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Guidelines

United Nations Military Commanders' Guidelines on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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UNITED NATIONS MILITARY COMMANDERS' GUIDELINES ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

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A. PURPOSE AND RATIONALE

1. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) violates the rights and dignity of victims and breaks the trust of the communities that the United Nations serves. The implementation of measures to prevent and respond to SEA within the military component is an operational requirement. This guidance aims to promote transparency from commanders in the reporting and handling of cases of SEA involving military personnel in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs), to ensure the accountability of perpetrators. All measures to prevent and respond to SEA are referred to as Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).
2. These guidelines provide support to military commanders in United Nations PKOs and SPMs in implementing appropriate measures to prevent and respond to SEA. The guidelines also provide a monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with measures to prevent and respond to SEA.

The Aide Memoire (Annex A) to these guidelines, the Commanders' Guide to the Prevention of Misconduct and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Annex B), and the Suggested Disciplinary Checklist for Field Commanders (Annex C) outline command and control responsibilities, and information on how to systematically prevent, identify and respond to incidents of SEA committed by the military component in United Nations peace operations, whether on or off duty. They also enhance military commanders' awareness of broader United Nations initiatives to address SEA within the United Nations system.

B. SCOPE

3. These guidelines shall apply to military commanders at all levels in United Nations PKOs and SPMs. The guidelines consider UNSCR 2272¹, and ST/SGB/2003/13². The standards set out in United Nations guidance, particularly ST/SGB/2013/23, are incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding signed by Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) with the United Nations and are directly applicable to military contingents. They are to be read together with existing United Nations system-wide policies and guidance on measures to prevent and respond to SEA, including upholding the rights and dignity of the victims in line with the victim-centred approach³. Compliance with these guidelines is required.
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C. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

4. All United Nations personnel are required to act in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and conduct⁴. They shall always discharge their functions and regulate their behavior according to United Nations standards of conduct and discipline considering the best interest of the local community in furtherance of the mandate under which they serve. In addition, the United Nations has a zero-tolerance policy for SEA and for inaction where SEA cases arise. It mandates personnel to take appropriate measures to prevent a breach of this policy. The following acts constitute SEA:
 - a. Sexual relationships between United Nations personnel and beneficiaries of assistance, including host populations where peace operations are conducted as inherently unequal power dynamics exist.
 - b. Sexual activity with a child, a person under the age of 18, regardless of the local age of consent or local age of majority. This includes online and telephone interactions of a sexual nature. Any sexual activity with a child is sexual abuse and may constitute rape. It is a human rights violation and a criminal offence.

¹ See: UN Security Council Resolution 2272 on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2016)

² See: Secretary-General's Bulletins (ST/SGB/2003/13) Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

³ See: Victims' Rights First: <https://www.un.org/en/victims-rights-first>

⁴ See: Policy on Accountability for Conduct and Discipline in field missions 2015

- c. Sexual activity in exchange for money, food, employment, goods, or any other benefit or services including sexual favours or any other form of humiliating, degrading, or exploitative behavior.
 - d. Sexual activity with sex workers even if it is practiced, tolerated and/or legal in the host country or the country of origin of the perpetrator.
 - e. The use of information and communication technology (i.e., computers, phones) as a means to sexually abuse and/or exploit an individual constitutes SEA and is prohibited conduct. This includes sharing or requesting sexual images, videos, and/or messages without consent, making public or threatening to make public private or sexual images without consent (“sextortion”), exchanging money, goods, or services for sexual images, etc.
5. SEA causes physical, emotional, psychological, and social harm in various forms:
- a. It harms victims’ minds, and bodies, and violates human dignity and rights. Victims are exposed to risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections and/or becoming pregnant.
 - b. Victims and children born as a result of SEA by United Nations personnel may face stigma and suffer from lifelong disadvantages characterized by trauma, discrimination, and poverty.
 - c. SEA harms the families of victims and their communities.
6. Acts of SEA by uniformed personnel damage the reputation and credibility of the United Nations and the TCC involved. Therefore, SEA undermines the ability of the United Nations and the TCC to implement its mandate to protect civilians.
7. Military personnel who engage in SEA will suffer the following consequences:
- a. Termination of the United Nations assignment and disciplinary repatriation.
 - b. Disciplinary consequences by national authorities, which can lead to dismissal, imprisonment, and other sanctions (e.g., fines).
 - c. Loss of financial benefits.
 - d. Banishment from future United Nations peace operations.
 - e. Repatriation of an entire contingent or unit upon credible evidence of widespread and/or systemic SEA in accordance with United Nations UNSCR 2272⁵.
 - f. United Nations military commanders who fail to exercise their command-and-control function to prevent and respond to SEA shall be held responsible and

⁵ See: [S/RES/2272\(2016\)](#)

accountable and will face administrative and/or disciplinary actions including disciplinary repatriation.

- g. Military personnel are liable to pay child support for children born as a result of SEA.

D. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 8. **United Nations Military Commanders at various levels.** The Head of Military Component (HoMC) is responsible for operational command and control over all United Nations military personnel and units in the mission and must establish the military operational chain of command under the Policy on Authority, Command and Control in Peacekeeping Operations⁶. Commanders of military contingents are responsible, under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations Headquarters and the TCC, for the discipline and good order of all members of the contingent while assigned to United Nations PKOs and SPMs. United Nations military commanders at all levels are accountable and responsible for the conduct of their subordinates. In United Nations SPMs, the principles of the Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations apply, although not in its entirety.
- 9. Preventing and responding to SEA is a fundamental operational requirement that is directly related to the performance of the contingent. It is not a peripheral issue. Continually integrating efforts to improve mission effectiveness is mandatory to prevent SEA. To share responsibility, commanders should consider clear delegation and coordination including assigning tasks to Military Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (MPSEA) Advisors and Focal Points (FP), key staff officers, and across section/unit leaders.
- 10. Responsibilities of the HoMC (or equivalent in United Nations SPMs environment):
 - a. Serve as role models in the implementation of the United Nations PSEA policies and guidelines.
 - b. Develop and issue additional guidance (Directives, SOP, Orders) on PSEA considering the risk and vulnerabilities of the mission area and operating environment including cultural context. This is to be done in coordination with the mission Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) or FP to ensure alignment and integration with the mission's SEA risk management efforts.
 - c. Ensure, through relevant staff, that all subordinates understand the standards of conduct expected of them and take all necessary steps to prevent and respond to acts of SEA, including increasing patrols of military police in high-risk areas.

⁶ See: Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

- d. Identify and appoint a trained and experienced MPSEA Adviser at the Force Headquarters (FHQ) to assist in all matters relating to SEA. If there is no such person available, the HoMC should consult with the CDT to discuss what support could be initially provided for the individual taking on this role.
- e. Ensure MPSEA Advisers have sufficient time to perform their functions and responsibilities and engage with other relevant stakeholders.
- f. Maintain close coordination with CDT and FPs, Senior Victims' Rights Officers (SVRO)/FPs, and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in the mission area in the collective effort to prevent and respond to SEA.
- g. With support from CDT and FPs, SVRO/FPs, and the UNCT PSEA Network, ensure that commanders and MPSEA Advisors/FPs are familiar with survivor assistance referral pathways so that victims can swiftly access support as needed.
- h. Ensure that, through the FHQ training staff, all uniformed personnel have completed in-mission training and other related training on the United Nations standards of conduct on SEA, including on the victim-centred approach, at the beginning of deployment (at most within the first month). PSEA training should be continuous and include workshops, briefings, dialogue, scenario-based exercises, and case studies to enhance awareness. Where possible, the training should also be specific to the culture and norms of the particular TCC.
- i. Ensure that, through relevant staff, PSEA is integrated into operational and risk assessments, planning, conduct, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation at all levels through regular updates with commanders, CDT, etc.
- j. Ensure SEA risks and vulnerabilities within missions/Areas of Responsibility (AOR) are assessed and understood. Ensure a military component Action Plan is developed that outlines concrete measures to prevent and respond to SEA for the mission. This is to be done in coordination with the mission CDT/FP to ensure alignment and integration with the mission's SEA risk management efforts.
- k. Provide resources through mission support to contingents to address physical conditions such as porous perimeters and lacking base facilities that increase risks for misconduct including SEA.
- l. Continuously assess and regulate the management of Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs) to improve accountability and mitigate the risks of SEA.
- m. Through relevant staff, ensure accurate maintenance of nominal roles by contingents and personnel to enhance record keeping for the United Nations military component. This can be used to support investigations into SEA allegations.
- n. Ensure commanders know where all their troops are deployed. Support

commanders to regularly visit troops in the field, at least monthly, including unannounced visits. Priority should be given to those units deployed to remote locations with challenging living conditions or where heightened risks of SEA have been identified, like TOBs.

- o. Issue clear and unequivocal messages on PSEA during troop parades, in meetings, field visits, etc., to ensure that all uniformed personnel understand prohibited conduct and consequences. Emphasize the need to adhere to internal rotations of troops and allow for leave.
- p. Ensure that all staff/troops are familiar with available reporting channels should they become aware of an allegation of SEA. Ensure commanders have been fully briefed on how to respond should someone report SEA.
- q. Ensure PSEA is a part of the handover and takeover of HoMC. The briefings must cover conduct and discipline issues, and include measures taken to prevent and respond to SEA, as well as recent misconduct violations, paternity claims, investigations, and follow-up actions, high-risk TCCs and/or areas of deployment.
- r. Through relevant institutional structures, ensure that appropriate and effective actions are taken against perpetrators in accordance with United Nations system-wide policies and guidance.
- s. Undertake periodic reviews/evaluations of capability gaps that identify where commanders and any part of the military component need more staff or structural support to fulfill their obligation on prevention and response to SEA directives.
- t. Establish specialized PSEA teams as appropriate to the AOR.

11. Responsibilities of United Nations Military Commanders at all levels

- a. Serve as role models in the implementation of the United Nations PSEA policies and guidelines.
- b. Attend PSEA training for commanders, including training on the victim-centred approach, which draws attention to the diversity of victims and the impact that misconduct has on them and their communities, as well as on the family of the perpetrators.
- c. Verify contingents have trained MPSEA FPs and National Investigation Officers (NIO) upon deployment according to the Status of Unit Requirements (SURs) and advise the Commander accordingly.
- d. Ensure there are well-equipped and qualified MPSEA FP at the Sector HQ, and at Battalion/Unit level. Ideally the MPSEA FP focuses solely on the specific task acting as FP, assisting contingents and other commanders, staff, and units to implement PSEA measures.

- e. Ensure all United Nations military personnel attend in-mission training, and other related training on United Nations standards of conduct on SEA at the beginning of their deployment to peacekeeping operations and SPMs (at most within the first month). Commanders should customize SEA training for each TCC based on their language and culture.
- f. Ensure that all troops are familiar with available reporting channels should they become aware of an allegation of SEA. Ensure that they have been fully briefed on how to respond should someone report SEA.
- g. Ensure and continuously maintain updated record of nominal rolls of all military personnel deployed in the AOR under their command, which can be used as evidence in SEA investigations.
- h. Incorporate PSEA in operational assessment, planning, reporting and evaluation, to strengthen prevention and response measures.
- i. Work collectively with CDT and SVRO/FP, United Nations Police and UNCT in AOR, convene regular consultative meetings to regularly exchange information and updates about SEA concerns, risks, and corrective measures.
- j. Undertake regular risk assessments in coordination with the CDT or FP in line with the mission-wide misconduct/SEA risk register and workplans within the framework of the United Nations SEA Risk Management Toolkit⁷.
- k. Prepare/design coordinated localized PSEA action plan considering specific mission/operating environments where risks and population vulnerabilities differ. Regularly review the plans to ensure they remain relevant.
- l. Collectively work with CDT, SVRO/FP, and UNCT to increase PSEA awareness among the local population through PSEA awareness campaigns and patrols including participating in community engagement to sensitize the local population on PSEA.
- m. Consult with CDT, SVRO/FP, and the UNCT PSEA Network to understand the victims' assistance referral pathways to so that victims can swiftly access support as needed.
- n. Know where all your troops are deployed by physically visiting the deployments. Ensure frequent visits to these deployments including unannounced visits to assess risks and vulnerabilities. Commanders deployed in TOBs should regularly review the environment around them and ensure preventative and awareness measures are in place.

⁷ See: https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpko-dfs_sea_risk_toolkit_28_june_2018_modified.pdf

- o. During patrols, ensure troops are briefed on measures to prevent SEA including monitoring the movement and interaction of troops with the population.
- p. Define off-limits areas and/or premises where prostitution and/or human trafficking is known or suspected to occur.
- q. Establish and enforce curfews where necessary, hold violators accountable, and apply restrictions to prevent personnel from visiting off-limits places.
- r. Ensure there is effective entry and exit control to United Nations camps/barracks/and bases. Do not allow unauthorized persons access to the camp (e.g., children and guests). Regularly inspect security perimeters to identify gaps, holes, etc. and have them immediately repaired to avoid unauthorized entry or exit. Ensure watch towers do not contain sleeping mats or beds; ensure empty shipping containers are not accessible.
- s. Ensure no United Nations vehicles are seen parked close to premises where prostitution is known or suspected to occur. No United Nations vehicles are allowed to carry unauthorized passengers.
- t. Implement all possible control measures to monitor movement of troops including maintaining nominal roles of the movement of personnel.
- u. Monitor activities around the United Nations camps/barracks and any interaction between United Nations troops with the population, which may exacerbate situations of vulnerability and power imbalances, including SEA.
- v. Monitor and track disciplinary non-SEA infractions, as these may be a warning sign of indiscipline that could raise the risk of SEA. This could be a culture of impunity where the commander is turning a blind eye and ignoring more serious forms of misconduct such as SEA.
- w. Consider adopting additional measures to maintain appropriate conduct and discipline among troops while they are on/off duty. Allow members to leave the camp in groups, always appear in uniform accompanied by a commander and regulate alcohol consumption.
- x. Ensure adequate provision of welfare and recreation facilities (e.g., sports facilities, adequate internet access to maintain contact with family, etc.). Insufficient workloads may lead to boredom which may lead to misconduct.
- y. A high workload and prolonged periods of work without breaks require relief and rotation. Rest and Recuperate (R&R) availed by the United Nations system is to be utilized and should be logistically supported.
- z. Increase awareness in the workplace including in guesthouses/hotels and United

Nations camps/barracks by displaying posters and other awareness-raising materials about prohibited conduct related to SEA. Ensure posted materials are in the language of the contingent members and local language.

- aa. Guided by the action plan, regularly monitor, track, and evaluate implementation gaps and ensure corrective measures are put in place.

12. Responsibilities of the **Military Protection from SEA Adviser (MPSEA Adviser)**

- a. Assist the HoMC or an equivalent authority in the United Nations SPMs on all issues and initiatives related to PSEA. This includes proposing specific measures, projects, or activities to foster the military component's efforts on PSEA.
- b. Ensure that MPSEA FPs receive proper training and induction in collaboration with the CDT, SVROs, other FPs, the mission training cell, and other United Nations entities to enable MPSEA FPs to report regularly on SEA challenges, incidents, and best practices to mission and senior leadership.
- c. Establish and engage in PSEA coordination mechanisms at the mission level where such arrangements currently do not exist and maintain an updated list of resources, including training referrals pathways and awareness raising material. Ensure open communication channels to facilitate timely updates and responsiveness.
- d. Coordinate with the CDT, SVRO/FPs, within the mission and other United Nations entities to promote coherent adoption and implementation of measures that increase awareness of PSEA issues among deployed personnel. Work closely with the CDT, SVRO, FPs, and FHQ staff to monitor reports from various sectors and units. Communicate any priority issues or findings to military leadership that require immediate action to improve SEA risk management.
- e. Oversee the development and implementation of a PSEA Action Plan for the military component, in collaboration with relevant FHQ staff. This process must include a victim-centred approach in the formulation of PSEA Action Plans.
- f. Supervise mission-wide monitoring of compliance with PSEA standards within the military component. Evaluate training effectiveness and conduct assessments to ensure accountability in line with mission-wide SEA risk management plans. Assist MPSEA FPs in conducting regular evaluations to identify risks, incidents, or areas for improvement in their respective locations.
- g. Collaborate with Gender Advisers, Women Protection Advisers, and Child Protection Advisers as feasible, paying particular attention to the specific vulnerabilities of women, girls, and children in the operational environment. Maintain an updated resource list to support this collaboration.

- h. Advocate for the allocation of necessary resources for PSEA activities in the field, including funding, staffing, and materials for training and reporting.

13. Responsibilities of Military Protection from SEA Focal Point (MPSEA FP)

- a. Assist United Nations military commanders at Sector and Battalion/Unit level and staff on all PSEA activities and initiatives to prevent and respond to SEA.
- b. Work as the eyes and ears of the Commanders, ensuring SEA risks and vulnerabilities are constantly brought to the attention of the Commanders with recommended remedial actions.
- c. Raise the awareness of deployed personnel in the AOR on PSEA, ensuring the victim-centred approach is understood and applied by all.
- d. Support the integration of the PSEA perspective into operational assessment, planning, and conduct.
- e. Maintain close coordination with the FHQ MPSEA Adviser, CDT, SVRO/FP, in the AOR, and keep the relevant commanders updated with the latest developments on the local PSEA strategies to work collectively together to increase awareness and response.

- 14.** The primary responsible personnel mentioned under 10 to 13 are to ensure a continuous engagement with all other relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to the Police and the Civilian Contingent of a United Nations PKO or SPM, including key leadership personnel, such as Chief of Staff (COS), Director/Chief Mission Support, CDT and their respective offices.

- 15. Duty to Respond.** United Nations Military Commanders have the duty to respond to SEA allegations and must take swift and decisive action when they receive reports of SEA and comply with the following procedures:

- a. Immediately inform mission higher authority to initiate an investigation.
- b. Alert the SVRO and/or CDT so that victims are appropriately referred to any immediate assistance they require including urgent medical care, psychosocial support, emergency shelter, food, legal services, or physical protection from retaliation.
- c. Liaise with SVRO or entity victims' right focal points, as applicable, to ensure a victim-centred, gender and child-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach is integrated into the response to the allegations.
- d. Inform all ranks of their duty to report possible cases with regards to SEA in good faith and always remain vigilant.

- e. The MPSEA FP of the unit is to work as eyes and ears for the commanders so that no issue or report goes unnoticed and are not overlooked.

16. Obligation to Report. United Nations Military Commanders are responsible for reporting SEA allegations and ensuring compliance by all, including their subordinates. They should ensure that all members of the military component/contingent/Guard Units are familiar with the obligation to report any suspicion, concerns, rumours, or complaints of SEA, regardless of rank and hierarchy, and that they understand that reports are to be made immediately to either one of the reporting entities as follows:

- Immediate military commander and/or the HOMCC or another person in the chain of command.
- Head of Mission (HoM).
- CDT or conduct and discipline focal points. (Most recommended)
- The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)
- Military Police deployed within the contingent, or as a formed unit in the mission.

17. Guidance on Investigations. Commanders are obliged to ensure they support the required investigation process following any SEA report as follows:

- a. Refrain from investigating if the allegation is true or false before reporting it to the United Nations. That is the role of the investigator.
- b. Preserve evidence until the investigator arrives, whether the NIO deployed with the contingent or the NIO coming from the capital. This also applies when the investigator is coming from OIOS.
- c. Cooperate with all aspects of the investigation process and order your troops to fully cooperate with investigations.
- d. Ensure subordinates are available to be interviewed by investigators.
- e. Retain alleged perpetrators within the mission and make them available for interviews until they are released by the investigators.
- f. Do not discuss the allegations with victims, witnesses, or other personnel. Ensure your personnel comply as well.

18. Handling Complaints. When handling complaints regarding SEA and paternity claims, it is essential to ensure impartiality and confidentiality by doing the following:

- a. React calmly and treat everyone involved with respect.

- b. Maintain confidentiality concerning the allegations, the identities and nationalities of the victims, identities of the alleged perpetrator, complainants, witnesses, and other parties involved, as well as specific details surrounding the allegations.
 - c. Information should only be disclosed to individuals officially responsible for conduct and discipline functions, such as the CDT, SVROs, the HOM or HoMC, OIOS, and NIOs.
 - d. Avoid discussing or gossiping about the allegations and instruct subordinates to follow suit.
 - e. Refrain from including names of victims or alleged perpetrators in the subject lines of emails or other correspondence. Do not publicly disclose the identity or nationality of parties involved in the allegations unless explicitly authorized.
 - f. Ensure confidential information is not left unattended, such as in a printer or photocopier or by walking away from the computer without closing sensitive content. Always label communications about allegations of SEA as “Strictly Confidential”.
 - g. Should the victim require any assistance or support (i.e., medical, psychosocial, legal, or security), liaise immediately with relevant parties. This could include SVRO/FO, CDT, GBV Working Group and/or PSEA Network Coordinator as applicable.
19. United Nations military commanders must regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and response measures. The commander shall engage with CDT to understand any data relevant to their command function and implement suggested recommendations.
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E. TRAINING

- 20. Sessions on SEA are part of the mandatory Pre-Deployment Training (P-DT) for any uniformed personnel preparing for deployment to a United Nations PKOs and SPMs. It is a TCC’s responsibility to ensure that deployed personnel have attended and completed mandatory P-DT on PSEA.
- 21. All United Nations military commanders should attend all in-mission training on PSEA. Training on PSEA should ideally be customized to each TCC based on their language and culture. The training should also consider mission-specific risks and vulnerabilities.
- 22. To enhance their knowledge and better perform the tasks assigned, the MPSEA FP and Advisor should use the Specialized Training Materials (STM) provided by the Integrated Training Service (ITS) on the online platform Peacekeeping Resource

Hub⁸ and are encouraged to undertake training on a victim-centred approach.

23. Once deployed into a United Nations PKO or SPM, MPSEA FP and Advisor should access the United Nations online learning platform Inspira for dedicated self-paced course to become more proficient in executing assigned tasks and responsibilities.
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F. EVALUATION

24. Through the mission evaluation framework⁹, United Nations military commanders must specify evaluation metrics, and ensure regular review to determine the effectiveness of prevention and response measures. Periodic reviews will help to identify gaps, and make recommendations on measures to be taken by commanders to address those gaps, whether it be additional personnel, structural supports, etc. FHQ shall submit periodic reports to OMA on a quarterly basis on the performance of their personnel on PSEA.
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G. DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGIES

25. The terms and phrases used in this guideline are defined in the United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse¹⁰¹¹ as follows:
 - a. **Sexual exploitation** means any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. This includes acts such as transactional sex, solicitation of transactional sex and exploitative relationships.
 - b. **Sexual abuse** means the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions. Note: Any sexual activity with a child as defined as a person under the age of 18 is prohibited and considered sexual abuse.
 - c. **Allegation** refers to as yet uncorroborated information pointing to the possible occurrence of misconduct. If sufficient information is available, all allegations will be followed by an investigation. An allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse can implicate one or more alleged perpetrators, and it can involve one or more victims.
 - d. **Complainant of SEA** is a person who brings an allegation of SEA to the attention of the UN in accordance with established procedures. This person may be a SEA survivor or another person who is aware of the wrongdoing.

⁸ See: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/sea>

⁹ See: [n1829550.pdf](#)

¹⁰ See: <https://peacekeepingresourcehub.un.org/en/training/stm/sea>

¹¹ See: [UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(English\)](#)

- e. **Child** is a person under the age of 18 years, regardless of the age of majority or consent locally.
 - f. **Victim of SEA** is a person whose claim(s) that they have been sexually exploited or abused by United Nations staff or related personnel have been established through a United Nations administrative process and/or Member States' processes, as appropriate.
 - g. **Victim-centred approach**¹² puts the rights and dignity of victims, including their well-being and safety, at the forefront of all efforts to prevent and respond to SEA and sexual harassment, regardless of the affiliation of the alleged perpetrator, from the moment that allegations are known and in every subsequent interaction.
 - h. A **paternity claim**¹³ in the context of SEA is a claim by a victim of SEA that a peacekeeper, military, and civilian personnel in United Nations PKOs or SPMs is the father of their child. Normally this is accompanied by a request for the United Nations to facilitate the resolution of the claim with the contributing TCC of the alleged father.
 - i. **Perpetrator** is a person (or group of persons) who commits any act of sexual exploitation and/or abuse or other type of offence.
 - j. **National Investigation Officer (NIO)**. One or more individuals designated by a TCC to a United Nations field mission to investigate an allegation referred to that TCC.
 - k. **United Nations military personnel**. Military personnel deployed to United Nations PKOs and SPMs, including military experts on mission (UNMEM), military staff officers and members of military contingents.
 - l. **United Nations military contingent personnel**. Personnel of a military contingent deployed to a United Nations mission under a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations.
 - m. **Zero-tolerance Policy**. The United Nations policy establishes that sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel is prohibited and that every transgression will be acted upon, including zero tolerance for inaction.
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¹²See: [Victims' Rights First | United Nations](#)

¹³See: [Paternity claims | Conduct in UN Field Missions](#)

H. REFERENCES

26. Normative or superior references

Security Council Resolutions

- Security Council Resolution 2272 on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2016)
- Security Council Resolution 2436 on performance and training (2018)

Secretary-General Reports and Bulletins:

- Secretary-General's Bulletins (ST/SGB/2003/13) Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse
- 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) (2007)
- Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1) Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations
- Report of the Secretary-General on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach (A/71/818) (2017)

27. Related Procedures or Guidelines

- Policy on Authority, Command and Control in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, 25 October 2019

28. Further Policy and Training

- United Nations System-wide Training module on the Rights and Dignity of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OVRA, OHCHR, IOM):
<https://www.un.org/en/victims-rights-first/training-module>
- Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:
<https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>
- United Nations Victims' Rights Statement for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff or related personnel:
[victims_rights_statement_on_sea_may_2023_web.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/victims_rights_statement_on_sea_may_2023_web.pdf)
- Victims' Rights First site on the victim-centred approach and an open-source United Nations training module on the victim-centred approach:
<https://www.un.org/en/victims-rights-first>

- DMSPC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Management Toolkit:
https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/dpkodfs_sea_risk_toolkit_28_june_2018_modified.pdf
 - UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (English):
<https://hr.un.org/materials/un-glossary-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-english>
 - Policy on Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach to United Nations efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:
https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org.preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/policy_on_integrating_a_human_rights-based_approach_to_un_efforts_to_prevent_and_respond_to_sea.pdf
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I. MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

29. All HoMC and military commanders within United Nations PKOs and SPMs shall ensure the implementation of this Guidelines. The OMA PSEA FP shall collect quarterly updates from field missions on implementation of these Guidelines and raise any issues within United Nations Headquarters.
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J. CONTACT

30. The Policy and Doctrine Team, Office of Military Affairs (OMA), Department of Peace Operations (DPO), United Nations Headquarters, New York.
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K. HISTORY

31. In October 2017, OMA/DPKO in collaboration with Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU)/Department of Field Support (DFS), now Conduct and Discipline Service (CDS)/Department of Management, Strategy, Policy and Compliance (DMSPC), Office of the Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse (OSCSEA) and other Secretariat Departments and Offices, developed the Military Aide Memoire: Commanders' Guide on Measures to Combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Military. In May 2018, the Aide Memoire was translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.

Since then, new initiatives have been implemented across the United Nations system to protect from and respond to SEA. Guided by the renewed commitment to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping through the Action for Peacekeeping Agenda (A4P), this Guideline provides a comprehensive and updated reference designed to strengthen United Nations military Commanders' efforts to prevent and respond to SEA in line with the United Nations zero tolerance policy.

APPROVAL SIGNATURE:



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DATE OF APPROVAL 22 November 2024

DATE OF APPROVAL 25 November 2024



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DATE OF APPROVAL 17 January 2025

Annex A – Aide Memoire for UN Military Commanders on Preventing and Responding to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) causes physical, emotional, psychological, and social harm in various forms. It harms victims' minds, and bodies, and violates human dignity and rights. Victims are exposed to risks of contracting sexually transmitted infections. A child born out of SEA may face lifelong disadvantages characterized by trauma, discrimination, and poverty. PSEA is a key operational requirement rather than a peripheral issue. All United Nations military commanders are responsible and accountable for the conduct of their troops through the following responsibilities.



DUTY TO PREVENT

- Lead by example!
- Know the guidance on PSEA.
- Develop and issue specific guidelines on PSEA based on local risks and vulnerabilities.
- Issue clear and unequivocal messages on PSEA.
- Integrate PSEA into operational assessments, planning, conduct, reporting and evaluation at all levels.
- Ensure military personnel have received in-mission training on the UN Standards on SEA at the beginning of their deployment (at most within the first month), including how to report. Customize PSEA training for personnel in their language and culture.
- Assess risks and vulnerabilities within mission/ the AOR and develop an Action Plan that outlines concrete measures to prevent and respond to SEA.
- Ensure effective entry and exit control on UN Camps/barracks/bases. Avoid unauthorized entry and continuously check gaps, holes around the perimeter and have them immediately repaired. Monitor absences and hold violators accountable.
- Declare off-limits and enforce curfews where necessary and hold violators accountable.
- Monitor commercial activities around the camp and ensure interaction with the local population, are not for purposes of engaging prostitution.
- Post awareness-raising material about UN prohibiting SEA.
- Conduct PSEA awareness campaigns and patrols to improve local population awareness.
- Know where all your troops are deployed and regularly visit them especially those deployed in Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs). Conduct unannounced visits.



DUTY TO REPORT

- Immediately inform higher authority for investigations.
- Refer victims to any immediate assistance required and inform the Senior Victims' Rights Officer or victims' rights focal point.
- Ensure subordinates are familiar with the obligation to report any suspicion, concern, rumour, or complaint of SEA to the following:
 - Immediate military commander and/or the HoMC or another person in the chain of command.
 - Head of Mission (HoM).
 - Conduct and Discipline Teams Conduct and Discipline Teams or Focal Points.
 - The UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).



COMMANDER'S ROLE IN INVESTIGATION

- Do not investigate to find out if the allegation is true or false before reporting it to the UN.
- Preserve evidence until the investigator arrives.
- Cooperate with all aspects of the investigation process activities and order your troops to cooperate the investigation team.
- Retain alleged perpetrators within the mission and make them available for interviews until they are released by the investigators.
- Liaise with Senior Victims' Rights Officer (SVRO) or victims' right focal points, as applicable, to ensure a victim-centred, gender and child-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach is integrated into the response to the allegations.
- Do not discuss the allegations with the victims or witnesses beyond receiving the initial complaint. Ensure troops do not interact with victims and witnesses.



CONFIDENTIALITY

Maintain confidentiality concerning the allegations, the identities and nationalities of the victims, **alleged perpetrator**, **complainants** and other parties involved, as well as specific details surrounding the allegations.



A **PSEA Action plan** should also ensure that free time is dedicated to providing recreational events as suggested below:

- Organizing recurrent refresher training and workshops with Scenario-Based Exercises.
- Sport activities.
- Social Events (Game-/Movies, Barbeques, Music/Karaoke-Events, among others)
- Environmental initiatives (Waste-Water Gardening)
- Any competition.
- Celebrating national days and holidays.

In the absence of good internet-connection:

- Provide shared computers for communication with families.
- Organize letter writing sessions to families.

Note:

This Aide Memoire should be read in conjunction with the Guidelines on Measures to Prevent and Respond to SEA, Commanders' Guide to Prevention of Misconduct and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the Suggested Disciplinary Checklist for Field Commanders.

Annex B – Conduct and Discipline Services Commanders’ Guide to Prevention of Misconduct and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

This is a Deployment Guide on conduct and discipline and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for UN commanders of military and police contingents.

Note

For the most up-to-date version of the deployment guide, it is advisable to reach out to the Conduct and Discipline Team prior to deployment. This will help confirm if there have been any recent updates or revisions to the guide.

CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE SERVICES COMMANDERS’ GUIDE TO PREVENTION OF MISCONDUCT AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

- Get in touch with the United Nations **Field Mission’s Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point**. They can support you to maintain good conduct and discipline, help you navigate the UN system if there is an allegation of misconduct against your personnel, and answer any other questions you may have.

Action 1/ Ensure that your personnel comply with the UN standards of conduct, with mission-specific rules and regulations and with local laws.

- Develop an action plan that describes how you will prevent misconduct by your personnel.

How?

This misconduct action plan needs to be based on an understanding of risk: commanders need to understand which forms of misconduct are most likely to happen and focus their attention on those risks. Commanders can develop a misconduct action plan by following this three-step process:

Step 1/ Understand the context where you are deploying to and identify which forms of misconduct your personnel are most likely to engage in and how it happens.

- Ask the UN Field Mission's Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point for a copy of the misconduct workplan and related risk register for your deployment location.
- Attend the UN Field Mission's induction briefings, which will include a briefing on conduct and discipline.
- During the hand-over with the out-going commander, ask to be briefed on measures taken to prevent misconduct, recent misconduct violations, paternity claims and investigations.

Step 2/ Identify and put in place measures to prevent and mitigate these misconduct risks.

- Put in place a wide range of measures to prevent your personnel from engaging in misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population. This will involve:
 - Coordinating with the rest of the UN Field Mission, including the Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point, to put in place prevention measures and ensure a coherent approach.
 - Training your personnel on the UN standards of conduct within 1 month of arriving in the UN Field Mission using UN-provided training materials, posters and pocket cards. Then repeating this training regularly throughout the deployment.

Step 3/ Monitor and report regularly on your misconduct action plan.

- Monitor regularly whether measures are being implemented on time.
- Report regularly about what you are doing to prevent and respond to misconduct through your UN chain of command and to the UN Field Mission's Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point.

Action 2/ Report allegations of misconduct immediately to the UN. Report allegations through your UN chain of command as well as to the UN Field Mission's Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point.

To decide what to report to the UN, commanders need to ask themselves:
'Does the violation have an impact outside of the contingent?'

YES

NO

Report it immediately to the UN for possible investigation by the troop-contributing country or by the UN (e.g. violations that harm anyone outside of the contingent, including all allegations of SEA)

The **commander is allowed to handle the matter internally** within the contingent and **does not have to report it to the UN** (e.g. minor breaches to the contingent's internal rules)

If in doubt, report it! Failure to report misconduct itself amounts to misconduct and may result in commanders being repatriated and barred from future deployments with the UN.

How?

- When handing complaints of misconduct, do react calmly, treat all persons making the complaint with respect, and refer the person making the complaint to the UN Field Mission's Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point for further assistance. Civilian parts of the UN Field Mission will then offer help to victims and protect them from further harm.
- When handing complaints of misconduct, do not negotiate or settle claims for compensation.
- Do not interview victims and witnesses to find out if the allegation seems to be credible before reporting it to the UN. That is the job of investigators.
- Do keep confidential the identities and nationalities of victims and others involved in misconduct as well as the specific details of the allegation. Only disclose this information to those authorized to handle an allegation (e.g. UN chain of command, UN Conduct and Discipline Team/Focal Point) or investigate it (e.g. the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services).

Action 3/ Cooperate with UN initial fact-finding activities aimed at preserving evidence before an investigation is launched and instruct your contingent members to do the same.

Action 4/ Cooperate with investigations into allegations of misconduct and serious misconduct involving your personnel and instruct your contingent members to do the same.

How?

- In road traffic accidents, instruct your contingent members to provide a written statement and agree to be breathalyzed to check for drunk driving.
- Preserve evidence until the investigators arrive (e.g. put logbooks and records in a safe place).
- Instruct your contingent members to stay away from victims and witnesses.
- Make your contingent members available for interview.
- Provide information and documentation that investigators require.

Annex C – Office for the Peacekeeping Strategic Partnership Suggested Disciplinary Checklist for Field Commanders

Prior to Deployment

Personnel management

- Select, identify and distribute a core of good warrant officers and NCOs to be deployed in each deployment location in the mission to support the officer in charge in the discharge of his/her duties.
- Identify issues of concern with alcohol/sexual behavior/ money/ social problems, etc. with your personnel, the officers, and warrant officers, and, where such issues exist, request other personnel to replace them before deployment. Where replacements are not possible, be prepared and monitor personnel behavior.
- Develop a Do's and Don'ts card for all members of the unit, containing explanations on issues, such as
 - Instructions on out of bounds areas
 - Rules and obligations concerning wearing uniform
 - Clarifying rules regarding fraternization/community engagements
 - Duty to report on any suspicion or confirmed case of misconduct/fraternization directly to the focal points
 - Permissions to visit local markets cannot be granted to a group less than 10
 - No going out during curfew hours (if applicable)
- Identify and know the abilities of each other (sub-unit and platoon leaders) to strengthen their unit and ensure that all military/police under command can identify the context of the objectives, challenges of their unit including, general situation, political situation and rules of engagement.
- Provide troops with adequate pre-deployment training on standards of conduct, including SEA, and ensure that troops understand the gamut of the United Nations "Zero Tolerance" SEA policy and how to report concerns of SEA.
- Inform lower company and platoon commanders that they will often deploy into isolated environments and train them to assess and mitigate risks.

Situational awareness

- Develop group discussion periods based on lessons learned from your mission to demonstrate “what to do” and “what not to do” in similar circumstances.
- Obtain adequate oral or written briefing/handing over notes from relief commanders and engage previous commanders on their experience and challenges.
- Learn about/understand
 - the country/Mission of deployment, including whether it is a high-risk misconduct mission or there have been prevalent cases.
 - the location of deployment: hotspots, cultural behavior of the population, camp security, and protection.
 - history of previous contingents - the previous issues from predecessor and existing units in the area if any.
 - the local population - their acceptance of foreigners/ where and how to get information on positive ways to approach the local population etc.
 - Geographical and economic context. (e.g. mining areas, inter-community interaction and impact on the conflict, the status of the state authority in relation to corruption)

Planning

- Review and adapt (if needed) the planned unit activities
- Think out of the box and discuss the military/police culture amongst your unit.
- Reflect about what can trigger negative behavior of troops – especially in relation to food, money, comfort, and the average age of the troops.
- Devise possible mechanisms to facilitate your command and control over your troops, for example, ensure that welfare facilities are planned and available.
- Prepare your rear detail at home - topics for internal discussions to include learning and career opportunities back home, social support back home, investment opportunities, and family support.

During Deployment

Personal accountability

- Acknowledge and take accountability for your role as commander (for all commanders and not just the battalion/FPU commander), especially your responsibility for the conduct and discipline and command and control of your unit/subunit.

Work with CDT

- Identify the CDT office/focal point at HQ/Field for disciplinary briefing and engage them regularly on disciplinary issues. Provide them, as soon as possible, with the list of SEA and legal affairs focal points in your contingent.
- Appoint internal focal points, request certified training for them by the Mission and ensure they, together with you as the commander, keep regular contact/reporting sessions with the CDT.
- Understand that the internal focal points are the relays of CDT within the unit and, as such, do not report to you but only inform you of their activities related to UN standards of discipline.

Training/Awareness raising of troops

- Ensure that induction training on UN standards of conduct is conducted by CDT.
- Ensure SEA Focal Point conducts training regularly and submits participants list to CDT in a timely manner.
- Hold internal sessions on conduct and discipline in the language of the T/PCC (could be different from the Mission's working language which the troops do not understand most of the time). All the aspects of misconduct (categories, sanctions...) must be translated and explained by the commander and the internal focal points.
- Ensure troops are familiar with prevention measures in place in a mission such as curfew and out-of-bound locations and look out for fraternization. (*You must ensure that they understand the difference between fraternization vs community outreach and engagement which is a vital part of a POC mandate.*)
- Ensure all troops are regularly reminded how to report concerns of SEA and what reporting channels are available to them.

Internal controls

- Interact with troops and sensitize them constantly on disciplinary issues through personal interaction, unadvertised visits, personal involvement of officers in training, and training poster campaigns.
- Conduct regular physical day/night checks on perimeter fencing, barracks, and access control measures.

- Carry out proper drills and procedures on access control, visits to markets by troops under supervision if required, daily roll calls, have daily duty officers/NCOs carry out day and night checks, ensure your lower commanders regularly talk to troops.
- Ensure effective internal control measures for UN rations and fuel.
- Implement measures to avoid fraternization, for example, discourage or avoid civilians who come close to the camp to sell vegetables/fruits, etc., ensure rotation of personnel in routine outside camp duties like water collection, etc., ensure that troops are always led and accompanied by officers/NCOs who are briefed and aware.
- Regularly visit isolated posts. Alert the senior leadership in the mission if regular visits are delayed or not made due to the availability of transport to travel to remote locations. Ensure that you are heard and assisted in this important issue.
- Rotate troops regularly from isolated and temporarily deployed posts. Provide duty of care for these personnel specifically that they are appropriately accommodated, have access to communications that allow them to stay in touch with their families, and have welfare facilities.
- Adhere to UN leave policies and procedures and provide personnel with due recreational leave entitlement and proper welfare time-off within or outside the mission area while maintaining the overall units' effective personnel strength and ensuring it does not fall below-specified leave policy at any time.
- Establish a good working relationship with existing networks to serve as early warning/alert on the conduct of troops in the locality.
- Ensure the health and safety of all personnel under your command by managing physical and psychological fatigue in the mission environment. While it is noted that not all soldiers can afford to travel home for leave, ensure an environment is accessible to all personnel to utilize rest and recovery leave time provided by the UN.

Reporting and lessons learned

- Document and report all allegations/rumors of misconduct in a timely manner to CDT for assessment/action.
- Routinely brief the Force-Police/ Contingent Command on disciplinary issues within the unit and action taken.
- Carry out After Action Reviews and Lessons learned/best practices and create a space for feedback to improve your unit, conduct, and operational effectiveness.

After deployment

Follow-up on cases and lessons learned

- Follow up and remain available for eventual misconduct cases from your unit that are still under investigation.
- If there were cases of misconduct/SEA during deployment, ensure that lessons learned are being reported to higher command and propose that they be included in further pre- deployment training for contingents and commanders.
- On return, ensure that you prepare detailed notes/ briefing to the next rotation commander and his/her subordinate commanders on your experiences in the mission, best practices that you ensured, failures and lessons learnt thereof.

Support to personnel

- Develop options for your personnel to de-compress after deployment. Provide an open environment where personnel can freely discuss incidents/feelings/frustrations they have experienced during the deployment.
- Conduct individual post-operational psychological screening with outgoing soldiers to assess the psychological wellbeing of the soldier and document any trauma suffered during the mission rotation (including possible witnessing a SEA incident).
- Provide opportunity for the soldier to report any SEA incident that they may have been uncomfortable raising within the rotation.
- Provide opportunity for the soldier to discuss any involvement or conditions within the deployment that may have led to incidents of SEA.