

OUR FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse of the people we serve, as well as sexual harassment in the workplace, is a top priority for UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. In 2018, we renewed efforts and strengthened action to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct. What were our key achievements?

A Reinforced Safeguarding Structure

In 2018, UNHCR reinforced its [safeguarding structure](#), which includes investigative, legal, ethics and staff welfare functions, with additional resources and training. In March, a Senior Coordinator was appointed to lead UNHCR's work on preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH). She is supported by a cross-functional working group and reports to the Deputy High Commissioner, who chairs a high level emergency task force.

A Comprehensive Strategy

UNHCR's [strategy and action plan](#), released in May 2018, recognize SEA and SH as distinct but interconnected issues on a continuum of sexual misconduct. We have brought them together to build on good practices, focusing on multi-faceted action for prevention and a victim/survivor-centred response. Our vision is that:

“UNHCR provides a trusted, respectful and inclusive environment where the people we serve and those who work for the organization feel safe, heard, equipped and empowered to speak up for themselves and others and to take robust and visible action, as appropriate, to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.”




“There is no place for sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment at UNHCR, an organization that is dedicated to serving and protecting others.”



UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, speaking at an internal dialogue on sexual misconduct in September 2018.

Improving Access to Reporting for Victims/Survivors and Witnesses

One of UNHCR's priorities in 2018 has been to *facilitate access to information and reporting on sexual misconduct for victims/survivors and witnesses and to ensure timely, sensitive and effective handling of SEA and SH cases.*

-  In September, we launched a confidential independent helpline available to all colleagues who wish to report misconduct or obtain advice on what to do when in doubt. The **SpeakUp! Helpline** is managed by an external provider and is available 24/7 by phone, through a web form and an app. It offers the possibility to report in complete anonymity.
- To avoid colleagues feeling overwhelmed by the process of making a complaint of sexual harassment, we also hired a **psychosocial case manager** who offers guidance to victims/survivors and witnesses, accompanies them through the process and coordinates action on their behalf until their case is resolved. We also created a document titled **Where to Go for Help** where colleagues, victims/survivors and witnesses can easily find all the options available to them.
- In September 2018, we completed a **survey across 41 operations** to collect information on the communication systems most commonly used by persons of concern – such as complaint boxes, hotlines and face to face interaction – and what challenges exist in collecting, using, and responding to their feedback.
- In 2018, **we strengthened our investigation and disciplinary processes**, prioritizing sexual misconduct cases. We recruited additional staff and trained our investigators on the handling of SEA/SH cases. Some investigators were also placed in Nairobi, Pretoria and Bangkok, enabling us to deploy them rapidly and increase the number of outreach sessions on SEA/SH investigative processes in field operations. We also reinforced our communications to colleagues on the disciplinary measures taken by the High Commissioner, reminding them of their rights and obligations and of the importance to abide by the highest standards of conduct.



- We have also reinforced our **SEA Focal Points in the field**. This network of colleagues is key to ensuring that activities on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse are in place on the ground. These past few months we have provided them with additional guidance and training, and have facilitated interaction and exchange of good practices within the network through an online platform.



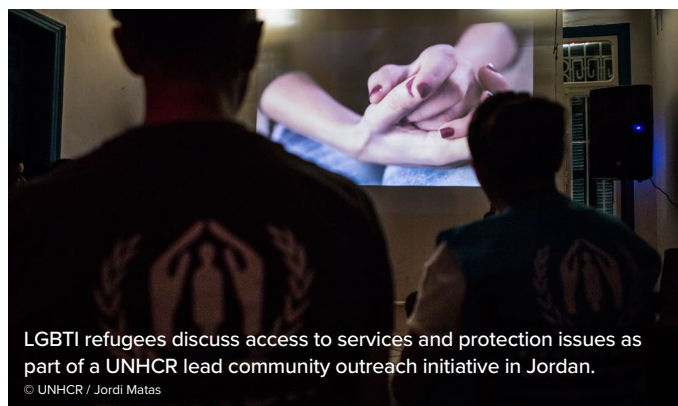
Ensuring the Safety and Protection of Those Affected

*To ensure the safety and protection of those reporting, it is crucial to have in place **robust legal and administrative systems** that support victims/survivors and help prevent transgressors from moving across the system. In 2018, we started reviewing our policies and procedures and took a first series of measures to simplify and reinforce them.*

- A new policy on **Protection against Retaliation was issued**, which now includes our affiliate workforce, expands the scope of the activities considered as protected and extends the timeline to report. It also provides interim measures to safeguard the interests of the complainant and strengthens corrective measures.
- UNHCR launched an **independent evaluative review** of its existing procedures and policies on SEA. An expert team has been assessing our SEA procedures

and policies, including through field visits, as well as identifying good practices, lessons learned and gaps. The review is expected to conclude in February 2019.

- In terms of **vetting and reference checking**, we have taken new measures, both internally and through inter-agency efforts, to ensure that perpetrators cannot move within the organization or from one organization to another. We were among the first agencies to roll out the UN SEA and SH Clear Check trackers, launched in June 2018, and have undertaken a mapping of vetting mechanisms with a view to improving our own internal processes. We have amended our recruitment form to include specific questions on misconduct and self-certification that allows us to sanction anyone trying to misrepresent him/herself.
- We launched in October a **review of existing policy and guidance on SEA and SH** with the aim of consolidating the various elements under one umbrella. New comprehensive guidance on preventing and responding to sexual misconduct will be issued in 2019.



LGBTI refugees discuss access to services and protection issues as part of a UNHCR lead community outreach initiative in Jordan.
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Creating a Safe Space for Dialogue Among Colleagues

In 2018, we **initiated a sustained dialogue on sexual misconduct among colleagues, including managers**. We provided them with information and guidance, empowering them to detect sexual misconduct, understand its impact, and take measures to prevent and respond to it. We know these efforts are part of a longer-term culture change process and will continue this important conversation in 2019.

- We enhanced our internal communications efforts and organized **two internal dialogues on sexual misconduct** last year. These events were screened live in our offices across the world. Colleagues were able to participate in the discussion via an interactive platform and exchange views with the High Commissioner, the Deputy High Commissioner and other senior managers. This generated a high



The Senior Coordinator joins a Women's Security Awareness Training in Ethiopia in 2018.
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level of interest, with some 2,300 contributions from colleagues, and led to the development of a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions on sexual misconduct. An **Intranet page** was also created to make information easily accessible to victims, witness, managers and colleagues. Videos and other communications materials were prepared.

- In September, we launched a **challenge on our UNHCR's Ideas Platform: How might we better prevent and respond to sexual harassment at UNHCR?** The challenge aims to capitalize on good practices and positive experiences from colleagues, in particular those in the field, and create a space for a meaningful dialogue on sexual harassment. In 2019 we will support the implementation and piloting of the top three ideas.
- We expanded the number and reach of **Women's Security Awareness Trainings (WSAT)**. These trainings are delivered by women for women and experienced as a safe place for female colleagues of UNHCR and partner organizations to speak up and ask questions that relate to their security. One module focuses on sexual harassment, helping participants understand how to minimize their exposure and/or respond to it.
- We included a **training on the role of security personnel in addressing sexual misconduct** in all workshops for our security workforce.

Leadership and Management in Action

Our accelerated actions of the past months reflect the **determination from leadership** – led by the High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner – to root out sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment from the organization. On numerous occasions, both internally and externally, the senior management of UNHCR have demonstrated their strong and personal commitment to eradicate sexual misconduct and foster a thorough reflection on the need to address power imbalances that give rise to SEA and SH.

- In May 2018, a **unique session on sexual misconduct** was held at the Global Meeting of all UNHCR Representatives, resulting in personal commitments to take strong, visible action to tackle the issue in their operations.
- We also issued a **Short Guide for Managers on SH in the Workplace** – based on guidelines elaborated at the UN Chief Executives Board Task Force on Sexual Harassment.
- A **Senior Intervention Team initiative** was developed to complement UNHCR's risk management initiatives, and to reinforce ethical conduct and values in the organization. The senior-level teams will be deployed to foster dialogue and address emerging issues in operations where the organization detects that our core values are being undermined through inappropriate conduct.

“Tackling the root causes, the power imbalances that give way to sexual misconduct is no easy task, but it is also our duty. The road may be long but at UNHCR we have embarked on the journey and will be staying the course. Until each voice is heard. Until each of us is, and feels, safe.”

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly T. Clements

Working with Partners

We cooperate and lead efforts with other UN agencies and NGOs to ensure a **coordinated approach** on these crucial issues, in line with the Secretary-General's commitment to combat sexual misconduct.

- UNHCR is engaged in several **areas of work** within and outside the United Nations. This includes initiatives of the Office of the Special Coordinator on SEA, the UN Chief Executives Board Task Force on Sexual Harassment and the UN Victim's Rights Advocate. We have also actively contributed to harmonizing approaches to sexual misconduct among UN investigatory bodies.
- In 2018, we revised our **project partnership agreements** to ensure they comply with the UN Protocol on Allegations of SEA involving Implementing Partners, and will be working with partners to ensure its implementation.
- UNHCR co-chairs the task team focusing on SEA issues at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).
- In light of the upcoming role of the High Commissioner as the IASC Champion on SEA and SH in June 2019, UNHCR has contributed to the development of the **Champions' Strategy**, which was released in November 2018 and outlines priorities in the fight against sexual misconduct until June 2020.



On International Women's Day 2018, High Commissioner for Refugees Grandi, and UNICEF Executive Director Fore, the current Inter Agency Standing Committee Champion on SEA and SH, meet Syrian refugee women and children in Lebanon.

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Visit UNHCR's dedicated **webpage on sexual misconduct**, which contains the most recent resources and information.