



# Fact sheet on the Secretary-General’s initiatives to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse

**Background:** In March 2017, the Secretary-General outlined a comprehensive four-pronged strategy<sup>1</sup> to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse across the United Nations system.<sup>2</sup> The elements of the strategy are to: (a) prioritize the rights and dignity of victims; (b) end impunity through strengthened reporting and investigations, including clarifying limitations on the United Nations to achieve criminal accountability; (c) engage with civil society and external partners; and (d) improve strategic communication for education and transparency. In the implementation of this strategy, the Secretary-General focused on putting the United Nations “own house in order”—putting in place mechanisms under his authority. In March 2018, the Secretary-General provided an update on the implementation of the strategy.<sup>3</sup>

To enhance coordination and ensure sustained high-level attention on the issue, the Secretary-General extended the mandate of the Special Coordinator to Improve the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse until 31 December 2018. Her role is to coordinate the implementation of the strategy throughout the United Nations system and ensure a harmonized approach through the development of aligned mechanisms and procedures, standardized protocols and tools.

Below are some key initiatives undertaken or built upon in accordance with the Secretary-General’s commitment to combat sexual exploitation and abuse.

## Prioritizing the rights of victims

Initiative	Status
1. Secretary-General appointed first <b>Victims’ Rights Advocate</b> at the Assistant Secretary-General level to strengthen the support that the United Nations gives to victims and ensure that a victim-centred approach is integrated into prevention and response	Appointment completed August 2017; action plan completed December 2017; work ongoing

<sup>1</sup> See A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1.

<sup>2</sup> As part of the strategy to ensure high level engagement in the relevant entities across the UN system, in 2016 a high-level steering group was established including the Chair, Chef de Cabinet; the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support; the Under-Secretary-General for Management; the Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications; the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Violence against Children; the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs; the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator; the Administrator of UNDP; the Executive Director of UNICEF; the High Commissioner for Refugees; the Executive Director of UNFPA; and the Executive Director of UN-Women. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services participates as an observer.

<sup>3</sup> See A/72/751 and A/72/751/Corr.1.





2. Field visits conducted by the **Victims' Rights Advocate** to gain a **first-hand understanding of how United Nations actors operate on the ground** to assist and support victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and make recommendations for further action
3. Establishment of inter-agency working group to facilitate a more timely and effective resolution of **outstanding paternity/child support claims** arising from sexual exploitation and abuse
4. Mapping of **victims' rights approaches/services**: in line with the Secretary-General's instruction in his 2018 report (A/72/751, para. 28), the Victims' Rights Advocate will map out victims' rights approaches and/or services (prevention, medical, psychosocial and legal assistance, livelihood support, accountability) available across the United Nations system and beyond. This will build on existing work and provide a clear **overview of gaps, overlaps, lessons learned and best practices** to inform the development of additional tools, policies and programmes
5. **Field victims' rights advocates** were appointed in the four peacekeeping operations with the highest number of allegations: Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Haiti and South Sudan. Their role is to ensure that a victim-centred, gender- and child-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach is integrated into all activities to support and assist victims in those countries
6. Secretary-General and the **Victims' Rights Advocate** met confidentially and directly with **victims** of sexual exploitation and abuse
7. **Centralized tracking tool for provision of victim assistance** in all peace operations developed by the Department of Field Support (DFS)
8. **Protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse** developed and field-tested by DFS and UNICEF. It provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities of United Nations actors in the field to ensure coordinated and immediate victim assistance
9. **Trust fund** established in 2016 to provide resources to support victim assistance services and projects
10. Development of a **United Nations policy on a human rights-based approach** to sexual exploitation and abuse

Central African Republic, October 2017; South Sudan, December 2017; Haiti, April 2018; Lebanon, August 2018; and Jordan, August 2018

Working group established June 2018; ongoing

Project began August 2018; ongoing

Appointment completed September 2017; work ongoing. Three dedicated positions were approved by the General Assembly in July 2018.

October 2017; ongoing

To be rolled out in fourth quarter of 2018

Field testing began January 2017; the protocol will be updated based on the testing and will incorporate roles of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the field victims' rights advocates.

As at August 2018, the balance of the Fund is some \$2 million. Projects have been launched or are being developed in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia and South Sudan.

Expected completion in fourth quarter of 2018





## Risk mitigation and ending impunity

Initiative	Status
1. Development and distribution to all United Nations entities with a field presence of the <b>“no excuses card” prototype</b> , which sets out the standards and obligations to prevent and report in all official and some local languages. The prototype can be customized to meet the needs of individual organizations	Completed November 2017; distribution ongoing
2. <b>Mandatory prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse training and e-learning</b> required of all peacekeeping, Secretariat, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, UN-Women, and WFP personnel	For peacekeeping since 2016, for Secretariat and other entities since 2017; training ongoing
3. <b>Instituted annual management letter 2017</b> requiring heads of funds and programmes to certify to their governing bodies and the Secretary-General that they reported all credible allegations and the training offered <sup>4</sup>	Completed January 2018
4. <b>Management letter 2018</b> , in which the Secretary-General plans to urge <u>all</u> members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to submit certifications for 2018	November 2018
5. DFS developed a sexual <b>exploitation and abuse risk-management toolkit</b>	Launched June 2018; under implementation
6. <b>Action plans/risk mitigation strategies</b> submitted to the Secretary-General by all entities with field operations and programmes	April 2017: 35 submitted August 2018: 37 submitted
7. <b>Development of guidelines</b> on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in peace operations ( <a href="http://undocs.org/S/RES/2272(2016)">http://undocs.org/S/RES/2272(2016)</a> )	Operationally effective July 2016
8. Development of an electronic tool, <b>“Clear Check”</b> , <sup>5</sup> for screening United Nations personnel dismissed owing to substantiated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or who left the Organization with a pending investigation or disciplinary case	Launched 28 June 2018
9. <b>Incident reporting form</b> (and associated guidance) to ensure uniformity in the collection of information first reports	July 2017
10. <b>Field testing of incident reporting form</b> in the Democratic Republic of the Congo	November 2017–September 2018

<sup>4</sup> Certifications provided by the International Trade Centre, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, UN-Women, the United Nations University and WFP.

<sup>5</sup> The United Nations entities participating in the screening tool are: all Secretariat entities, Food and Agriculture Organization, International Maritime Organization, International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, ITC, International Telecommunication Union, UNAIDS, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, and WIPO.





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| 11. <b>Review of field testing of incident reporting form</b>  | Ongoing, May–September 2018  |
| 12. Development and endorsement of system-wide <b>uniform policy</b> on balancing the disclosure of information to national authorities with principles of confidentiality when receiving and handling allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by persons acting under a United Nations mandate | November 2017  |
| 13. Development of <b>uniform guidelines for investigations of sexual exploitation and abuse</b> to harmonize investigative methods and approaches across United Nations investigative bodies  | Fourth quarter 2018  |
| 14. Adoption of formal/informal <b>community-based complaint mechanisms in all peace operations</b> for receipt of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse  | Established 2016, rolled out to all United Nations entities March 2018                       |
| 15. United Nations finalized and circulated to all agencies, funds and programmes the <b>protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners</b> (led by UNICEF and UNFPA)  | March 2018<br>Translations of Protocol completed (Arabic, English, French, Russian, Spanish) |
| 16. <b>All job openings and hiring letters now specify</b> United Nations values and expectations of conduct and consequences for misconduct   | Completed 2017; ongoing  |
| 17. <b>Staff members required to acknowledge in writing</b> , upon entry, reassignment and on a yearly basis, their knowledge and understanding of United Nations standards of conduct, particularly regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, and the consequences for violating them                | Completed 2017; ongoing  |
| 18. <b>Repository of national laws</b> on sexual exploitation and abuse established at:<br><a href="https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/standards-of-conduct">https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/standards-of-conduct</a>   | To date, 43 legal frameworks submitted   |
| 19. Review of options for <b>harmonization of standards and procedures</b> for non-United Nations international forces authorized under a Security Council mandate   | Ongoing  |

## Engaging with civil society and external partners

Initiative	Status
1. Establishment of a <b>civil society advisory board</b> , comprising leading civil society figures and experts, to provide the Secretary-General with advice on measures to strengthen prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse	October 2018
2. <b>Formal/informal meetings</b> with civil society actors	2017, three formal meetings 2018, two formal and three informal meetings





## Improving strategic communications for education and transparency

Initiative	Status
<p>1. Development of a glossary on sexual exploitation and abuse in the context of the United Nations in English and French  <a href="https://hr.un.org/materials/un-glossary-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-english">https://hr.un.org/materials/un-glossary-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-english</a>  <a href="https://hr.un.org/materials/glossaire-sur-l'exploitation-et-les-atteintes-sexuelles-glossary-sea-french">https://hr.un.org/materials/glossaire-sur-l'exploitation-et-les-atteintes-sexuelles-glossary-sea-french</a></p>	<p>Initiated 5 October 2016; updated 24 July 2017</p>
<p>2. <b>Secretary-General's high-level meeting</b> on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse held on the margins of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly with Heads of State and Government, regional organizations, civil society and United Nations leadership</p>	<p>18 September 2017</p>
<p>3. <b>Voluntary compact</b> on measures for preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse established  <a href="https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/voluntary-compact">https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/voluntary-compact</a></p>	<p>Ongoing. As at 19 September 2018, 99 Member State signatories</p>
<p>4. <b>Circle of leadership on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations</b> comprising Heads of State and Government willing to make a visible commitment to end impunity for sexual exploitation and abuse  <a href="https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/circle-leadership">https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/circle-leadership</a></p>	<p>Ongoing. As at 19 September 2018, 68 sitting and former heads of State/ Government are members</p>
<p>5. Development and Issuance of a <b>Collective Statement of the Members of the Secretary-General's Circle of Leadership</b> on the Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Operations</p>	<p>September 2018</p>
<p>6. <b>Five informal meetings</b> in 2018 chaired by the Secretariat and co-sponsored by permanent mission representatives of the Heads of State and Government who are members of the <b>circle of leadership to share best practices and initiatives</b></p>	<p>May, June, July and 17 and 30 August 2018</p>
<p>7. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse website launched: <a href="http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/">www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/</a></p>	<p>Created July 2017; updated regularly</p>
<p>8. To improve transparency, each quarter the Spokesperson reports publicly on allegations received by all United Nations entities mandated to report to the General Assembly. These allegations are also published online:  <a href="https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/quarterly-updates">https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/quarterly-updates</a></p>	<p>Recurrent: November 2017 and February, May and August 2018; ongoing</p>





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| 9. United Nations produced and aired a film showing the work of the <b>community-based complaint mechanisms</b> .  | September 2017  |
| 10. Development of <b>mobile application</b> featuring training materials for use by field personnel   | Expected completion in September 2018                               |
| 11. DFS launched its new website with a live database of allegations, an <b>online reporting</b> form and a subscription service for database updates<br>( <a href="https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction">https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction</a> )   | January 2017  |
| 12. All peacekeeping missions, as part of their <b>communications strategy on sexual exploitation and abuse</b> , conduct outreach activities to inform communities of the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse and the reporting mechanisms using direct outreach, theatre, radio, television programming and SMS-based and social media campaigns, as well as specific outreach to local media               | Ongoing   |
| 13. <b>UNDP</b> launched a <b>website</b> containing information and resources on combatting sexual exploitation and abuse<br>( <a href="http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/accountability/combating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse.html">http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/accountability/combating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse.html</a> )  | Created fourth quarter of 2017                                      |
| 14. <b>UNFPA</b> launched a <b>website</b> containing information and resources on Protection of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse<br>( <a href="https://www.unfpa.org/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse">https://www.unfpa.org/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse</a> )  | August 2018   |
| 15. <b>UNHCR</b> launched a webpage on addressing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse<br><a href="http://www.unhcr.org/our-fight-against-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.html">http://www.unhcr.org/our-fight-against-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.html</a>   | July 2018   |
| 16. <b>Public information campaign</b> on United Nations efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, featuring a <b>video</b> showing the UN System approach to the Secretary-General's strategy to prevent and respond to SEA (commitments from: Secretary-General, Special Coordinator, VRA, DFS, DPKO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNRWA, UN-Women, WFP, and Field: MONUSCO, Civil Society-MINUSCA) | September 2018 and presented during the 2018 General Assembly weeks |

## Additional

Initiative	Status
1. <b>System-wide survey</b> for United Nations personnel at 30 duty stations with humanitarian and peace operations	Baseline survey: completed September 2016 Second survey: 1 August–September 2017 Third survey: 1 August–30 September 2018







2. Results of **survey disaggregated and shared** with heads of participating entities  
Baseline survey: December 2016  
Second survey: December 2017  
Third survey: to be released December 2018
3. **UN-Women** developed and issued a **sexual exploitation and abuse/sexual harassment handbook** providing a comprehensive overview of the applicable policies and procedures  
June 2018
4. **Gender study** on the causes and consequences of sexual exploitation and abuse to inform the development of strategies and responses  
Concept finalized in February 2018; engaged in outreach for necessary funding
5. **UNRWA** established a **task force on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment** to find innovative ways to ensure that the Agency meets the Secretary-General's and Chief Executives Board initiatives, standards and reporting requirements  
February 2018
6. **WFP** established an **ad hoc joint management and Executive Board committee on sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and whistle-blower protection**.  
First meeting held in May 2018
7. **UNFPA** appointed a **senior focal point for PSEA at the Assistant Secretary-General level**, who is assisted by a full time PSEA Coordinator and an ad-hoc inter divisional working group at the directors' level.  
Ongoing
8. **UNHCR** appointed a **senior coordinator (director)** to lead its work on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment supported by a working-level multifunctional team. The Senior Coordinator reports directly to the Deputy High Commissioner, who **chairs an emergency task force on sexual exploitation and abuse** with director-level membership.  
May 2018
9. **UNHCR** released its sexual exploitation and abuse strategy with an **action plan** taken forward by cross-divisional teams at Headquarters and in the field. Key initiatives include: an evaluative review of UNHCR policies and procedures on sexual exploitation and abuse, the establishment of an independent helpline, a new communication strategy, strengthening of UNHCR investigation capacity and disciplinary processes and reinforced vetting and reference-checking mechanisms  
May 2018  
<http://www.unhcr.org/5b2cb6284>





- 10. **UNICEF** Executive Director issued a public statement on her commitment to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and launched an independent review of UNICEF’s response, aimed at examining what was working and areas that needed improvement; identifying ways of deepening management accountability; and improving the organization’s policies and systems and its responses, as well as its culture  
<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicefs-position-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment>  
February 2018  
Planned completion of the review  
September 2018
- 11. **UNICEF** completed an internal review of sexual harassment investigations, conducted by an independent law firm, as an additional step towards culture change and a zero-tolerance environment  
August 2018
- 12. **UNICEF** amended its programme cooperation agreements and conducted global training for all regional and country offices and partners on the United Nations protocol on allegations involving implementing partners. A toolkit for partners is also under development  
June 2018
- 13. The **UNDP** Administrator has requested all Country Offices to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan to prevent and respond SEA.  
To be completed by 30 September 2018

### Inter-Agency Standing Committee initiatives

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. It is a unique forum involving the key United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian partners. It was established in June 1992 in response to General Assembly resolution 46/182 on the strengthening of humanitarian assistance. IASC principals are the heads of all IASC member agencies or their representatives and meet twice a year, chaired by the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse aims to create a system-wide “culture of accountability” in function and resourcing within each humanitarian organization alongside system-level cohesion, coordination and learning.

Initiative	Status
1. Executive Director of <b>UNICEF</b> appointed Inter-Agency Standing Committee Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse /Sexual Harassment for the humanitarian sector	July 2018 Function previously held by IOM
2. <b>IOM</b> launched a <b>project dedicated to extending technical assistance to humanitarian country teams and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse networks.</b>	Established 2016; ongoing







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| 3. Adoption of <b>formal/informal community-based complaint mechanisms</b> in humanitarian operations to receive allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse  | Established 2016; ongoing  |
| 4. Development of <b>IASC 2016</b> protection from sexual exploitation and abuse <b>toolkit</b> through <b>inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms</b> <sup>6</sup><br><a href="https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-50">https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-50</a> | Rolled out in 2016   |
| 5. <b>Mandatory training</b> and regional training of trainers for <b>community-based complaint mechanisms</b> <sup>7</sup>  | 2017; ongoing  |
| 6. <b>Regional training of trainers</b> held for East Africa, Middle East and North Africa, and Western/Central Africa   | Addis Ababa, completed 8 June 2018<br>Amman, completed July 2018<br>Dakar, completion September 2018 |
| 7. <b>Deployments on request to support or establish preventing sexual exploitation and abuse</b> in-country initiatives   | Bangladesh, 2017, and Syrian Arab Republic, 2018   |

<sup>6</sup> The 2016 toolkit includes the best practice guide for humanitarian actors on inter-agency community-based complaint mechanisms, and the global standard operating procedures on inter-agency cooperation in community-based complaint mechanisms.

<sup>7</sup> Training countries were Chad, Iraq, Lebanon, Malawi, Nigeria, Turkey (refugee response and cross-border Syrian Arab Republic response) and Yemen.

