

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

In Mali, assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations personnel are provided through available gender-based violence (GBV) services offered by implementing partners. Lack of dedicated services for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse affects victims' access to specific support, most notably legal services. Deeply rooted traditions and cultural and religious beliefs among Malian communities pose barriers to reporting by victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as accessing services and receiving assistance and support. The armed conflict in Mali renders the provision of services in remote areas difficult, particularly in the northern region of the country.



Street scene from Timbuktu, Mali. 31 May 2013, UN Photo/O. Salgado

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

- The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes **provide assistance to, and support for, victims of sexual exploitation and abuse through referral to implementing partners** identified in the GBV Sub-cluster's mapping of GBV services. This mapping, updated in 2019, identified 37 NGOs and 10 networks providing GBV services and support which would be available to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- UNFPA funds the **One-Stop Centre initiative**, offering **medical care and psychosocial support**, under a **partnership with the Ministry of Health**; and **legal services and socio-economic reintegration through implementing partners**. Three centres are currently available for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse in Bamako, Mopti and Gao.
- The Mali Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network established in 2017, and a PSEA Coordinator appointed under auspices of UNFPA are operational. The Network developed **the 2019-2020 PSEA Action Plan** which seeks to strengthen the identification and **management of victims and support** to the PSEA institutional framework set up by the Humanitarian Country Team.
- Two databases are used to track assistance provided to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse: The Gender-based Violence Information Management System, managed by UNFPA; and the Victims' Assistance Tracking System (VATS), managed by MINUSMA's Conduct and Discipline Team.
- **The Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA) encourages** United Nations entities in Mali **to consider a uniform, system-wide recording and tracking mechanism for victims** of sexual exploitation and abuse including the support they receive and follow-up, as well as service providers, possibly building on the VATS.
- As Mali constitutes a peacekeeping setting with a large humanitarian and development presence, **the OVRA recommends the designation or appointment of a Field Victims' Rights Advocate or Senior Victims' Rights Officer** to encourage victims to come forward, support efforts to prevent of sexual exploitation and abuse and guarantee that the response focuses on the rights and dignity of victims, including through the **facilitation of assistance and follow-up**.

