

Safeguarding Snapshot – Afghanistan

Countrywide Findings from Malan’s Safeguarding Needs Assessment

July 2025



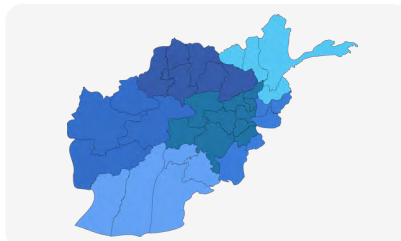
Introduction

Between February and May 2025, Malan Ideal Impact conducted a national wide study to examine safeguarding practices within aid-funded programs in Afghanistan. This snapshot presents an evidence-based analysis of how safeguarding is perceived, practiced, and challenged across the country. By capturing insights from the key informants, beneficiaries, and safeguarding focal points, the report sheds light on real-world experiences and systemic patterns of protection from misconduct. Using a mixed-methods approach grounded in community surveys, interviews, and field-level data. The study explores key dimensions such as institutional capacity, policy implementation, reporting systems, trust in complaint mechanisms, and barriers to equitable access.

In a context where humanitarian aid can be a lifeline or a liability, this snapshot offers not only a diagnosis of existing challenges but also a roadmap for action. The study reveals both safeguarding developments and shortfalls in the country. It underscores the urgent need for culturally responsive, survivor-centered safeguarding systems that are locally led, transparently funded, and equitably delivered.

Methodology

The study design include desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), and surveys. The study engaged a diverse group of respondents from across the country, categorized into six regions (North, Northeast, East, South, West, and Central), based on Malan’s regional mapping. Including 150 community key informants, 125 community beneficiaries, and 17 safeguarding focal points representing both international and national NGOs. Using the mixed method approach enabled the collection of both quantitative data and rich qualitative insights, capturing community perceptions, institutional practices, and gaps in safeguarding systems across humanitarian and development settings. The national scope of the assessment ensures the findings reflect a broad and inclusive understanding of safeguarding challenges and opportunities in the Afghan context.



Participants	Community Key Informants	124	26	150
	Beneficiaries	75	50	125
	Safeguarding Focal Points	10	7	17

Key Findings

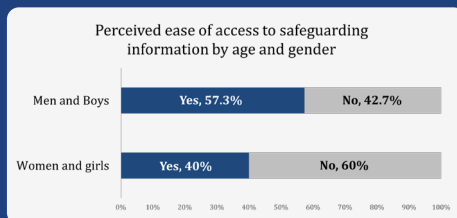
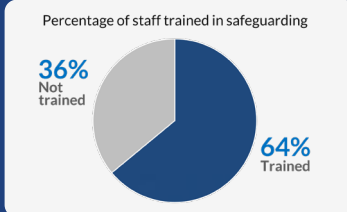
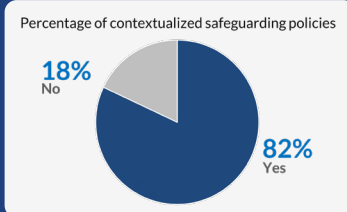
Institutional Capacity on Safeguarding

All participating organizations reported having safeguarding or PSEAH policies, but many subsumed safeguarding under broader frameworks, potentially weakening focus on exploitation and abuse. While 82 percent contextualized policies to Afghanistan’s cultural and linguistic realities, 18 percent relied on non-contextualized policies, citing limited expertise. Safeguarding is widely incorporated in to the Code of Conduct, though enforcement and monitoring varied. Almost all safeguarding policies prohibits child marriage, yet applicability is challenged by cultural norms and legal gaps in the country.

While 64% of organizations having mechanisms in place to train staff on safeguarding and PSEAH, further analysis reveals that approximately 17.6% of these organizations still rely on brief orientations or general onboarding that lack a specific focus on safeguarding or PSEAH. This gap highlights a need for more structured and comprehensive training programs to ensure all staff understand their responsibilities and the mechanisms for preventing, reporting and responding to safeguarding breaches.

Community Awareness

Distribution points emerged as the most common source of information, followed by local community groups and door-to-door outreach. Access to safeguarding information remains limited, with only 40 percent of women and girls and 57.3 percent of men and boys having access to safeguarding information.

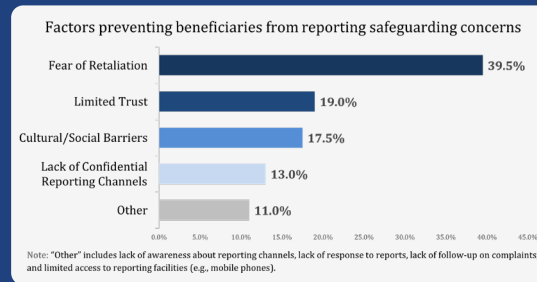


“Outreach teams **DON’T REACH** women and girls in time.

— A female beneficiary —

Trust and Barriers to the Reporting Mechanisms

Despite the presence of multiple reporting channels, communities, especially in rural and high-risk areas, face major challenges in accessing and using them. Key barriers include fear of retaliation, limited trust, social barriers, limited trust, social barriers, lack of confidential reporting channels and other.



Safeguarding Breaches

Over 6 percent of respondents reported witnessing safeguarding breaches by the aid workers or community volunteers. The most frequently cited safeguarding breaches included favoritism, abuse, stigma and neglect.



High-risk spaces



Distribution sites 26.6%
Farms 8.6%

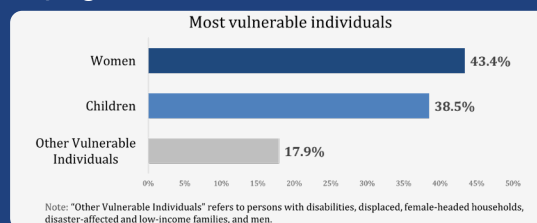
Nowhere 57.6%
Other 7.2%

“Sometimes, village leaders **ASK BENEFICIARIES** to give them **A PART OF THEIR AID**, or they will not be considered for future aid.

— A female beneficiary —

Most Vulnerable Individuals by Age and Gender

This study underscores the urgent need for inclusive, responsive, and survivor-centered safeguarding systems that prioritize accessibility, protection, and accountability for the most marginalized individuals.



“Safeguarding activities are often treated as **CHECKBOX** exercises. To be truly effective, we must shift from **PAPER** compliance to **MEANINGFUL** and **ACTION-ORIENTED** approaches.

— A safeguarding focal point —

Key Recommendations from the Community

- Establish separate distribution lines for female and male
- Regular community consultations with all beneficiaries male and female
- Improve and establish safe and accessible complaint and feedback mechanisms
- Establish Community Safety Committees
- Manage the role of community aid representatives
- Train all aid workers and community representatives on their safeguarding responsibilities
- Take disciplinary action and terminate staff who identified to be involved for safeguarding breaches