

Girls'
Education
Challenge



Girls' Education Challenge (GEC)

Safeguarding and Evaluation - A Brief Guidance Note

September 2021

Safeguarding Evaluation and the GEC

Evaluations are meant to measure the impact of the program within the target population, including determining whether or not to attribute change to/identify a contribution by a programme's intervention. Within the GEC, evaluations of GEC-T projects are focused on the use of a control or comparison group that functions as a means for evaluators to understand what would have happened if the program were never implemented. This is done by measuring a set of indicators within the intervention group over a period of time. For projects to have an effective evaluation process, it is important to determine how they will measure the success of a program. This also includes developing metrics to track and measure progress and detailing how the program team will collect data to track results.

All GEC projects are required to undertake evaluation work in line with the GEC's 14 minimum standards on safeguarding. To do this effectively requires safeguarding and Do No Harm risks to be considered at the earliest phase of designing an evaluation approach. This is to maintain the safety and welfare of beneficiaries and members of the evaluation team and ensure data collection is done in the safest way that does not expose women, men, boys and girls to harm. The Fund Manager (FM) also requires that GEC projects and their external evaluators must outline the specific safeguarding principles which they will adhere to throughout the evaluation. This should reflect both international standards and be informed by the local context(s) in which the project is being delivered. Evaluators will be expected to commit to and abide by these principles and adhere to them throughout the course of the evaluation. By doing this, the external evaluators are committing to;

- Do no harm
- Prepare, prevent and respond to any disclosures during the evaluation
- Safely and critically observing project progress in relation to safeguarding

Projects and external evaluators will also need to demonstrate that they have a good understanding of safety considerations and pertinent risks from local perspectives, for example evaluators should have GESI knowledge which has been assessed and contextualized either by the partner or researched separately. The FM safeguarding Team has an external safeguarding risk score for all projects. It is best practice for the evaluator to be aware of this score and the reasons behind it.

The FM has published extensive guidance on evaluation design and therefore this guidance note should be read in conjunction with existing policy documents (FM Handbook, 2020). The purpose of this briefing note is to further clarify how projects can engage in ethical evaluation work safely and in doing so recognize and address key challenges that arise and consider how to prioritize the care and well-being of beneficiaries and staff in this work.

For the FCDO, safeguarding means the implementation of frameworks, policies or codes that work to protect everyone who works in, or comes into contact with, an organisation. Safeguarding, in its broad sense, means protecting people from harm. Due to the pervasiveness of this issue, FCDO focuses in particular on preventing and responding to harm caused by sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment through its sectoral reform work.¹ The aim is to minimise the likelihood of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment of both the people FCDO

¹ Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, 2020. *Enhanced Due Diligence: Safeguarding For External Partners*. [online] GOV.UK. Available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dfid-enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners/enhanced-due-diligence-safeguarding-for-external-partners#principles-of-safeguarding>> [Accessed 5 November 2020].

is trying to help, and also people who are working in the sector. However, operationally, the FCDO takes a comprehensive view of safeguarding.

The GEC's focus on safeguarding is on **the prevention of, mitigation of and response to violence, exploitation, abuse and harassment, which occurs due to structural and hierarchical power inequality and the abuse of that inequality by individuals or entities because of action or inaction**. The GEC's safeguarding policies, practices and procedures cover SEAH, Child Safeguarding, bullying and (non-sexual) harassment.

It is important to note that harm can be perpetrated by adults or children. It is critical for a project to not only demonstrate how effective programs have been in achieving its intended aims and objectives, but also how well a project has prioritized the well-being and protection of children and adults at risk. The GEC Safeguarding Policy contains full and detailed information on the FM commitment to safeguarding and abuse prevention, mitigation and response.

Safeguarding in evaluation is therefore an attempt to ensure that all Do No Harm and safeguarding principles are upheld and where abuse has occurred or is disclosed, appropriate measures are in place to safely ensure referrals and/or access to reporting mechanisms.

Evaluation exercises often involve the deployment of field staff or researchers to engage with groups of beneficiary women, men, boys and girls, many of whom are marginalised and are of varying ages and developmental stages. The needs of these young people should be considered before undertaking any data collection activity with them. It is highly recommended that specialist input may be required to offer technical advice and support during the evaluation design phase to build in the appropriate ways of engaging and undertaking safe data collection work with beneficiaries. Additionally, principles of safe practice with young people must guide decision making at every stage of the evaluation process i.e. before, during, and after the exercise has been undertaken.

An evaluation team must take care to ensure there is a consistent understanding of when a safeguarding concern has been identified and how to report that concern to the appropriate individual so appropriate action can be taken. The aim is to avoid safeguarding concerns emerging in evaluation reports which are often produced much later in the process. This means that opportunities may have been missed to respond to issues that have arisen. Clear reporting procedures are required to ensure concerns have been responded to and children and young people as well as adults at risk have received the appropriate follow-up and support.

Ethical guidelines for researching sensitive topics

- **Methodology:** Information gathering and documentation must be done in a manner that presents the least risk to respondents i.e. builds on current experience and good practice.
- **Account for Risks and Benefits:** The benefits to respondents or communities of documenting violence must be greater than the risks to respondents and communities participating.
- **Referral services:** Basic care and support to survivors must be available locally before commencing any activity that may involve individuals disclosing information about their

experiences of violence



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- **Safety:** The safety and security of all those involved in information gathering about violence is of paramount concern and should be continuously monitored. Evaluation work should avoid causing harm, or injury to women, men, boys and girls (taking into account their specific needs). It is recognized that risk can never be fully eliminated but the aim is to anticipate what risks may be present during the evaluation work and ensure sufficient mitigation is introduced.

Safety should be observed at all stages of the data evaluation i.e. interviews, storage, analysis, documentation, sharing and communicating findings.

- **Informed consent:** Consent is when someone makes an informed choice to agree freely and voluntarily to do something. There is no consent when agreement is obtained through:
 - The use of threats, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, manipulation, deception, or misrepresentation;
 - The use of a threat to withhold a benefit to which the person is already entitled;
or
A promise is made to the person to provide a benefit.
- **Confidentiality:** The confidentiality of participants must be protected at all times. A lack of confidentiality by the evaluation team increases risk and safety concerns for the participants and the evaluators themselves.
- **Information gathering team:** All members of a data gathering team must be carefully selected and receive relevant and sufficient specialized training and ongoing support (refer to Annex 1). Where the team is working predominantly with women and girls, the team should only include women. This will create a safer space for women and girls to discuss sensitive issues and report concerns.
- **Beneficiaries with Additional Needs:** Additional safeguards must be put into place for participants with additional needs e.g. women, men, boys and girls with a disability.

² Alina Potts, MPH Research Scientist—Gender, Violence & Humanitarian Assistance. Safety & Ethical Considerations for GBV & The Global Women's Institute (GWI) Safeguarding-Related Research, Monitoring & Evaluation, Girls' Education Challenge Webinar 16 January 2020

In terms of providing informed consent, the FM considers 18 to be the age of maturity. This is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. For girls and boys under the age of 18, the FM considers that they have reduced capacity to make an informed decision and will require a parent or guardian to support their decision to take part in the research.

Where a girl (in particular) is an emancipated adolescent (above the age of 15), and married, the husband should not be sought out for consent as this replicates patriarchal norms associated with lack of autonomy for girls – and contributes to reinforcing the very norms the GEC is seeking to change through its gender transformative approach to education.

Maturity and cognition should all be taken into account and the principle of participation should be considered in addition to age and the girl or boy should be an active participant in any decision which affects them. Again, it is also important to note that adults-at-risk may have diminished capacity to provide informed consent, and in instances where an adult-at-risk does not have the cognitive ability to consider the decision and its impact on their lives in the short, medium and long-term, a trusted adult (perhaps a carer) is to support their decision.

- **Respect:** This principle requires recognition that women, men, boys and girls' decisions exist within broader personal, relational, social, cultural, legal and environmental contexts. It refers to respecting the dignity of participants and their capacity, when fully informed, to make decisions whether or not to consent to research. In relation to children, it requires an understanding that the decision to participate or (not) is shaped by power dynamics and other influences. Every individual who is capable of forming his or her own views has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting them. With respect to children and young people, their wishes and feelings should always be considered and respected.

Useful Resources

DFID, (2011), 'DFID ethics principles for research and evaluation', available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67483/dfid-ethics-prcpls-rsrch-eval.pdf

The Global Women's Institute, "Gender-Based Violence Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation with Refugee and Conflict-Affected Populations; A Manual and Toolkit for Researchers and Practitioners",

<https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs1356/f/downloads/Manual%20and%20Toolkit%20-%20Website.pdf>

Key Safeguarding Responsibilities for GEC Evaluation Work

Projects and evaluators will need to outline how the risks identified will be reflected in each stage of the evaluation process. This should include identifying a named individual who has overall responsibility for safeguarding within the project evaluation team.

Prior to, during and after evaluation, there should be a promotion of behavior protocols, reporting mechanisms and available response services to those who took part in the evaluation (or more broadly in the community). It should detail clear roles and responsibilities and appropriate escalation processes.

Ensuring that the evaluation adheres to abuse prevention principles is an ongoing process, rather than one which only applies during the initial design phase. It must be an explicit part of decision making throughout design and delivery.

Projects and external evaluators will be asked to outline the safeguarding issues they have considered and the principles which will underpin their evaluation and to demonstrate that these principles have informed the design and delivery of the evaluation.

In order to adhere to the safeguarding principles and be able to demonstrate this, projects and evaluators will need to;

- Work with the project they are evaluating to ensure that they are aware of their protocols and procedures, their complaints mechanisms etc.

In addition, a comprehensive risk register should be developed for the evaluation which includes both safeguarding risks and appropriate mitigating actions are identified. Questions for projects and external evaluators to consider when identifying risks include:

- What potential risks are there for participants who are involved in the GEC evaluation? Are there any potential physical, psychological or disclosure dangers that can be anticipated?
- What procedures have been established for the protection of participants and the oversight of any information gained from them or about them?
- Have particularly marginalised groups been identified to take part in the research? For women, girls, boys or adults with disabilities and impairments, girls and boys living or working on the streets or married girls etc? If so have appropriate safeguards and support been put in place to ensure they can meaningfully participate.
- What are the safety risks for enumerators and researchers?

Projects and external evaluators should be able to demonstrate how they have applied safeguarding principles across every stage of their evaluation, including the following:

- Selection of evaluation approach and methodology
- Recruitment and training of evaluation personnel
- Design of data collection tools, data collection activities and data recording
- Data storage, handling, analysis and report writing

Projects are also responsible for identifying the need for - and securing - any necessary ethics approval that may be required, including from national or local ethics committees as appropriate.

1. Development of Evaluation Tools and Data Collection Methods

One aspect of GEC evaluations is to seek to measure the well-being and safety of target beneficiaries. It is therefore important that tools are carefully designed and that the questions are linked to the expected outcome. Key considerations in developing data collection tools include:

- ✓ Who are the target population and do they have any specific needs and risks?
- ✓ Will the methodology present any risk? i.e. Individual Interviews, KIs, FGD, HH/Obs surveys
- ✓ Is there something happening in the geographic area which may present a risk?
- ✓ Will the tools be in the local language and will translations present any risk?
- ✓ Is there a likelihood that the very nature of a question may result in safeguarding information being disclosed? Even if not, it is important to be prepared should a beneficiary make a disclosure. *The FM highly discourages direct questioning of beneficiaries' experience of any form of violence including GBV or sexual violence for purposes of research evaluation as this is triggering and has the potential to be re-traumatizing for survivors. It is clear that even when interviewing children generally, a plan for support should be in place.*
- ✓ Organisations must have a clear, written position and a plan outlining what kind of support will be offered to children involved in research, and how support will be provided. In practice, organisations might have high-level policies on child protection, but a specific protocol³

Even in a situation where questions relate to violence and abuse generally, it is important to ensure that local response services and referral pathways are available and functional. This means organizations without sufficient technical knowledge and experience of GBV will require specialist input. This is also the case if the evaluation is undertaken in an area where few services exist.

These issues will all need to be considered well in advance to determine if there is scope to collaborate with specialized actors who can provide appropriate services to women and girls. It is therefore important to eliminate questions that may lead to disclosures or questions that elicit information which may cause a beneficiary emotional distress. If it is determined this information is required, then there must be a full plan that includes supportive work with participants before, during and after the interview.

All GEC projects should have mapped services within their trusted referral pathways and this should be available to the external evaluator to appropriately provide information on services to participants should a disclosure of abuse/violence be made. Careful consideration of

³ Devries, K, Dipak Naker, Adrienne Monteath-van Dok, Claire Milligan and Alice Shirley, (2016), "Collecting data on violence against children and young people: need for a universal standard", available at: <http://inthehealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/8/3/159.full.pdf+html> page 160

referral pathways and ease of access, along with the distance required to travel to reach these services, should be outlined in the mapping.

2. Additional Requirements to Consider

The sections below list some important requirements in relation to each stage of the evaluation. This is not an exhaustive list, but a starting point to stimulate thinking and discussion about the safeguarding principles that need to be established and practical implications for design and delivery.

3. Recruitment and training of evaluation personnel

Projects and external evaluators should ensure:

- The evaluation team has necessary skills and experience needed in order to conduct the qualitative aspects of the evaluation in a rigorous and robust way. Projects and external evaluators also need to ensure that it is safe for participants take part in evaluation activities. Projects should clearly communicate the need for external evaluators to conduct evaluation activities to the highest safeguarding standards.
- Processes are in place to select enumerators and researchers based on:
 - Safe recruitment practices ensuring that none have a criminal record involving child abuse or other inappropriate behaviour.
 - Experience of collecting data with children, including with vulnerable children where appropriate.
 - Experience of conducting evaluations on the topics that will be explored.
 - Appropriate socio-demographic profiles where this is appropriate (such as ethnic belonging, gender and age where either the context or the research topics make these more pertinent).
- Training on safeguarding is provided to evaluation team members, especially those who will have direct contact with participants. For those involved in data collection, this should include being trained to observe signs of distress or trauma and to pause or stop data collection activities as appropriate. All relevant personnel must also be trained on what further protocols must be followed if such a situation would arise.
- Risks and ethical issues which may affect those working on the evaluation have been considered. Any known risks of harm related to the evaluation should be made clear to evaluation personnel, in particular those involved in data collection. Efforts should be made to minimize these risks protocols should be in place related to enumerator and researcher safety.

4. Choice of Participation and Safeguarding

Projects and external evaluators should ensure:

- Participation rests on informed, voluntary and ongoing consent/assent. A meaningful process for gaining informed, voluntary and renegotiable consent from adults and assent (agreement to take part) from children under the age of 18 must be defined. Consent must not be sought from children, but assent must be sought before any evaluation activities take place. In most (but not all) cases parental/caregiver consent should also be sought. Where

parents/guardians are asked to consent, and children have declined to take part, the rights of the children should be respected.

- Care is taken not to put potential participants under any pressure to give consent or assent to take part in evaluation activities. Evaluators must ensure that participants feel they can say 'no' at any point in the process. Additional consent/agreement should be sought for the use of voice recorders, video equipment or cameras in accordance with a project's CPP.
- Sufficient information is provided to potential participants. This information must be appropriate and accessible, including to children and those who are disabled. At a minimum the information provided should include:
 - The purpose of the evaluation
 - The funder of the evaluation
 - Contact information for the evaluation team
 - Why the individual has been selected for participation
 - What participation in the evaluation will entail
 - Any risks or benefits of participating in the evaluation
 - Provisions for privacy, confidentiality and anonymity and any limitations
 - Future use of information given
 - Right not to participate and to withdraw at any point
- Sampling and recruitment strategies have been developed based on an assessment of potential risks to participants. This is particularly important in contexts where even being seen to talk to a researcher could put someone at risk.
- Survey instruments adhere to best practice and are sufficiently tested before being used to ensure they are age, gender and culturally appropriate.
- Careful thought is given to the location and set up of data collection activities, including considerations related to privacy and who is present. All evaluation participants are able to fully participate, meaning that the location chosen must be fully accessible, the data collection methods used should be adapted where necessary and researchers should be trained and sensitised in regard to including participants with particular needs, including those with disabilities.

5. Data storage, handling, analysis and report writing

Projects and external evaluators should ensure:

- Confidentiality of participants' data at all times and ensure strict administrative, technical and physical safeguards must be in place to protect the confidentiality of participants' data. For instance, when longitudinal sampling or studies are carried out, it is essential that personal information is separated from the panel participants' data.
- Reports should not include disclosures that might have happened during the data collection.
- Data shared with the FM or presented in external communications is anonymised at all times.
- Accurate interpretation of evaluation findings, with any limitations or biases clearly outlined in evaluation reports, with any necessary caveats noted.

- Consistent disaggregation findings, which ensure the voices and perspectives of marginalised groups are reflected.
- To the greatest extent possible, that research participants and communities are informed about the evaluation findings. Projects should consider how findings can be made available, including to children themselves, illiterate individuals and community members with impairments.

Useful Resources

Ellsberg M, and Heise L. Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists. Washington DC, United States: World Health Organization, PATH; 2005 at <https://www.path.org/resources/researching-violence-against-women-a-practical-guide-for-researchers-and-activists/>

Bennouna, C., Mansourian, H. and Stark, L., (2017), 'Ethical considerations for children's participation in data collection activities during humanitarian emergencies: A Delphi review', Conflict and Health 201711:5, available at: <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-017-0108-y>

Devries, K, Dipak Naker, Adrienne Monteath-van Dok, Claire Milligan and Alice Shirley, (2016), "Collecting data on violence against children and young people: need for a universal standard", available at: <http://inthehealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/8/3/159.full.pdf+html>

DFID, (2011), 'DFID ethics principles for research and evaluation', available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67483/dfid-ethics-prcpls-rsrch-eval.pdf

⁴**Engaging Children with disabilities and/or low literacy.** The appropriate age of participation must be established. It is important that the team are trained on how to effectively communicate with children. Informed consent must be obtained from a parent or guardian as well as ascent from the child depending on the age. The age at which children should be asked for their consent also depends on the laws of the country. See summarized principles in the table below. Also consider multi-sensory materials that that have been adapted to ensure inclusive participation for children with additional learning.

Do no harm	Be comforting & supportive	Be reassuring
Help the child feel safe	Talk in a way children will understand	Tell children why you are talking to them
Use appropriate interviewers	Pay attention to non-verbal communication	Respect children's thoughts & beliefs

Handling Disclosures of Violence and Abuse during Evaluation Work

External Evaluators should receive orientation on the case handling framework including reporting and referral channels. For example, all disclosures should be reported to the Designated Focal Person. Specifically, the evaluation team should have received training on the

⁴ <https://gbvresponders.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/GBV-disability-Tool-8-Guidance-for-GBV-caseworkers-Applying-the-guiding-principles-when-working-with-survivors-of-disabilities.pdf>

forms of violence and abuse how to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse and the steps to take following a disclosure. This orientation should be provided prior to starting any field-based work with beneficiaries.

References

1. DFID ethical guidance for research, evaluation and monitoring activities
2. The IRC Caring for Child Survivors Training Manual at <https://gbvresponders.org/response/caring-child-survivors/>
3. GWU/GWI, Gender-Based Violence Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation with Refugee and Conflict-Affected Populations; A Manual and Toolkit for Researchers and Practitioners
4. GEC Combined Recipient Handbook
5. GEC Do No Harm Policy
6. GEC Safeguarding Policy
7. Guidelines for Ethical Research on Sexual Exploitation Involving Children, Ecpat International (December, 2019)

Useful resources

Bennouna, C., Mansourian, H. and Stark, L., (2017), 'Ethical considerations for children's participation in data collection activities during humanitarian emergencies: A Delphi review', *Conflict and Health* 201711:5, available at: <https://conflictandhealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13031-017-0108-y>

Devries, K, Dipak Naker, Adrienne Monteath-van Dok, Claire Milligan and Alice Shirley, (2016), "Collecting data on violence against children and young people: need for a universal standard", available at: <http://inthehealth.oxfordjournals.org/content/8/3/159.full.pdf+html>

Ethical Principles, Dilemmas and Risks in Collecting Data on Violence against Children; A review of available literature, Technical Working Group on Data Collection on Violence against Children Child Protection Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group. Available at <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/6777/pdf/6777.pdf>

DFID, (2011), 'DFID ethics principles for research and evaluation', available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67483/dfid-ethics-prcpls-rsrch-eval.pdf

Graham, A., Powell, M., Taylor, N., Anderson, D. & Fitzgerald, R. (2013). *Ethical Research Involving Children*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, available at: <http://childethics.com/>

GEC Case study

The World Vision Zimbabwe IGATE Program is one of many GEC projects that have taken a robust and proactive approach to safeguarding when undertaking evaluation work. One example of this is recruitment and selection of enumerators.

The IGATE program management team work closely with the External Evaluator to onboard enumerators safely and with a focus on safeguarding. During the first phase of recruitment they solicit applications from double the number of enumerators they actually require. The project management staff felt this is a way to ensure they reach their target number of enumerators. Each potential applicant comes with a background check in hand and with the names of contactable references which are checked and verified. If the candidates progress to the next phase, they are interviewed by a panel and asked a series of questions to gauge empathy and attitudes toward girls. They must also demonstrate a commitment to the ethos of the organization. Once full safeguarding checks are completed, the enumerators attend a specifically designed training. Upon completion they are required to sign a Code of Conduct as well as confirmation they have attended all of the training sessions. The IGATE team regularly review and update the training and closely monitor feedback to ensure training sessions remain relevant and fit for purpose. The project leadership also note the importance of preparation and early planning work. The team stated, *"We have a heavy emphasis on behavioral protocols. They are always present and reinforced. We are diligent and careful when forming field-based teams. All enumerators must be accompanied by a community member. Enumerators are not allowed to work alone. Our M+E Team conduct spot checks regularly and any issues that arise or should any concern be raised via the community reporting channels are responded to immediately"*.

Annex 1.

Safeguarding Checklist for External Evaluators⁵

Activity or operating standard	Responsible	Progress
Is the Safeguarding Policy included as an annex to all contracts?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager</i>	
Has safeguarding been included in all partner assessments (due diligence, organisational capacity assessments etc.) and their capacity building plans?	<i>Example: Grant Officer</i>	
Do all offices have a Safeguarding Reporting Poster? Is the reporting procedure readily accessible by all staff?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager / Safeguarding Focal Point</i>	
Has safeguarding been incorporated into relevant programme implementation and research tools, such as risk assessments, monitoring checklist, workplan and budget, programme learning review tools? If so, how?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager</i>	
Have you undertaken a safeguarding risk assessment and identified risks and mitigation measures which are specific to your programme and the local context?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager</i>	
Have all staff members, subcontractors and consultants (including research partners and their enumerators) received training on safeguarding?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager Safeguarding Focal Point</i>	
Who is the dedicated project Safeguarding Focal Point?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager</i>	
Does the project have an allocated staff member who will deliver safeguarding training to partners and staff?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager; EE</i>	

⁵ The checklist is referenced with permission from the Tetra Tech International Development

	<i>Field Research Manager</i>	
Is safeguarding included in the orientation for all programme visitors together with security briefing? If not, how are project visitors made aware of programme's reporting procedures?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager/ Risk Manager</i>	
Have all staff members, subcontractors and consultants successfully completed national police checks and reference checks?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager/ HR Manager</i>	
Are operational suppliers aware of our safeguarding policy? Do they have a reporting mechanism for beneficiaries, staff and others to report safeguarding concerns? Do they have a safeguarding policy which includes training and/or awareness raising?	<i>Example: EE Programme Manager</i>	