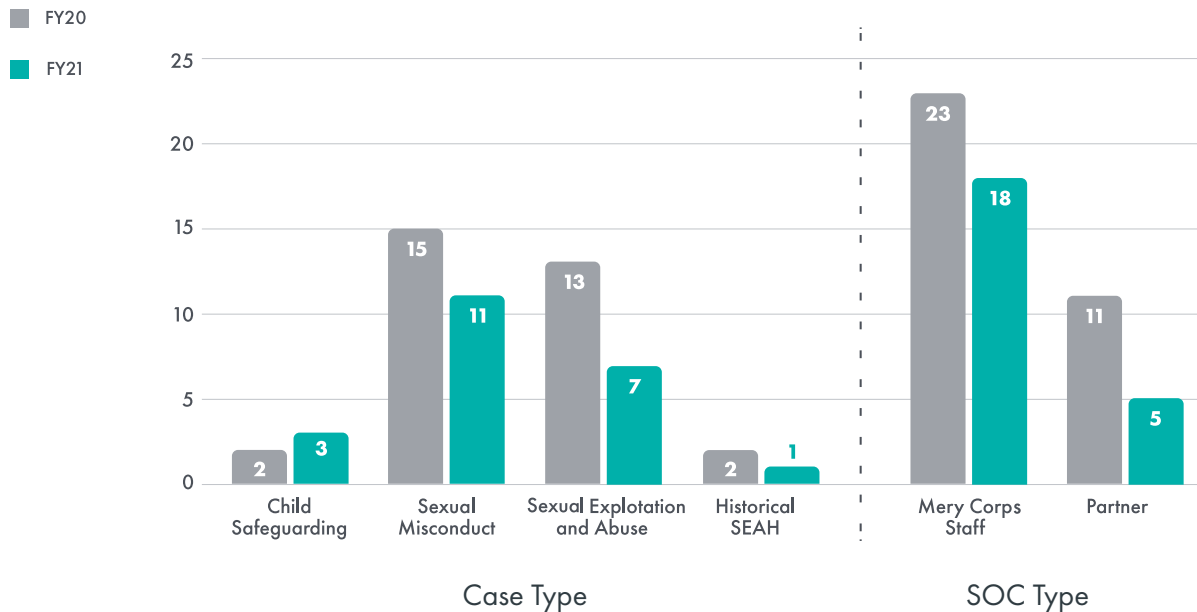


FIGURE 3: Total number of substantiated cases in fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2021 broken down by case type as well as subject of complaint (SoC) type. Definitions for case type and subject of complaint type can be found in Annex A.

Reflections on Fiscal Year 2021 Data

After rising in the previous several years, case numbers dropped this year by about 11%, from 73 allegations in FY20 to 65 in FY21. It is too early to say whether this is the result of prevention efforts, or due to other factors such as programming shifts to COVID-19 response, increased difficulty in reporting due to travel restrictions or isolation, or other factors related to the particularly challenging economic and social conditions in many countries over the past year. We remain concerned about the locations where we receive few to no reports and will focus on raising further community awareness in those places this year. We know we have work to do to ensure that every community member where we work is aware of and trusts our reporting channels. We have strengthened our safeguarding guidance around CARM community sensitization, and with added in-country safeguarding support roles, will be better positioned to support program teams with ongoing community awareness raising.

The breakdown of cases by type has remained largely consistent. Trends across the sector show that as organizational cultures shift and trust grows in reporting and investigative processes, internal sexual misconduct cases initially tend to be reported in greater numbers than external SEA allegations, as those with relatively more power begin to feel comfortable reporting. We believe that the relative balance between our SEA and sexual misconduct allegations is a positive sign that community trust and awareness is growing alongside that of team members.

The proportion of unsubstantiated cases and inconclusive cases remains higher than substantiated cases. Our messaging continues to emphasize team member and partner obligations to report any good faith concern, whether personally or anonymously, without attempting to gather information or investigate the allegations. We know this may result in a higher number of allegations that are ultimately unsubstantiated, but we always want our team members to err on the side of reporting. In all cases, we take whatever steps are possible to inquire into the circumstances surrounding an allegation. Even where

we do not have sufficient specific facts to investigate, we attempt to take other action, such as reviewing systems, and practices, and ensuring that potential survivors understand how to come forward. In cases where allegations are unsubstantiated or inconclusive, we take extra care to ensure that we have provided ample opportunities for participants and community members to safely report concerns, including through random sampling and survivor-sensitive outreach.

Reflect and Adapt: A Data Informed Approach

We analyze data in order to reflect and adapt in two essential ways: at the conclusion of each case, and by regularly reviewing overall trends and data gathered from our database of safeguarding cases. At the end of a safeguarding investigation, we examine the specific conditions that existed and may have made the incident more likely to occur. We consider all implications that stem from that analysis—from recruitment and hiring to onboarding and training, program design, implementation and management, to the reporting and investigation process—always looking for ways we can prevent similar situations from occurring and improve our response if they do.

In terms of identifying overall trends and risk areas, we have substantially increased the number of data points we collect on each case, allowing for a richer data set and deeper analytics. We are also working to strengthen our case management system to identify broader trends, spot risks, and identify areas for process and program improvements. Our cross-functional Global Safeguarding Task Force meets regularly and supports review of relevant processes and systems in order to ensure meaningful adaptation and improvement. The Task Force partners with the safeguarding team in an annual review of high level incident data.¹⁴

¹⁴ This review does not involve any identifying information to protect the confidentiality of our investigative process.

Annexes

Looking Forward

We have made substantial improvements and advances in FY21, particularly to our investigation and response functions and our in-country safeguarding support. We look forward to additional improvements in the coming year with a particular focus on strengthening practices, systems, policies and workplace culture across our programs, with our partners, and in the communities we serve.

Abuse and exploitation are in direct opposition to the values that bring us to our work and to Mercy Corps: a belief in justice, integrity and equity, and a determination to alleviate suffering and oppression. We know that we still have much work to do. Mercy Corps is deeply committed to contributing to a safer, more accountable, survivor-focused sector where exploitation and abuse are not tolerated. We believe safeguarding is the responsibility of each and every Mercy Corps team member and partner, and of each member of our sector as a whole. We will continue our work to ensure that all those affiliated with our agency understand that responsibility and have the resources and knowledge to act upon it. Together, we are committed to ensuring everyone we come into contact with is treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Annex A: Referenced Definitions (in alphabetical order)

- › **Child Safeguarding (CS) Case:** Includes allegations of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or otherwise putting children at risk of harm.
- › **Community Accountability Reporting Mechanism (CARM):** CARM is a channel for any and all community members to provide feedback, suggestions, complaints, and concerns, in a manner that is safe, confidential, transparent, and accessible, enabling Mercy Corps to respond and make any necessary programmatic or safeguarding adaptations and to ensure the safety, security, and empowerment of program participants.
- › **Inconclusive Case:** Where we are unable to obtain sufficient evidence to make a determination around substantiation, for example because the report is by an anonymous third party and/or does not identify a particular survivor or subject of complaint. In such cases we take whatever action possible to investigate in a survivor sensitive way and to provide opportunities for other complaints to be raised. In addition, we review programs and systems to ensure they meet our safeguarding standards and that team members, participants, partners and community members understand their rights and how to report concerns.
- › **Partners:** Sub-grant recipients, partner organizations, contractors, outside experts, consultants, agents, representatives, and any other organization or individual that acts on Mercy Corps' behalf or at Mercy Corps' direction.
- › **Pending Case:** Where the investigation is complete and a finding has been made but where we have outstanding corrective and/or reporting actions to implement and finalize.
- › **Safeguarding Allegation:** We consider safeguarding allegations to include allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, internal sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment), child safeguarding and human trafficking.

- › **Safeguarding Champion:** Safeguarding Champions have a similar role to Safeguarding Focal Points, raising awareness and producing community resource maps which are used as part of our survivor support practices and service referral process. Safeguarding Champions work at a reduced technical capacity and are not a replacement for Focal Points. They are an important addition to our global safeguarding team and supplement our in-country support surrounding safeguarding prevention efforts.
- › **Safeguarding Co-Investigator:** Safeguarding Co-Investigators act as in-country investigative support when allegations of safeguarding violations are reported. They provide local contextual information, translation, and facilitate investigation planning, communication, and implementation. With guidance and supervision from full-time lead Investigators, the Co-Investigators may take on-the-ground investigative action including participating in interviews, examining evidence, and reviewing relevant documents.
- › **Safeguarding Focal Point:** Safeguarding Focal Points are in-country resources for safeguarding, working with their team members to build trust and confidence in our reporting mechanisms. They also provide on-the-ground information and feedback to help inform our agency-wide safeguarding strategy and approach. Focal Point training includes survivor-centered approaches to incident responses, referral pathways, community resource mapping, international safeguarding standards, community and team member reporting, safeguarding risk assessment, and other related skills.
- › **Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) Case:** Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of participants in our programs or other community members including: actual or attempted abuse of position of vulnerability, power differential, or trust for sexual purposes; profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another; exchange of assistance for sexual or romantic relations; sexual abuse of program participants or community members; and paying for sex or sexual acts.
- › **Sexual Misconduct (SM) Case:** Allegations that include instances of sexual misconduct in the workplace, including sexual harassment (quid pro quo or work environment) and sexual assault. Also includes undisclosed relationships along reporting lines.
- › **Substantiated Case:** Where the investigation concluded that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred.
- › **Team Member:** All team members globally, including Mercy Corps' Boards of Directors, executive officers, management, employees/team members, seconded employees, temporary staff, interns, and volunteers.
- › **Temporary Workers:** Individuals hired on short term contracts as part of a program.
- › **Unsubstantiated Case:** The available evidence was insufficient to conclude that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred.
- › **Visitors:** Visitors to Mercy Corps facilities, including photographers, filmmakers, journalists, researchers, donors and prospective donors, and anyone else hosted by Mercy Corps or visiting Mercy Corps' implemented or financially supported programs.

Annex B: Relevant Links and Referenced Documents

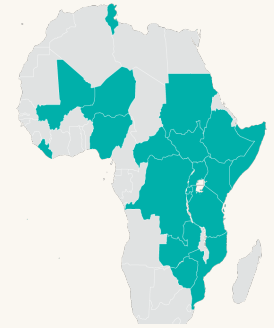
- › [Mercy Corps Website](#)
- › [External Investigation & Commitments to Action](#)
- › [Timeline of Actions](#)
- › [FY 19 Global Safeguarding Report, Part I and Part II](#)
- › [FY 20 Global Safeguarding Report](#)
- › [Mercy Corps Policies and Policy Guidance Documents](#)



Annex C: Mercy Corps Global Footprint by Region

Africa

- › Countries of operation: **17**
- › Programs with participants in FY 2021: **130**
- › Participants: **13,096,351**



Asia

- › Countries of operation: **13**
- › Programs with participants in FY 2021: **85**
- › Participants: **8,918,756**



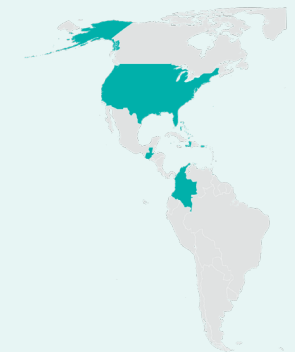
Middle East

- › Countries of operation: **6**
- › Programs with participants in FY 2021: **59**
- › Participants: **6,306,908**



Americas

- › Countries of operation: **5**
- › Programs with participants in FY 2021: **43**
- › Participants: **1,958,393**



Annex D: CARM Minimum Standards

1. CARM Focal Points are designated at the country and program level. The country CARM Focal Point is responsible for the management and quality of CARM for the Country and is responsible for leading the design and implementation of CARM.
2. CARM is budgeted for in all programs. Every program will have budget lines allocated for community accountability.
3. CARM standard operating procedures are completed and approved. Use the provided SOP template and once completed, send to carm@mercy corps.org for technical review. The Country director must approve the final SOP.
4. Every active program has three feedback channels and community members are sensitized on their purpose and availability. Feedback channels must be set up within 90 days of program start up. When operating remotely or with reduced access and face-to-face feedback can't be collected, two feedback channels are allowed.
5. All feedback is documented and managed in a CARM database. Access to the database will be restricted to the team members who are responsible for documenting feedback in order to protect the identity of informants.
6. Feedback is classified according to six standard Grades and grading is verified. Only specific, designated team members will have the authority to grade feedback, and these team members will be selected by the Country Director in consultation with the country CARM Focal Point.
7. Appropriate action is taken for all feedback based on Grade. After a Grade is assigned to feedback, appropriate action must be taken based on that Grade. Appropriate action and segregation of duties will be outlined in the CARM SOP.
8. All Grade 5 and 6 feedback (any feedback related to fraud, corruption or safeguarding issues) is reported directly to the Integrity Hotline and the informant's identity is protected. The Country Director and country Safeguarding Focal Point (Grade 6 only) can be copied if the feedback does not implicate them.
9. The feedback loop is closed for all non-anonymous feedback. The person who shared the feedback must be informed of the resolution of their case for 100% of feedback that is not submitted anonymously.

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About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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