

UNICEF/United Nations response to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping forces

UNICEF EB Briefing

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Background: Timeline of events

- Spring/Summer 2014: Allegation of SEA of children by foreign troops to the UN system in CAR
- May 2015: Media query on the UN's response to the allegation
- June 2015: UNSG established an independent panel (**The CAR Panel**) to review UN's response
- December 2015: The CAR Panel report was released

Panel's Conclusions & Recommendations

- Re **UNICEF**: Failure to monitor the local partners who had been designated to provide psycho-social and other support to the victims

UNICEF has now in place a set of internal alert and reporting protocols – primary focus is to support children's needs; improve oversight of response at country, region and HQ levels; share information with UN in country and HQ

Panel's Conclusions & Recommendations

- Recommendations to UN:
 - **More coherent policy framework on SEA** (SEA data reliability; improved UN coordination; harmonization of policies)
 - **Strengthened procedures for responding to allegations** (mandatory and immediate reporting; rapid, professional investigation; effective prosecution of perpetrators; strengthened accountability)
 - **Improved support to victims** (funding specialized services to victims)

UN System's response to CAR Panel's Report

- **High Level Steering Committee** established by the UN Secretary-General in 2016 to review the recommendations and to advise the UNSG on matters related to recommendations by the CAR Panel
- **UN SEA Task Force** appointed by the new SG to develop a system-wide “game-changing” SEA strategy for inclusion in the upcoming SG’s Report on Special Measures for PSEA.

List of key actions taken by UNICEF

- **UNICEF SEA prevention and response**

Notification Alert; Victim Assistance; Contractual Agreements and Recruitment procedures; Mandatory SEA Training; Contribution to Community-Based Complaints Mechanism (CBCM); Cooperation with Investigations; SEA Policy and Child Safeguarding Policy; Reporting SEA Allegations to the UN for SG report

- **UNICEF inter-agency SEA contributions**

Engagement with: UN SEA Working Group; IASC Task Force for CBCM; UN SEA Task Force

SEA Notification Alert

- In place since Nov 2015
- Within 24 hours of receiving SEA allegation UNICEF Representative reports to Regional Director using **Significant Incident Report (SIR)** for SEA and informs most-senior UN official in country.
- Within 12 hours of receiving SIR for SEA, Regional Director reviews and decides whether to inform NYHQ, using SIR for SEA.
- **Immediate victim assistance** is provided, including **monitoring of response**.

SEA Victim Assistance

- Strengthened **systematic response** to SEA, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, safety plan, access to school and cash assistance for immediate material needs.
- UNICEF and the Conduct and Discipline Unit (CDU/DPKO) have co-chaired the development of a **Uniform Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of SEA**.
- The Protocol strengthens coordination of assistance to victims and will be field tested in early 2017.

Contractual agreements

- **Vendor general conditions of contracts** require adherence with the UN code of conduct and zero tolerance policy on SEA (Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/203/13).
- **Standard Programme Cooperation Agreement** requires compliance of all implementing partner employees with the UN code of conduct and zero tolerance policy on SEA (SG's Bulletin ST/SGB/203/13).

Recruitment procedures

- All candidates **must disclose** if they have been investigated or disciplined for allegation of misconduct, including SEA.
- Candidates must provide a **detailed statement** on how any such allegation was resolved.
- **Confirmed allegation of SEA**, regardless of whether it resulted in criminal proceedings, will be grounds to **disqualify**.
- **Resignation initiated by the candidate** prior to the completion of an investigation into SEA will be grounds to **disqualify**.

Mandatory training

- UNICEF is finalizing a **mandatory SEA online training for all staff**, developed in a joint exercise with UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women to be rolled out in UNICEF in early 2017.
 - Lesson 1: UN Standards of Conduct on SEA
 - Lesson 2: Obligations of UN Personnel
 - Lesson 3: Consequences

Strengthening investigations involving children

- UNICEF has developed guidance for safeguarding child victims and witnesses of SEA during the investigatory interview process to **prevent secondary victimization of the child.**
- UNICEF **cooperates with the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services** in UN investigations in CAR and elsewhere to strengthen the investigation process for allegations involving children.

UNICEF Child Safeguarding Policy & SEA Policy

- **UNICEF Policy on Conduct Promoting the Protection and Safeguarding of Children** was issued on 1 July 2016.
- **UNICEF Policy Preventing and Prohibiting Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse** is pending final clearance.
- Both policies apply to all staff, non-staff personnel, individual consultants and contractors.
- Conduct prohibited under the policies may constitute grounds for contract termination or dismissal.

UNICEF SEA Reporting

- 3 SEA allegations involving **UNICEF staff**.
- 2 SEA allegations involving **UNICEF partners**.
- 264 SEA allegations reported by UNICEF involving **UN peacekeepers or foreign military personnel with UN mandate**:
Central African Republic: 235 total, including 173 children; DRC: 24 total, including 10 children; Somalia: 5 total, all children
- UNICEF and partners provided **victim assistance in all cases**.

Engagement with the UN SEA Working Group

- Finalizing the **Uniform policy on balancing the disclosure of information to national authorities with principles of confidentiality** (Rec 6 of the CAR Panel Report).
- UNICEF advocates for safeguarding the principle of **informed consent** to protect every child's right to privacy, confidentiality, security and safety.
- Other engagements: Draft policy on a human rights-based approach to preventing SEA; Draft procedures to strengthen investigation procedures; Uniform Protocol on the Sharing of Information and Protection of Victims of SEA; SEA Incident Report Form (IRF) and Operational guidance; SEA Accountability framework; etc.

Engagement with IASC in prevention/response

- UNICEF has contributed to the **Community-Based Complaints Mechanism SOPs and Best Practice Guide prepared by IASC**, based on pilots carried out by UNHCR and Save the Children in Ethiopia and DRC.
- CBCM Best Practice Guide outlines steps to establish **community dialogue and feedback on SEA prevention and response**.
- UNICEF in DRC is using C4D community sensitization activities to prevent SEA, both to strengthen SEA reporting and reduce risks for children.

Engagement with the UN SEA Working Group

- UN SEA Task Force to develop a system-wide **“game-changing”** SEA strategy, to include in upcoming SG’s Report on Special Measures for PSEA.
- Strengthen member State accountability by establishing a **credible and independent investigatory process**.
- **Operationalize CBCMs** through UNCT PSEA Network.
- Increase **selective vetting of peacekeeping troops and capacity building** prior to deployment.

End of the presentation

- Thank you for your attention
- Questions and comments