



United Nations
Office of the Victims'
Rights Advocate

Annual Report 2022



‘My aim is to secure
the application of the
victims’ rights approach
across the United Nations
so their rights and dignity are
recognized and respected’

Jane Connors

Victims’ Rights Advocate

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Imprint

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Cover



OVRA is grateful for the generous *pro bono* support provided by visual artist Livia Mourao (www.nagaiola.com), who produced the cover for this Annual Report.

The portrait, which does not depict a real victim, aims to demonstrate that there is no unique profile of a victim but there is strength in all.

Foreword



Significant progress has been made in realizing the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse since the commencement of my mandate. This year, my Office finalized the methodology for major projects that bring us closer to delivering on the Secretary-General's pledge. The first is the framework for the introduction of a roster of *pro bono* lawyers able to assist victims and the second is a methodology to garner victims' feedback on the investigation process and support they received both to be piloted in 2023. These projects will enable us to identify gaps, promote greater access to support, and continue to develop policies and services that place victims at the centre of preventing and responding to sexual abuse and exploitation.

In 2022, accompanied by Senior Victims' Rights Officers (SVROs), I embarked on a series of visits to States whose personnel have outstanding paternity and child support claims to promote their amicable resolution. These visits will continue in 2023 and beyond.

The SVROs deployed in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Haiti continued to work innovatively in increasingly challenging circumstances. They have been critical in creating an enabling environment which encourages victims to come forward confident they will be heard, and facilitating their access to quality support and services.

In June 2022, during a retreat, the SVROs identified solutions to challenges faced in the field and shared good practices. Together they committed to creating

a framework of practical guidance for future SVROs, as well as codifying the main responsibilities of SVROs and the remit of their work.

In March 2022, I led discussions on ways to expand the network of SVROs across the system, and to ensure that adequate resources are available for those deployed. While much work remains to be done, I am encouraged by an increase in momentum, with United Nations agencies, such as UNOPS, recruiting victims' support specialists for victims of misconduct, including harassment, discrimination, abuse of authority, sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. Together with the nomination of victims' rights focal points in the State of Guatemala, Nepal, State of Palestine and Uruguay, this demonstrates widespread acknowledgement that victims' rights professionals are needed.

To coordinate and align efforts directed at protection and response to sexual abuse and exploitation, in 2022 I began briefing newly-appointed Resident Coordinators on my mandate and the importance of a victim-rights approach in the implementation of their responsibilities set out in their Management and Accountability Framework.

The Office successfully advocated for the inclusion of a reporting indicator in the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) on the number of SVROs in the field and their work. The inclusion of a mechanism through which the United Nations must report progress on efforts taken to address sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel is an important step in

accountability. Despite progress, lack of common system-wide mechanisms to track victims and the assistance they receive, including its quality, limited financial and human resources; and limitations in information-management and sharing, create barriers to achieving just outcomes for victims. We continue to push for the voices of victims to be heard and their rights and dignity integrated at all levels and across all entities of the United Nations.



Jane Connors

Victims' Rights Advocate

Policy

■ Mandate

The Victims' Rights Advocate is tasked to lead efforts to prioritize the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by anyone working for the United Nations or its partners in prevention and response efforts.

With the support of her Office and SVROs in the field, the Victims' Rights Advocate collaborates with State institutions, international intergovernmental and regional organizations and civil society, including national human rights and legal aid organizations, to build networks of support and help ensure that reliable pathways exist for victims to file complaints, assistance is rapidly and sensitively delivered, and victims' rights are protected during any United Nations and national accountability processes.

■ Methodologies to gather victims' feedback

Victims' opinions and experiences in accessing and engaging with support services provide invaluable insight into the effectiveness of support frameworks. To ensure that the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse at country level is informed by their experiences, OVRA finalized a methodology to garner victims' feedback on the assistance and support provided. The methodology will be piloted in 2023.

■ 'Frequently Asked Questions'

In line with the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations

Staff and Related Personnel (A/RES/62/214, Annex), all complainants and victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel have the right to receive assistance and support in accordance with their individual needs, regardless of sex, gender, age, status, or other personal circumstances. In 2022, the Victims' Rights Advocate published a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document outlining the scope and duration of assistance¹ to guide United Nations entities on their obligations in dealing with claims of sexual exploitation and abuse in a victim-centred manner.

¹ 'Frequently Asked Questions on the scope and duration of assistance for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and non-staff personnel', 2022, available at <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/frequently-asked-questions-faqs>.

Statement on victims' rights and standardizing victim-centred policies

The Victims' Rights Advocate continued to consult internally on a draft statement on the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel (the Statement).

The Statement is intended to ensure victims know and understand their rights and serve as a common point of reference for anyone working for the United Nations. Plain language, child-friendly and language versions of the Statement will be produced, as will versions for people with disabilities.

To ensure similar initiatives are aligned, she engaged with the Institute for International Criminal Investigations, which led the drafting of the

Murad Code² that outlines principles on gathering information and evidence from victims of conflict related sexual violence for accountability purposes, as well as InterAction which crafted core standards for survivor-centred support³. She also supported the work led by Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment to formulate the principles and a IASC definition of a victim-centred approach.

2 'Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence', 2022, available at <https://www.muradcode.com/murad-code> ('the Murad Code').

3 'Core Standards for Survivor-Centered Support of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment', 2023, available at: <https://www.interaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Core-Standards-for-Survivor-Centered-Support-of-SEAH.pdf>.

Education and communication on the victim-centred approach

Promoting a victim-centred approach through education and communication is a central component of OVRA's work. In 2022, OVRA, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Secretariat of the Chief Executives Board Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment, designed a training module to provide all United Nations staff and related personnel with a clear and practical understanding of the meaning of the victims' rights approach and what needs to be done to put a victim/survivor first.

The training seeks to equip all United Nations staff and related personnel, irrespective of whether they are providing direct assistance to victims, with the skills and knowledge of how to respond in accordance with the victim-centred approach when they become aware of an allegation of sexual misconduct.

The training module includes a two-minute film, '[I have the right](#)', portraying the perspectives of victims of sexual misconduct by United Nations personnel and highlights the victim-centred approach as critical to preventing and responding to these wrongs, which was released in September 2022 to mark five years since the Secretary-General introduced the United Nations' first Victims' Rights Advocate.

The training module materials can be found on [Victims' Rights First webpage](#), hosted on the United Nations official website. The webpage includes an explanation of the victim-centred approach, outlines the rights of victims, details the impact that sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment have on victims, and provides background of the root causes of these misconducts. The pages also describe the mandate and role of the Victims' Rights Advocate, contain links to the module's materials as well as the opening statement of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the video messages from senior United Nations officials about the importance of the victim-centred approach.

In 2023 the Victims' Rights Advocate will initiate and implement a roster of *pro bono* lawyers and legal aid organizations able to assist victims

■ Legal aid roster

Adequate and timely legal support is essential to realizing the rights of victims, including the right to remedial recourse and financial support through paternity claims. However, accessing legal support remains a significant barrier for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Based on a methodology developed in collaboration with the Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) and OHCHR, in 2023 the Victims' Rights Advocate will initiate and implement a roster of *pro bono* lawyers and legal aid organizations able to assist victims. Once in operation, these lawyers and organizations may be called upon to provide advice on national family law legislation of selected countries and to facilitate the resolution of outstanding paternity and child support claims.

■ Preventing and addressing sexual harassment

The Victims' Rights Advocate's mandate does not extend to providing support to victims of sexual harassment, however she regularly provides informal guidance and advice to victims of sexual harassment. Recognizing the importance of integrating a victim-centred approach in matters relating to sexual harassment, the Chief Executives Board Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations designated the Victims' Rights Advocate to co-lead together with the World Bank the workstream on advancing a victim-centred approach to sexual harassment.

The workstream developed the document, '[Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations](#),' endorsed by the High-level Committee on Management in July 2021. The Victims' Rights Advocate continued to build on this work in 2022 by developing a survey for entities to seek feedback from victims who have used their informal or formal institutional processes to address complaints of sexual harassment.

She also provided regular briefings, including to the Gender Focal Points of United Nations entities, on implementation of the principles.

Advocacy

The Victims' Rights Advocate continued to engage within the United Nations system, with Member States, intergovernmental and regional organizations, civil society and academic institutions to accelerate the Secretary-General's imperative of elevating the rights and dignity of victims. In 2022, she:

- Developed a briefing note for incoming and existing Resident Coordinators on her mandate and the victim-centred approach, and provided in-person briefings prior to their deployment. She also convened online briefings on her mandate for United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and encouraged them to designate a system-wide Victims' Rights Focal Point to uphold the rights and dignity of victims.
- Accompanied by the SVRO in Haiti and a Legal Officer from OLA, in June 2022 the Victims' Rights Advocate advocated for the timely resolution of outstanding paternity and child maintenance claims in two Member States.
- Opened the 'Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Workshop' organized by the UNCT in Guatemala.
- Participated in the UNCT in Sao Tomé and Príncipe's session on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Discussed the integration of a victims' rights approach to building capacity for United Nations/ African Union peace support operations with members of the British Peace Support Team in Kenya.
- Addressed the twenty-fifth Regional Senior Mission Leaders' Course at the International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya.
- In her capacity as a member of the OECD/DAC Reference Group on ending sexual exploitation and abuse, provided comprehensive input on the OECD's draft Toolkit to support implementation of the DAC recommendation on ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.
- Participated in a webinar on Survivor-centred Documentation of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: The Murad Project, hosted by the Institute for International Criminal Investigations and the Nadia Initiative.
- Engaged with academic institutions, national human rights institutions, and civil society by contributing publications and speaking about progress and challenges faced in implementing a victim-centred approach when dealing with sexual abuse and exploitation, including by:
 - Participating in the launch of a policy paper entitled 'Blue on Blue: Investigating Sexual Abuse of Peacekeepers',⁴ organized by the International Peace Institute and the Elsie Initiative.

⁴ 'Blue on Blue: Investigating Sexual Abuse of Peacekeepers', International Peace Institute, available at <https://www.ipinst.org/2022/04/investigating-sexual-abuse-of-peacekeepers#3>

It is essential that all personnel understand how traumatic events may affect a victim's ability to meaningfully participate in proceedings

- Speaking at the Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs.
- Taking part in a webinar at the University Padjadjaran in Badung, Indonesia on the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Presenting at the Civil Society Organizations' Townhall Meeting on ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in Global Health.
- Briefing the Humanitarian Practice Network on how the presence of a dedicated United Nations advocate on the ground tasked with prioritizing victims' rights makes a real difference to victims.
- Participating in a panel discussion on the rights of victims of sexual misconduct, organized by the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- Receiving an honorary degree from the University of Reading in recognition of her role leading the UN's efforts to uphold the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Convened the fourth session of the Community of Practice for OVRA interns, allowing past, present and future interns to stay in touch and discuss issues related to the Victims' Rights Advocate's mandate.

■ System-wide advocacy

Victims of sexual exploitation and abuse often present with unique vulnerabilities that make traditional forms of investigative and disciplinary processes unsuitable for achieving a victim-centred approach. It is essential that all personnel assisting, investigating, or acting on behalf of or interacting with victims of sexual abuse and exploitation understand how traumatic events may affect a victim's ability to meaningfully participate in proceedings.

Following a review of judgments issued by the Tribunals of the United Nations administration of justice system, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate identified good practices and gaps in dealing with victims of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. The Victims' Rights Advocate briefed judges, registrars, and lawyers tasked with dealing with these types of victims' rights issues that may arise before the United Nations Dispute Tribunal and the United Nations Appeals Tribunal.

The Victims' Rights Advocate will continue this work and will formulate guidance on how a victim-centred approach can contribute to the administration of justice system.

Partnerships

■ INTERPOL

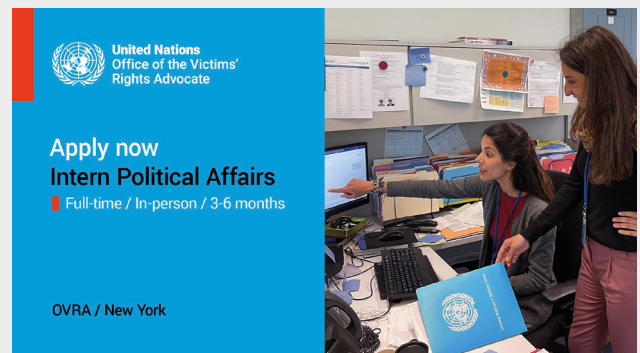
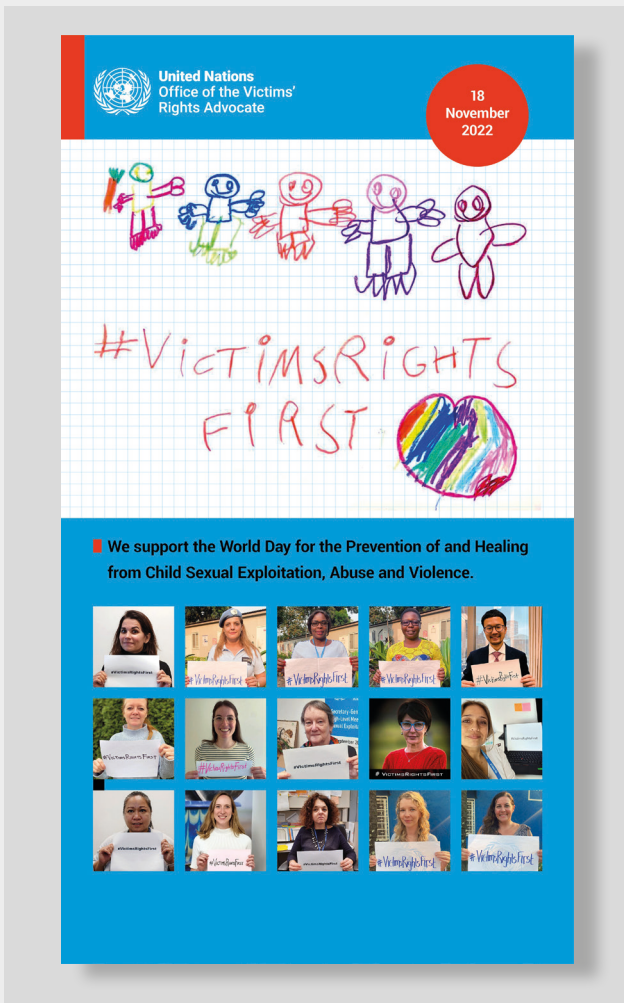


Confronting sexual exploitation and abuse requires a collaborative effort. Recognizing the critical role that law enforcement plays in prevention and response efforts, in 2022 OVRA began engaging with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The Victims' Rights Advocate looks forward to working with INTERPOL to identify opportunities for collaboration, including ways in which their network may be leveraged to improve investigative practices in matters relating to sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations personnel and related partners.

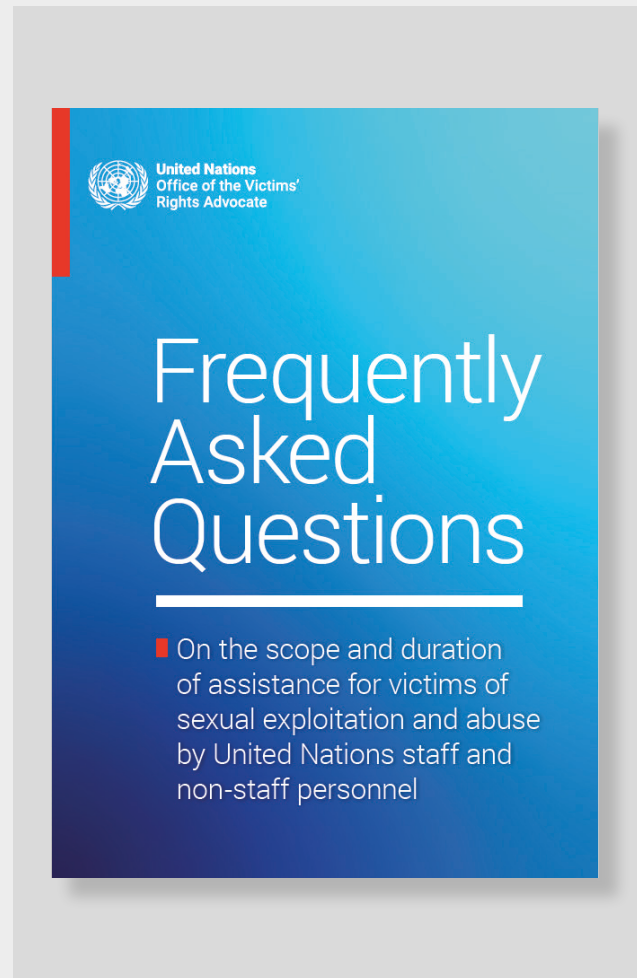
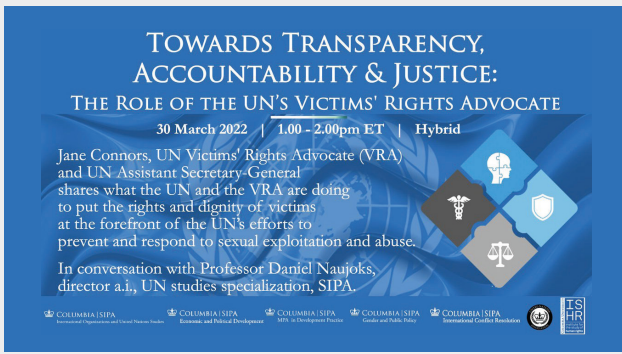
■ GANHRI



National human rights institutions will play a significant role in supporting the delivery of legal aid and *pro bono* legal advice to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2023, OVRA anticipates working closely with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and its member institutions to support implementation of the legal aid roster.



Selected media | Top left: Social media card marking International Translation Day, thanking the language professionals who are working to ensure that victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are heard, and their rights and dignity respected and upheld, September 2022. Top right: Social media card from the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate's #VictimsRightsFirst campaign, highlighting the rights of victims of sexual misconduct, posted during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign, November 2022. Middle/bottom left: Social media card marking the first World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence, November 2022. Middle right: Social media card advertising a Political Affairs Intern position with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, May 2022. Bottom right: Social media card introducing Senior Victims' Rights Officer, a.i. Valeria Bove in Bangui, Central African Republic, November 2022.



Events and publications | Top left: Invitation to a presentation by Victims' Rights Advocate Jane Connors on the Role of the United Nations Victims' Rights Advocate, Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs, March 2022. Top right: 'Frequently Asked Questions' document released by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, October 2022. Middle left: Invitation to a presentation by Victims' Rights Advocate Jane Connors at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, November 2022. Bottom left: Victims Rights' Advocate, Senior Victims' Rights Officers, Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate staff, the Director of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance, and Conduct and Discipline team members, at Senior Victims Rights' Officers Retreat, Entebbe, June 2022. Bottom right: Victims' Rights Advocate Jane Connors and members of the British Peace Support Team in Kenya at an International Peace Support Training Centre course, March 2022.

Operational

Country visits

Visiting countries and meeting directly with victims of sexual exploitation and abuse enables the Victims' Rights Advocate to gain invaluable insight on how United Nations entities are delivering support and what gaps may need to be addressed.

The Victims' Rights Advocate visited South Sudan from 18 to 25 September 2022, where she met with United Nations actors, State officials, members of the diplomatic community, and civil society, including the South Sudan National Human Rights Commission and Juba University students and administrators.

Emphasizing the need to ensure that accountability measures focus on victims, the Victims' Rights Advocate encouraged stakeholders to reduce barriers to reporting, improve communication with victims, and provide adequate multi-disciplinary support. During her visit, the Victims' Rights Advocate also conducted a site visit to a United Nations Population Fund-led project implemented by the non-governmental organization Hope Restoration South Sudan and resourced by the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Trust Fund).⁵

⁵ The Trust Fund is intended to provide funds to address gaps in services for victims, and is financed through voluntary contributions from 24 States and payments withheld from United Nations personnel with substantiated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Further information is available at: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/trust-fund>.

Supporting the collection of DNA samples

Obtaining child support is essential to realizing the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and children born as a result of these misconducts.

The stigma often faced by victims and these children and the financial insecurity limit their access to necessary services such as medical support, education, and shelter. Children born of sexual exploitation and abuse usually do not enjoy the support of their fathers, and ancillary rights such as citizenship and are denied knowledge of their heritage.

In December 2022, one of OVRA's staff travelled to Liberia to assist a Nigerian Government delegation to address the rights of 31 children born to 28 victims of sexual exploitation and abuse involving members of the Nigerian military formerly deployed to United Nations Mission in Liberia by securing DNA samples.

During the process, which marks a proactive step towards holding the perpetrators accountable, the OVRA representative supported victims and advised the delegation on how to implement appropriate victim-centred policies and safeguarding procedures.

However, it is only the first step in proving paternity and securing child support which depend largely on the positive engagement of Member States, effectiveness of domestic family law frameworks, and victims' access to legal representation.



Country visits | Top: Senior Victims' Rights Officer, a.i. Valeria Bove and the Conduct & Discipline Team of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) training United Nations police officers on the victims' rights approach to tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, November 2022. Bottom: Victims' Rights Advocate Jane Connors visiting the Women and Girls Friendly Space Trust Fund Project in South Sudan, September 2022, UN Photo.

Senior Victims' Rights Officers

Throughout 2022, SVROs deployed in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and South Sudan strengthened collaboration on realizing victims' rights to support and assistance.

Advocating across the United Nations system and civil society organizations, including national human rights institutions and States, the SVROs demonstrated that the presence of a dedicated and trusted person on the ground is essential in realizing the dignity and rights of victims.

In June 2022, OVRA convened the first retreat of SVROs in Entebbe, Uganda. The retreat provided an opportunity for SVROs to identify solutions to challenges faced in the field and share good practices, which informed the development of a special framework for practical guidance for newly deployed SVROs.

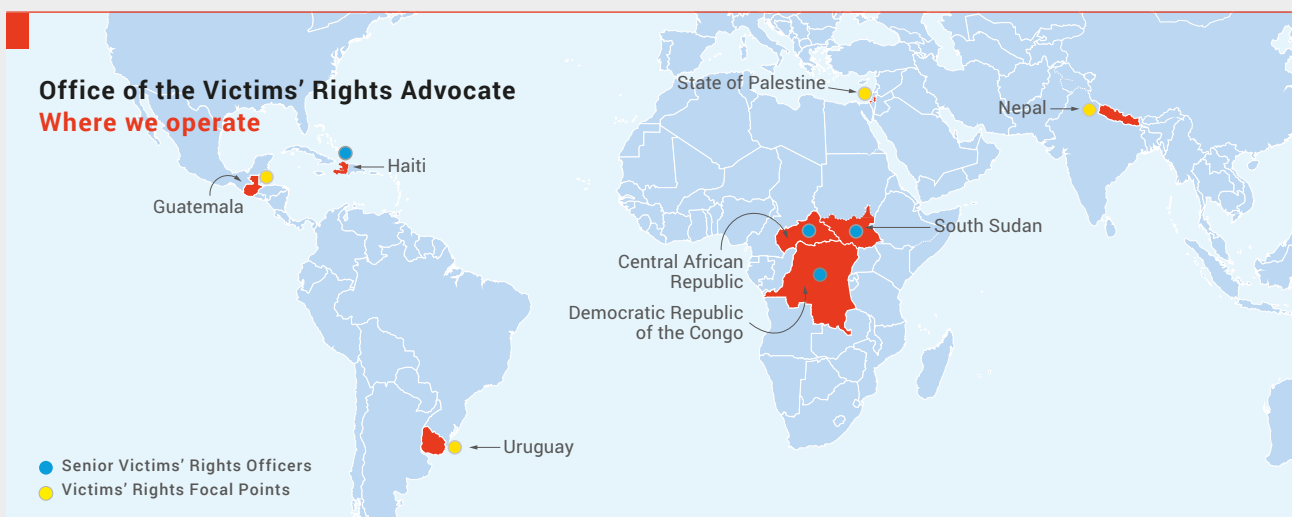
In meetings with donors and other United Nations agencies, the retreat also served as an important reminder that tackling sexual abuse and exploitation requires a collaborative effort. As the year progressed, SVROs continued to seek opportunities to partner with UN entities, fostering a holistic approach to the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Central African Republic

From February to April 2022, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) deployed a staff member to support the SVRO, and together they provided support to victims.

An OVRA staff member acted as the SVRO *ad interim* from August to December 2022. From November 2022, OVRA deployed a Junior Professional Officer to serve for one year in support of the SVRO, a.i. The SVRO a.i. in 2022:

- Engaged with the UN entities and other interested stakeholders to foster cooperation, build partnerships and maximize internal resources available to respond adequately to victims' needs.
- Participated in the multidisciplinary team established by the Secretariat to examine, in close collaboration with MINUSCA, the factors that contributed to the receipt of a higher number of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to peacekeepers in 2021.
- Supported victims in Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) investigations, including by attending interviews, arranging safe transport, locating shelters and connecting them with existing sexual and gender-based violence services.



Advocating across the United Nations system and civil society organizations, SVROs demonstrated that the presence of a dedicated and trusted person on the ground is essential in realizing the dignity and rights of victims

- Supported the safe relocation of victims including ensuring protection services for the victims and the families.
 - Led the implementation of a project to provide assistance and support to victims in the Alindao region, funded by the Trust Fund to be implemented by NGURE TI BATANGO YE SO A NGÔRO E (NBY).
 - Supported the digitalization of the mapping of available gender-based violence services in the country funded by the World Bank, and led by UNFPA, with the Government and other United Nations entities, civil society and international and local non-governmental organizations.
 - Facilitated collaboration between the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA and the Global Survivors' Fund to provide support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by non-United Nations personnel serving under a Security Council mandate.
- of the local community of the United Nations zero tolerance policy against sexual exploitation and abuse, the victims' centred approach and the availability of victims' assistance. The IPO also supported the SVRO to follow up on the victims and the assistance provided to them.

In 2022, the SVRO:

- Worked closely with a full-time certified psychologist to facilitate case management and support for victims to deliver continuity and quality care.
- Assisted the delivery and monitored the implementation of a Trust Fund financed project across six regions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo aimed at strengthening victims' capacity to sustain themselves, and providing medical and psychosocial assistance.
- Facilitated the collection of DNA samples from victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and their children to support the resolution of paternity claims.
- Supported victims in OIOS investigations, including by attending interviews with them, arranging safe transport, locating shelters and connecting them with existing sexual and gender-based violence services.
- Introduced a WhatsApp number that enabled her efficiently and effectively to follow up on victims' wellbeing, provide updates on the status of their matters, and facilitate contact with her 24/7.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

From January 2022, the Police Commissioner in United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), deployed an International Police Officer (IPO) to support the SVRO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The IPO, along with the Special Police Team for Sexual and Gender-based Violence raised awareness

- Facilitated legal assistance to progress paternity claims for seven victims following collection and matching of DNA samples.

While there has been some progress, the security situation in Goma and its surrounding areas negatively affected the work of the SVRO and provision of assistance to victims. Some victims with children born of sexual exploitation and abuse were unable to participate in DNA sample collection exercises as they could not be brought to Goma due to increased security risk and the presence of armed groups, including on the roads.

The SVRO continues to work with service providers to facilitate support to victims remotely, without putting their lives at risk. However, the absence of DNA samples obstructs progress in realizing paternity claims.

Haiti

In Haiti, the SVRO worked both on the ground and remotely to provide support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2022, the SVRO:

- Supported OIOS to conduct remote investigations by assisting investigators to contact victims, and ensuring that interviews and evidence gathering from victims were done in a respectful manner in line with their rights and dignity.
- Closely monitored the medical, psychosocial, educational and economic empowerment support to mothers/caregivers and children born of sexual abuse and exploitation, and based on feedback received from mothers/caregivers, advocated for improvements in the design and delivery of future assistance.
- Advanced the resolution of sexual exploitation and abuse related paternity and child maintenance cases by mobilizing Member States and *pro bono* lawyers to act on behalf of victims.

- Referred victims in need of lifesaving assistance or who were at risk of harm to IOM and OHCHR.

- Accompanied the Victims' Rights Advocate on visits to two Member States to encourage them to take a victims' rights-based approach to the amicable resolution of outstanding paternity and child maintenance cases.

- Collaborated with the Resident Coordinator's Office to strengthen the response of the United Nations system in Haiti to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by implementing partners.

- Provided timely updates to victims on the status of their cases through a combination of face to face, telephone, and written communication.

In the second half of 2022, the deteriorating security situation and an outbreak of cholera negatively impacted the ability of the SVRO to support victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

The SVRO continued to provide remote support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, however she observed that the lack of face-to-face contact with victims and limited means to respond to victims' increasing humanitarian needs made it challenging to maintain their trust and confidence.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, the SVRO advocated for system-wide alignment, coherence and institutionalizing victims' assistance. In 2022, the SVRO:

- Worked with the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Taskforce to create the first draft of a pilot tracking system which will underpin the development of a system-wide victims' assistance tracking tool to support provision of quality and appropriate assistance and accountability for remedial actions.

The nomination of victims' rights focal points in Guatemala, Nepal, the State of Palestine and Uruguay demonstrates widespread acknowledgement that victims' rights professionals are essential on the ground

- Provided critical guidance and leadership in the development of a project, now financed by the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, to enhance service providers' capacities and deliver specialized services and livelihood support to victims. The project is currently implemented in Bentiu, Bor, Malakal and Pibor.
- Engaged with the Human Rights Division in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), rule of law, and child protection practitioners to ensure that rights-based, gender and child-sensitive support and assistance is available to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Facilitated timely updates to victims on the status of their cases through a combination of face to face, telephone, and written communication.
- Engaged with the capacity-building unit of the UNMISS Human Rights Division to facilitate victims access to legal aid, conduct joint training and develop strategies for advocacy.

Focal Points for Victims' Rights

The nomination of victims' rights focal points by UNCTs and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Networks in Guatemala, Nepal, the State of Palestine and Uruguay demonstrates widespread acknowledgement that victims' rights professionals are essential on the ground.

In 2022, the victims' rights focal points continued

to garner support for victims, providing them with access to essential services and advocating for their rights.

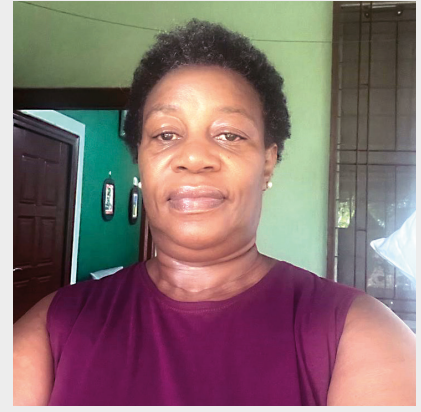
Guatemala

In Guatemala, the UNCT-appointed victims' rights focal point worked to strengthen community reporting pathways and continued to map essential services for victims across the country. The focal point was instrumental in operationalizing UNCT's first community-based complaint mechanisms and victim assistance strategy.

The victims' rights focal point engaged with communities to raise awareness of the newly established sexual exploitation and abuse hotline and sought feedback from victims and complainants on their experience of the available United Nations complaint mechanisms. This feedback was used to inform the preparation of the 'Communications Action Plan.'

Nepal

In Nepal, the UNCT's victims' rights focal point provided on the ground assistance to victims, and oversaw the strengthening of Victims' Rights Advocate's policies in the country. The UNCT finalized, in consultation with OVRA, the 'Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Assault Standard Operating Procedures' (SOP). The SOP explicitly sets out the need to ensure that a victim-centred, gender- and child-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach is taken when preventing sexual exploitation and abuse



Portraits | Top left: Senior Victims' Rights Officer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mihaela Aurelia Pórumb. Top middle: Senior Victims' Rights Officer in Haiti, Ritu Gambhir. Top right: Senior Victims' Rights Officer in South Sudan, Maria Nakabiito. Middle left: Senior Victims' Rights Officer, a.i in the Central African Republic, Valeria Bove. Middle centre: Associate Expert, Central African Republic, Theresa Friedrich. Middle right: Victims' Rights Focal Point the State of Palestine, Marta Agosti. Bottom left: Victims' Rights Focal Point in Guatemala, Ana Graciela Cabrera. Bottom middle: Victims' Rights Focal Point (alternate) in Guatemala, Paola Alejandra Maria Estrada Sosa. Bottom right: Victims' Rights Focal Point in Uruguay, Annika Gostowski.

and providing assistance and support to victims. The publication of the SOP marks a welcome step towards a more coordinated and standardized victim-centred response to complaints.

To accompany the SOP, the focal point worked with the PSEA Coordinator to compile case studies on good practices. In 2023 a new victims' focal point will be appointed to replace Inah Fatoumata Kaloga whose assignment has ended in Nepal.

State of Palestine

In Palestine, the UNCT appointed its first system-wide victims' rights focal point in November 2022. The focal point created an annual work plan and delivered two training sessions on the victims' rights approach and the Victims' Assistance Protocol.

The UNCT also appointed a cohort of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse trainers and introduced a mentoring programme. The focal point identified two cases where practices and investigations had not been victim-centred and worked with the entities involved to support the development of better investigation practices, including by ensuring that survivors and their families are updated and informed during the process.

Uruguay

In Uruguay, the UNCT appointed the victims' rights focal point in December 2022. She has facilitated meetings between the Victims' Rights Advocate, Government officials and others to support the resolution of paternity claims. She continues to raise awareness on the Victims' Rights Advocates' mandate and encourages the implementation of victim-centred policies in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.



United Nations
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Rights Advocate

