



Brief #3: Best Practices on Training for the Prevention Sexual Violence

For several years, international cooperation organizations (ICOs) have shown a strong willingness to better prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence, and sexual violence in particular. In light of the importance of power relations in the sexual violence phenomenon, and considering the specific nature of the international cooperation sector, ICOs duty to protect deserves to be examined more thoroughly. This brief was drafted following a series of workshops conducted in 2018, as part of the activities of the Comité québécois femmes et développement (Quebec Committee Women and Development) of AQOCI. This is the third of a series of briefs on sexual violence which together form a practical toolkit. This brief presents the best practices relative to training on sexual violence in the international cooperation sector. It focuses particularly on the notions of power, consent, and disclosure preparedness.

Training

The literature suggests that training on sexual violence should be mandatory for all members of an organization (volunteers, staff, and members of the Board of Directors). These trainings must combine different approaches in order to mobilize members and create a sense of collective responsibility regarding prevention. Participatory trainings promote staff ownership of the policies and procedures that relate to prevention and to case management or support (medical, psychosocial, legal and judicial). The challenge is to keep the policy, the code of conduct and the procedures against sexual violence “alive” in order to embody its values within the organization. It is important to avoid that this type of undertaking becomes limited to a compliance exercise. Therefore, each organization can define the best strategies to ensure that its members understand and take ownership of the organization’s policies, the expectations regarding their behaviour, the recourses, as well as their agency in relation to the issue.

Here are a few examples of good practices related to training that may be helpful:

- Offering regular trainings on topics such as consent, the definition of acts of sexual violence, and the limits of cultural sensitivity as a justification for acts of sexual violence¹.
- Reproduce the three pillars of the campaign *It's on Us*, used since 2014 on United States campuses: define consent, integrate *Bystander Intervention* trainings, and create an environment to support the survivors.²
- Emphasize the importance of identifying risk factors, such as the expression of a masculinity that is hostile to women, hostility toward gays and lesbians, or hostility toward other minority groups. We must create and implement regular training on diversity and inclusion for all staff members, with particular attention paid to the people of LGBTQI community.
- Let people know that alcohol may be a risk factor for committing an act of sexual violence.
- During the trainings, provide participants with the coordinates of available resources (crisis centres, etc.) for the different areas of intervention, and make them easily accessible to all members of the organization.
- Present the legal obligations of organizations.
- Explain the way in which the information will be managed if a case is reported. This is to ensure that individuals can make an informed decision regarding the reporting of an incident. For example, it is suggested to inform individuals only when an incident is reported. We must also report the incident to some funders, such as Global Affairs Canada, and this, even if we do not share information on the identity of the victim.

These trainings should be provided periodically to consolidate a personal and institutional commitment toward a culture of zero tolerance. Here are examples of training activities regarding consent, power and trigger warning (presentation of elements that can trigger the memory of a trauma and disclosure).

Trigger Warning³

Before beginning a training session, the facilitator can make a “trigger warning”. The trigger warning is used to prepare the people who have lived a trauma to be confronted with images, videos or discussions that could trigger painful and upsetting memories. This practice is supported by a movement that recognizes the needs and past experiences of the learners, as

¹ Report the Abuse (2017)

² The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Key findings of the select task force on the study of harassment in the workplace.

³ RQCALACS and Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes (Ontario Action on Violence Against Women)

well as the barriers to full participation. It is recommended to use in a way that is as simple as possible, and to remain sensitive to the risk of labelling individuals as potential victims or survivors.

At the beginning of the training:

1. Inform the participants of what is to come so that they know what to expect (duration, activities, etc.), as well as the themes that will be covered during the various workshops.
2. Invite participants to express their need for additional information if necessary. In this regard, it is important to encourage individual rather than group discussions, and to remain available during breaks.
3. Recognize that the topic of sexual violence may be difficult and stressful to address.
4. Provide flexibility to the participants to enter and exit as needed, and encourage an atmosphere of benevolence, toward oneself and others.

Disclosure

During activities about sexual violence, it is important to prepare for the potential presence in the group of a survivor or a person who has been in confronted with this type of violence. To facilitate the work of the facilitator who would have to receive such confidences, the checklist below may be useful.

What to do during the disclosure of a case: checklist to the attention of the person receiving a confidence

1. *Listen;*
2. *Believe the person;*
3. *Don't make judgments;*
4. *Don't ask leading questions;*
5. *Let the person speak with her own words;*
6. *Receive the person with its emotions, and respect its pace;*
7. *Avoid strong reactions, control your emotions;*
8. *Put the responsibility on the aggressor;*
9. *Check if the person is in a situation of danger and if she has suicidal thoughts;*
10. *Check if the person as a support network (family, friends);*
11. *Check the resources available in the area, and make a referral if needed;*
12. *If necessary, find personal support from competent resources.*

Consent

Defining consent is a good practice, particularly during trainings or awareness-raising campaigns.

One video that is commonly used is “Consent: It’s as Simple as Tea”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oQbei5JGiT8>. The video compares sexual acts to offering a cup of tea, to clarify the necessary conditions that are needed for consent to be valid. Consent must be:

- clear or enthusiastic,
- given voluntarily,
- given at the time of the activity (the fact that someone may have consented at a previous time that consent is automatic: consent may be withdrawn at any time),
- given without threats,
- given without the possibility of a refusal resulting in negative impacts,
- given by a person in full command of her faculties.
- Silence is not tantamount to consent.
- Being unconscious invalidates consent.

Defining these conditions lays the foundations for a common understanding of valid consent. This common understanding is a prerequisite to the definition of the expectations of an organization toward its staff, its partners and its Board members. This type of dialog therefore represents a first step toward the definition of expectations for a healthy and safe working environment. In order to promote this common understanding, in a context as complex as that of international cooperation, it may be useful to use a variety of situations using case studies or the scenario analysis.

The video on the consent represents a practical tool which wouldn’t be complete, however, without a discussion period, and without a reflection on the power relations that influence consent.

Some power relations may invalidate consent between two people (e.g.: psychiatrist and patient, coach and athlete). Some of these power relations are recognized on a legal level or in codes of ethics. In other situations, it may represent a gray area, falling more within the scope of judgment, ethics, or a code of conduct. International cooperation, because of the nature of its solidarity and support activities, involves power relations about which it is important to reflect.

Power

To initiate a dialogue on the topic of how power relations can influence consent and sexual violence, three activities are proposed below. The first activity, which comes from Oxfam-Québec, focuses on the types of power which exist in international development and humanitarian assistance.

Presentation of an activity on the analysis of the different types of power, in four steps:

1. The sources of power
2. The different types of power that are conferred on the basis of different sources.
3. Examples of persons who hold these types of power.
4. Return to plenary.

SOURCES OF POWER	TYPE OF POWER	EXAMPLES
Weapons	Physical power	Military, police
Hierarchical Position	Hierarchical power	Managers

A second activity, also proposed by Oxfam-Québec, focuses on individual responsibility in the face of the powers (and privileges) associated with one's identity. The idea here is to reflect on the meaning of our own identity for the different stakeholders with whom we interact within an international cooperation mandate.

2) Power and me

This activity is a facilitator-led individual reflection. A video is used to initiate a discussion on the types of powers related to the identity. The video used by Oxfam-Québec is called: *The Race of Life*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBQx8FmOT_0

This video shows how systems of oppression influence the level of power and privileges linked to the social status of each individual. The purpose of this video is to promote a reflection on the levels of power and privileges which are linked to one's identity, and on what this means for partners, community members, groups targeted by the program, etc.

1. As a person, based on my identity, what are the types of power that I have and that I exercise?
2. As a worker in international development or humanitarian assistance, what are the types of power that I have and that I exercise?
3. As a person, based on my identity, what are the types of power that I suffer from?

This activity may be uncomfortable for some people because the video illustrates in an obvious way the inequalities of privileges in the North American context. The video, however, helps to facilitate a dialogue on the basis of what is observed rather than having the whole group live through a similar activity. It is suggested to put some time aside for a discussion period after the viewing of this video, to avoid discomfort. The objective of this activity is not to stigmatize some privileged groups, but rather to encourage the benevolent behaviour.

3) Scenario

Crossroads International proposes a scenario in order to prepare volunteers and staff to the realities on the ground. It uses a scenario with predetermined steps, followed by feedback questions which facilitate a discussion on the experience of the activity. The participants should not have access to the whole of the scenario at the beginning of the activity.

1st part of the scenario: During a field visit with another volunteer, you notice that your colleague is making inappropriate comments about members of the local community. The next day, this person seems particularly interested by a young girl, and displays inappropriate behaviour. The volunteer insists on staying with the young girl and makes jokes about wanting to become her fiancé. The girl is visibly uncomfortable.

Discussion on the first part of the scenario: What are the power dynamics in this first part of the scenario that originate from the powers and privileges linked to the identity of the volunteer?

2nd part of the scenario: Two weeks later, you go out with several people, including your colleague from IC, and he keeps talking to you about the young girl. You realize that he has remained in contact with her. You ask him how the girl reacts to his advances. He responds: "She says no but it means yes ... it's cultural! I am sure that she is pleased to *flirt* with a man from Canada. When I kiss her, she doesn't say no!" You are very uncomfortable.

Discussion on the second part of the scenario: What are the elements to consider? What do you do? What is your role as a witness?

3rd part of the scenario: The following week, you return in the field, in the community where the girl lives, and a member of the partner organization comes to you to share what she has recently learned:

- 1) The young girl does not want to have a relationship with the volunteer.
- 2) The young girl feels trapped in a situation which she doesn't like, and she has not consented to physical contacts.
- 3) Her reputation is at risk and there are rumours circulating about her.
- 4) Her family feels that she is responsible for the situation.
- 5) The girl has suffered physical abuse because of this relationship.

Suggested topics to address during the discussion on the third part of the scenario:

- Clarify the procedures for reporting an incident (what to do, what not to do—for example, speaking on behalf of the victim-survivor).
- Clarify the organization’s expectations regarding this type of behaviour, and toward witnesses.
- Clarify what you can expect from the organization when a report is made.

A toolkit on sexual violence

This concludes the third brief focusing on training to prevent sexual violence.

The practical toolkit also contains the following briefs:

- Brief #1: Introduction to sexual violence
- Brief #2: Tools and Best Practices for the Prevention and Reporting of Sexual Violence
- Briefs #4, 5, 6: Case management or support (medical, psychosocial, legal and judicial), and investigation in cases of sexual violence
- Tool #1: Prevention Strategies Checklist; a tool to address sexual violence

The complete list of references is available in the annex of the first brief.

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