



07 June 2006

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse An update from UNMIL

The United Nations and UNMIL are committed to preventing and sanctioning misconduct, in particular, the abhorrent practice of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). The UN policy is clear - zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse.

In his bulletin on *Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse*, the Secretary-General underscores the required conduct of all UN personnel and stresses the need to create and maintain an environment that is conducive to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. All UN personnel have a duty of care and responsibility, especially to women and children, and are bound to uphold the highest standards of integrity in professional and personal conduct. The United Nations has adopted a three-pronged strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse: prevention, investigation and enforcement.

Prevention

The United Nations has developed a comprehensive standardized training module that focuses on accountability and the consequences of misconduct. Training is primarily carried out by SEA Focal Points from all UN agencies in Liberia and the UNMIL Training Cell.

In 2005, a total of 14,740 UNMIL personnel comprising 1,323 civilian personnel, 350 United Nations Police (UNPOL) and 13,067 military personnel participated in training with a particular emphasis on SEA issues. As part of its on-going advocacy initiative, the Mission regularly conducts refresher training for all UN personnel.

United Nations agencies are responsible for providing training on SEA to implementing partners (including national and international NGOs), who often work on behalf of the UN at community level. Implementing partners are required to adopt a clause in their Codes of Conduct with specific reference to the Secretary-General's bulletin on sexual exploitation and abuse. Failure to comply may lead to cancellation of contracts.

UNMIL established a Conduct and Discipline Unit in 2005 which provides full time capacity to identify and address all issues of misconduct, by all categories of UNMIL personnel. This Unit is responsible for developing strategies and implementing policies designed to ensure compliance with the Secretary General's zero tolerance policy.

Investigation

Allegations of SEA involving UNMIL personnel are automatically investigated by a resident autonomous unit from the Office of the Internal Oversight Service (OIOS), with unimpeded access to personnel; and a reporting chain independent of the Mission management.

In 2005, 45 allegations of SEA were reported to OIOS for investigation. The breakdown of cases investigated is as follows:

- Rape/Attempted rape: 3 cases
- Prostitution: 9 cases
- Sexual exploitation¹: 18 cases
- Sexual abuse²: 2 cases
- Sex with minors³: 13 cases

Enforcement

The following is a summary of the action taken to follow-up on the allegations reported in 2005:

- After preliminary investigation, 3 of the cases were found to be unsubstantiated and closed due to lack of evidence;
- Preliminary investigations were completed in another 24 cases, of which 16 were found to be substantiated;
- Investigations are on-going in the other 18 cases.

Disciplinary action has been taken by UN Headquarters in 6 of the 2005 cases involving UNMIL personnel. For the remaining cases if substantiated, disciplinary action will be taken at the conclusion of the case review.

Following any investigation, disciplinary action is taken against personnel found to have violated the UN Code of Conduct and the provisions of the Secretary-General's bulletin. Disciplinary measures can include repatriation and referral to national courts for criminal prosecution. They can also result in summary dismissal and ineligibility for participation in future UN missions.

The UN's commitment to combating SEA

The United Nations remains determined and vigilant in its efforts to end all forms of misconduct, including SEA. In 2006, 17 cases have been reported all of which are under investigation. The UN will continue to investigate each and every allegation. In substantiated allegations, the perpetrators will be punished. Due process is maintained at all times.

The eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse requires the full commitment and effective participation of all. To this end, the UN is involved in developing an action plan in partnership with the Government of Liberia and national and international organizations, while increasing its own efforts to assist the people of Liberia to live their lives in peace and dignity.

UNMIL will publish an update every six months on the efforts and actions that it is deploying to eliminate the incidence of SEA.

¹ Defined as: "Any 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." (ST/SGB/2003/13)

² Defined as: "Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions". (ST/SGB/2003/13)

³ Defined as any person under the age of eighteen.
