



Loop's Glossary and Working Definitions

Last updated: August 2025

(in Alphabetical Order)

This glossary presents key terms and definitions used by Loop, adapted from authoritative sources including the United Nations (UN), Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and CHS Alliance.

Accountability

Accountability is the process of using power responsibly, taking account of, and being held accountable by, different stakeholders, and primarily those who are affected by the exercise of such power ([Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability](#))

Allegations

Allegations are assertions or claims made by an individual that a person or organisation has engaged in misconduct, wrongdoing, or a breach of policies or laws. These claims may concern issues such as abuse, exploitation, fraud, corruption, or other violations and require investigation to determine their validity.

Author

Anyone who uses Loop to submit feedback. This person may be a survivor, witness, complainant, or any community member sharing information, concerns, needs, opinions, or suggestions. Loop sometimes refers to them as users.

Best interests of the child

The best interests of the child guide all sensitive feedback concerning children (18 years and under). In applying this principle, the child's best interests must be the primary consideration in all actions involving children, in accordance with the [Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#).

Child Protection

Refers to the prevention and response to violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect against children (persons under 18 years of age). It involves safeguarding children's



rights, ensuring their safety and well-being, and promoting environments where they can grow and develop free from harm ([UNICEF](#)).

- **Child protection violations** are an act or a situation of violence, exploitation, neglect, and harmful practices against children, which undermine their rights to safety, development, and well-being ([UNICEF](#)). These violations can include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, child labor, trafficking, recruitment into armed groups, and neglect.
- **A child** is considered as any person under the age of 18 ([Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)), irrespective of laws and/or customary practices in individual countries ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)).

Closing the loop

Closing the loop means informing the person who submitted the feedback or complaint about the action taken or outcome of their submission, while respecting confidentiality, safeguarding principles, and data protection. It ensures accountability and transparency, and demonstrates that the feedback was taken seriously and followed up.

Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern raised by an individual or community about the quality, appropriateness, or conduct of aid, services, personnel, or organisational practices. Complaints can relate to failures in service delivery, misconduct, breaches of policy, or violations of rights.

Complainant

A complainant is the person who raises or submits a complaint. This individual may be directly affected by the issue or may report on behalf of others. In cases involving sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), fraud, or other misconduct, the complainant may be the survivor or another person aware of the wrongdoing.

Concerned entity

The organisation, agency, or institution that has a contractual or formal affiliation with the individual alleged to have committed misconduct or wrongdoing. This affiliation gives the entity the authority and responsibility to take appropriate administrative action, including suspension, investigation, and disciplinary measures, in response to



any form of misconduct, such as abuse, exploitation, fraud, corruption, or other breaches of conduct, adapted from [IASC definitions](#).

Confidentiality

Confidentiality means safeguarding both the identity of the person sharing information and the content of what is shared. It ensures that sensitive feedback, especially involving harm, abuse, or misconduct, is handled with discretion and respect. Personal information must not be shared without the explicit, informed consent of the individual (and where applicable, the survivor), except in cases where there is a legal or ethical obligation to act, such as when a child is at risk or someone poses a danger to themselves or others.

Victims/survivors have the right to decide who they tell their story to. They must be informed early on about any limits to confidentiality, including when information may need to be shared, with whom, and for what purpose. This includes possible implications if confidentiality affects the ability to investigate or provide services. Information is only shared with a minimum number of people on a strict need-to-know basis, with appropriate data protection safeguards in place.

All sensitive feedback is treated as confidential. Identifying details will not be disclosed without informed consent, unless mandatory reporting applies.

Corruption

Any act of omission that misuses official authority, or seeks to influence the misuse of official authority, in order to obtain an undue benefit for oneself or a third party. The elements of corruption are:

1. An individual seeks to - misuse official authority or seeks to influence the misuse of official authority,
2. in order to obtain an undue benefit for himself/herself or a third party

This definition is adapted from the [United Nations Leadership Dialogue 2016](#).



Discrimination

Discrimination is any distinction, exclusion, limitation, or preference based on characteristics such as race, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, language, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability, age, social origin, political or other opinion, economic condition, birth, or other shared traits. Such treatment has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or equal treatment. Discrimination may manifest as an isolated incident or as ongoing harassment or abuse of authority. It can occur in many contexts, including employment, education, access to services, and beyond. This definition is adapted from *the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#).*

Do No Harm

The principle of 'do no harm' obliges individuals and organisations working in humanitarian and development contexts to prevent and mitigate any negative impact of actions taken in the course of carrying out their work. In the context of Loop, staff are always mindful that any decisions and actions taken, especially in handling sensitive feedback, must not cause further harm to the author, survivor, or any affected individual. This includes careful consideration of confidentiality, informed consent, referral processes, and the broader consequences of response or non-response.

Escalation

Escalation is the process of bringing feedback or concerns to the attention of a higher level of authority or decision-making power when they cannot be resolved at the initial point of contact. This process ensures that critical and/or sensitive information is addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

Feedback

Feedback is information shared by individuals or communities about their experiences, needs, concerns, or opinions. It can relate to any services, support, or interactions they have had with institutions, organisations, or authorities whether humanitarian, development, governmental, or private. Feedback may be positive or negative and can include suggestions, questions, complaints, or expressions of satisfaction or



dissatisfaction. It may be shared anonymously or with personal details, and can be open or sensitive in nature depending on the content and context.

- **Open feedback:** Open feedback refers to feedback that does not contain information deemed sensitive or confidential. It can usually be handled through standard feedback and response processes and can be published publicly in the Loop's platform, in line with the author's consent and privacy preferences..
- **Sensitive feedback** Sensitive feedback is any information that could put the person sharing it, or others associated with it, at risk and therefore must be handled with heightened care and confidentiality. Sensitive feedback includes complaints as well as reports of protection violations. Loop categorises sensitive feedback into different types including Gender-based Violence (GBV), Child Protection (CP), Sexual Exploitation, Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH), fraud and corruption, requests for mental health support, etc. (Adapted from IFRC Feedback Kit)
- **Urgent feedback** is defined as any information or report that demands immediate attention and swift action due to the severity or time-sensitivity of the issue. This includes situations involving life-threatening medical emergencies, imminent risks to a person's safety or wellbeing (such as suicidal thoughts or threats of violence), and other critical protection concerns that require rapid response to prevent harm.

Fraud

Any act or omission whereby an individual knowingly misrepresents or conceals a material fact in order to obtain an undue benefit for oneself or a third party, or to cause another to act to his or her detriment. The elements of fraud are:

- 1) An individual knowingly misrepresents or conceals or omits to tell a fact
- 2) in order to either:
 - a) obtain an undue benefit or advantage for himself/herself or a third party or
 - b) cause another person to act to his/her detriment

This definition is adapted from the [United Nations Leadership Dialogue 2016](#).



Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

An umbrella term for violence directed toward or disproportionately affecting someone because of their actual or perceived gender identity. The term 'gender-based violence' is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials around the world place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence. This includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

While women and girls disproportionately experience GBV, men and boys can also be survivors. Additionally, the term is sometimes used to include targeted violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) individuals, recognizing the diverse impacts of gender-based violence across all gender identities and sexual orientations ([UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)). See as well ([IASC GBV Guidelines](#)).

Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Rights

HLP rights refer to the range of legal and customary entitlements that individuals and communities have to housing, land, and property. These rights may be formally recognized by statutory law, governed by customary systems, or held informally. HLP rights include the right to own, rent, occupy, use, inherit, transfer, or access housing, land, and related resources.

Informed assent

The expressed willingness of the child to participate in services.¹ It is sought from children who are not legally able to provide informed consent due to their age, but who are developmentally capable of understanding the nature of the intervention and voluntarily agreeing to participate. Informed assent must be age-appropriate, explained in a way the child can understand, and sought in addition to the consent of a parent or legal guardian when required and appropriate.

Informed consent

Informed consent is the voluntary agreement of a person, based on a clear appreciation and understanding of the facts, implication, potential consequences, and

¹ [IRC & UNICEF, Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse \(2023\)](#), [IRC & UNICEF, Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse \(2012\)](#).



available options, for an action to take place, such as the collection or sharing of personal information or access to services. It involves actively informing individuals of their rights, including the right to decline or withdraw consent to participate in a process at any time. Informed consent also includes explaining how their personal information will be used, stored, and shared, with whom, and for what purpose. When individuals cannot provide full consent, such as young children, their informed assent should be sought in line with their evolving capacity.

Informed consent entails the following requirements:

- Given voluntarily, without coercion, manipulation, or undue influence;
- Based on adequate, relevant, and comprehensible information provided in a manner the person can understand;
- Given by a person with the legal capacity and maturity to decide;
- Revocable at any time, without negative consequences for the individual's right to assistance.

When it comes to referrals for survivors, informed consent requires that a survivor must be informed about all available options, and fully understand what he/she is consenting to as well as the risks, including the limits of confidentiality, before agreeing. The full range of choices should be presented to the survivor, regardless of the service provider's individual beliefs. The survivor should not be pressured to consent to any interview, exam, assessment, etc. A survivor is allowed to withdraw consent at any time.

Adapted from the [*IASC Guidance: Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures*](#), [*WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Researching, Documenting and Monitoring Sexual Violence in Emergencies*](#) and [*Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies*](#).

Investigation

An internal administrative procedure, carried out by an authorized body or investigator within an organisation, in which an organisation attempts to establish whether there has been wrongdoing or a breach of organisational policy by a staff member or members such as fraud, harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). It is not a criminal process, but an internal procedure governed by organisational rules and standards.



Localisation

Localisation is the process of recognizing, respecting, and strengthening the leadership, decision-making power, and access to funding of local and national actors, in humanitarian and development responses.

Mandatory reporting

Mandatory reporting refers to a legal or policy obligation to report specific types of harm, abuse, or misconduct such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), gender-based violence (GBV), or child protection violations to relevant authorities or designated bodies

Within the humanitarian sector, mandatory reporting refers to an **obligation to report SEA** perpetrated by UN staff or related personnel, non-UN forces operating under a Security Council mandate, and implementing partner staff and related personnel in line with established reporting procedures. All UN entities, IASC members, and their partners are required to comply with established SEA reporting procedures, regardless of whether the alleged perpetrator is from the same organisation. These entities must also ensure that survivors are informed of the mandatory reporting obligation as soon as they come forward, including their rights around informed consent, confidentiality, and access to assistance, whether or not they engage in an investigation or accountability process (as outlined in the [IASC Guidance: Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures](#)).

This should be distinguished from **mandatory reporting requirements under national laws**, which may oblige service providers, including humanitarian staff, healthcare workers, or social workers, to report certain incidents (such as child abuse or criminal GBV cases) to national authorities like the police or child protection services. These obligations vary across countries and are defined by national legal frameworks. In countries where Loop operates, it maintains an updated analysis of national mandatory reporting requirements to ensure its practices align with both legal obligations and its commitment to safe, survivor-centred reporting pathways.

Misconduct

Misconduct refers to any improper or wrongful behavior by a staff member or representative that is in breach of an organisation's rules, standards of conduct, or applicable laws.

- **Sexual misconduct:** is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of acts, including sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

The term mental health and psychosocial support is used to describe any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorder ([IASC Guideline: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#)).

Outcome

An outcome refers to the result or action taken by the responsible actor after receiving and assessing a referred complaint. This may include investigation, provision of support services, corrective measures, or other appropriate responses, in accordance with internal procedures and safeguarding standards.

Perpetrator

A perpetrator is any person who carries out a harmful act that affects others.

Protection cases

Protection cases refer to individual situations where a person's fundamental human rights have been violated, threatened, or are at risk. Human rights are enshrined by the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) and other related instruments and include economic and social rights as well as land rights ([International Human Rights Law](#)).

Loop refers individual protection cases according to global standards and best practice including UNHCR's [Your Guide to Protection Case Management](#).

Referral

A referral is the process of directing an individual who has shared feedback, a complaint, or a protection concern to the appropriate service or authority that can provide specialized support or take further action. Referrals ensure that people receive timely and appropriate assistance or follow-up.

- **Referral for assistance:** The process of directing an individual, such as a survivor or vulnerable person, to services that provide direct support such as medical care, psychosocial support, case management, legal advice, or protection interventions, to address their specific needs. This process involves different sectors and service providers communicating and coordinating in a safe, ethical, and confidential manner to provide the victim/survivor with usually a multisectoral response including several services. (IASC)



- **Referral for accountability:** The process of directing complaints or reports of misconduct or wrongdoing such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), fraud, or corruption to the concerned organisations or designated bodies/mechanisms responsible for investigation, disciplinary action, or enforcement of organisational standards.

Referral pathways

Referral pathways are coordinated and pre-established systems that safely link survivors and persons in need to supportive and competent services. These pathways involve clear communication and collaboration among different sectors and actors, such as healthcare, protection, legal, psychosocial, and accountability services, to ensure timely, ethical, and confidential referrals. The goal is to provide effective, survivor-centred assistance while minimizing risks and respecting the dignity and rights of those referred. This definition is adapted from the [IASC GBV Guidelines](#)

Responsiveness

Responsiveness refers to the timely, appropriate, and accountable actions taken by the receiving organisation or actor upon receiving a referral or complaint. It involves acknowledging receipt, assessing the case or concern, and taking the necessary steps in line with organisational procedures to ensure that individuals receive the support, services, or follow-up required. For survivors, this means accessing needed assistance in a manner that is safe, confidential, and centred on their rights and well-being. For complainants, it entails appropriate investigation or follow-up, providing feedback on the outcome when possible, and maintaining respect for their confidentiality, dignity, and safety throughout the process.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding is the responsibility of organisations to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do not harm children and adults nor expose them to abuse or exploitation, as aligned with the terminology used in the [Multilingual Safeguarding and PSEA Glossary](#). It requires organisations to take all reasonable steps to prevent harm from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

- **Child safeguarding:** The responsibility that organisations have to make sure their staff, operations, and programmes do no harm to children. It includes policy, procedures and practices to prevent children from being harmed by



humanitarian organisations as well as steps to respond and investigate when harm occurs ([Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action](#))

Sexual Exploitation is the actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another ([Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(ST/SGB/2003/13\)](#)).

Sexual Abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is considered sexual abuse regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. (Secretary General's Bulletin: Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ([Secretary General's Bulletin on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse \(ST/SGB/2003/13\)](#))).

At Loop we take the age of the person as reported by the author and are not involved in age verification.

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected, or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation, when such conduct interferes with work, is made a condition of employment or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment may occur in the workplace or in connection with work. While typically involving a pattern of conduct, sexual harassment may take the form of a single incident. In assessing the reasonableness of expectations or perceptions, the perspective of the person who is the target of the conduct shall be considered. Sexual harassment is the manifestation of a culture of discrimination and privilege based on unequal gender relations and other power dynamics. Sexual harassment may involve any conduct of a verbal, nonverbal or physical nature, including written and electronic communications. Sexual harassment may occur between persons of the same or different genders, and individuals of any gender can be either the targets or the perpetrators. Sexual harassment may occur outside the workplace and outside working hours, including during official travel or social functions related to work. Sexual harassment may be perpetrated by any colleague, including a supervisor, peer or a subordinate. (Secretary-General's bulletin Addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority ([Secretary-General's bulletin: Addressing](#)



[discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority \(ST/SGB/2019/8\)](#)

Loop also acknowledges that sexual harassment is a continuum of unacceptable and unwelcome behaviours and practices of a sexual nature that may include, but are not limited to, sexual suggestions or demands, requests for sexual favours and sexual, verbal or physical conduct or gestures, that are or might reasonably be perceived as offensive or humiliating. Sexual harassment has widely been understood to relate to the workplace, but is also included in the spectrum of behaviours that are not acceptable conduct by our staff, be it in the workplace or with affected populations. ([CHS Alliance: PSEAH Implementation Quick Reference Handbook](#))

Survivor

A survivor is a person who has experienced or been subjected to a harmful act, such as gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, or other protection violations including physical, emotional, or psychological abuse.

The term “survivor” is used rather than “victim” to acknowledge the agency, dignity, and strength of individuals affected by violence or abuse. It reflects an empowering, person-centered approach that prioritizes the survivor’s rights, wishes, and well-being in all decisions, particularly in case management, referrals, and response efforts.

Survivor-centred approach

An approach in which the survivor's wishes, safety, dignity and well-being remain a priority in all matters and procedures.

Using a survivor-centred approach means that the survivor’s rights, needs and wishes are prioritised when coordinating, and referring on, in accordance with the guiding principles ([Handbook for Coordinating GBV in Emergencies](#) and [IASC Definitions and Principles of a Victim/Survivor Centered Approach](#)). The key elements of the survivor-centred approach build on the guiding principles of safety, confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination.

Using this approach, Loop ensures that survivors lead decisions about referrals, information-sharing, and actions taken after a report is submitted. The role of Loop is to support, not direct, the process, offering options and clear information, while always prioritizing the survivor’s informed consent.



Trauma-informed approach

A trauma-informed approach is a way of engaging with people who may have experienced trauma such as violence, exploitation, abuse, displacement, or loss, in a manner that recognizes and responds to the impact of trauma on their lives, emotions, behaviors, and decision-making.

This approach is grounded in the understanding that trauma can have lasting psychological, emotional, and physical effects, and therefore, every interaction especially in sensitive feedback and referrals should be handled with compassion, awareness, and care.

Whistleblower

A whistleblower is a person who discloses information about wrongdoing, such as fraud, abuse, misconduct, or violations of codes of conduct, that they reasonably believe to be true at the time of disclosure, and which involves individuals or practices within an organisation.

Witness

A witness is a person who has observed or has direct knowledge of an incident involving misconduct or wrongdoing such as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), fraud, or corruption.

The witness is not the survivor or the direct victim but may choose to report what they have seen or heard in order to help protect others or ensure accountability. In the context of sensitive feedback, a witness can use Loop to submit a report on behalf of someone else or to flag concerns that need follow-up.