

Overview of services available to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse in Lebanon

Most United Nations entities in Lebanon refer victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel to implementing partners providing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) programmes and services for assistance and support. Some entities, such as UNRWA, provide direct support, including psychosocial support and medical care. The Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA) was not informed of any dedicated services to support victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, nor of any assessment conducted of the need for such services. While there have been few reports of allegations, refugees and migrant domestic workers are particularly at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. Cultural taboos, fear of reprisals, stigma, abandonment and exclusion from families and communities constitute barriers to reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse and access to assistance and support.



*A view of a Syrian refugee camp in the Beqaa Valley of eastern Lebanon. 25 March 2016, Beqaa Valley, Lebanon.
UN Photo/Mark Garten*

Findings and recommendations on United Nations assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse

- **UNRWA provides direct support to SGBV victims that may be accessed by victims of sexual exploitation and abuse**, including an in-house **psychologist**, free **legal services** for civil cases and legal counselling on their rights. It also covers the cost of clinical management of rape services and related **medical care**.
- **United Nations entities refer victims** of sexual exploitation and abuse **to implementing partners** for assistance and support through the established SGBV referral pathways. The SGBV referral pathways include case-management, psychosocial and mental health support, clinical management of rape and medical care, legal services, and safety and protection measures.
- There is **lack of service coverage** in some areas of the country, and **limited shelter services**. Some services are costly which impedes access, as does insufficient awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse reporting mechanisms.
- A Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network, in operation since 2013, is composed of 21 United Nations entities and other international and national organizations; **a dedicated PSEA Coordinator has been in place since early 2020**.
- **The OVRA recommends reinforcing victims' assistance**, including through **sustained follow-up, taking into account victims' views**.
- Considering risk factors, barriers to reporting, the vulnerable situation of many refugees and others receiving United Nations assistance, and the large presence of United Nations personnel, the designation of **a Field Victims' Rights Advocate or Senior Victims' Rights Advocate** or the inclusion victims' rights functions in



the workplan of a staff member **should be considered** in order to build capacity for support in line with a victim-centred and rights-based approach.

- The development of a **United Nations system-wide pooled funding strategy for assistance to victims**, complementary to existing services **should be considered**. Opportunities for joint fundraising by United Nations entities for services for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse should also be explored.
- The **adoption of a system-wide tracking and monitoring mechanism for victims' assistance** that is consistently used and updated **should be considered**. Such a mechanism should include details on referrals for assistance, assistance received and information on service providers.