

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

The United Nations provides support and programming on gender-based violence through implementing partners, which victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff may access. It was reported that the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provided basic assistance and emergency support to victims including medical care, psychosocial support and legal services until its closure in mid-2018. No other examples of direct assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations entities were identified. The levels of poverty and gender inequality and the high incidence of sexual and gender-based violence, heightens the vulnerability of beneficiaries to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. Such acts may remain unreported, as individuals who see transactional sex as their only source of income are unlikely to file complaints.



SGBV One-Stop Centre at Redemption Hospital in Monrovia, Liberia supported by UNFPA and implementing partner Plan International. December 2019, Monrovia, Liberia. UN Photo/Eric Anderson.

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

- **United Nations entities in Liberia do not provide direct services or assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.** Victims can access services provided by implementing partners designed for sexual and gender-based violence. These services are primarily medical care, psychosocial support and legal services through sexual and gender-based violence **One-Stop Centres located in the Greater Monrovia area.**
- A **2018 UN Women assessment of existing services to victims of sexual and gender-based violence** highlighted the significant **gaps in legal services, safety and protection, medical care and psychosocial support throughout the country.** These are **more pronounced in rural settings** outside of the capital Monrovia and other urban centers and directly impact victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- The commitment of senior leadership was found to be critical to guarantee the United Nations Country Team's preparedness to assist victims in an effective and coordinated manner.
- **The Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA) recommends reinforcing victims' assistance,** including through **follow-up,** informed by **victims' feedback.**
- **The OVRA recommends the development of a system-wide strategy** on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) **and a coordinated referral mechanism for victims' assistance.** The lack of a channel for reporting allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse at the county level constitutes an impediment to the provision of victims' assistance.
- The adoption of a **system-wide tracking and monitoring mechanism for victims' assistance** that is consistently used and updated **is recommended.** Such a mechanism should include details on referrals for assistance, assistance received and information on service providers.



- Assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse allegedly perpetrated by UNMIL came to an end with the closure of the Mission in 2018. The current response should be aligned with the responsibilities outlined in the Management and Accountability Framework of the United Nations Development and Resident Coordinator System. The creation of a **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Coordinator** and the **designation of a staff member to follow-up on assistance to victims** of sexual exploitation and abuse **should be considered** to strengthen coordination of the PSEA Network and victim assistance.