

# Prevention and Response to Sexual Misconduct



UNDP is committed to eliminating all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. It is striving to work closely with partners and the wider UN system to ensure that the highest standards of policies, processes and systems are in place for the protection from, prevention of and effective response to sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Any unwelcome sexual advance; request for sexual favor, verbal or physical conduct; gesture of a sexual nature or any other behavior of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?

Sexual exploitation is 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 person.

## WHAT IS SEXUAL ABUSE?

Sexual abuse is the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions.

# STANDARDS FOLLOWED BY UNDP ON PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SECRETARY-GENERAL BULLETIN ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (ST/SGB/2003/13)

**Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse violate universally recognized international legal norms and standards and have always been unacceptable behavior and prohibited conduct. In order to further protect the most vulnerable populations, especially women and children, the following specific standards are promulgated:**



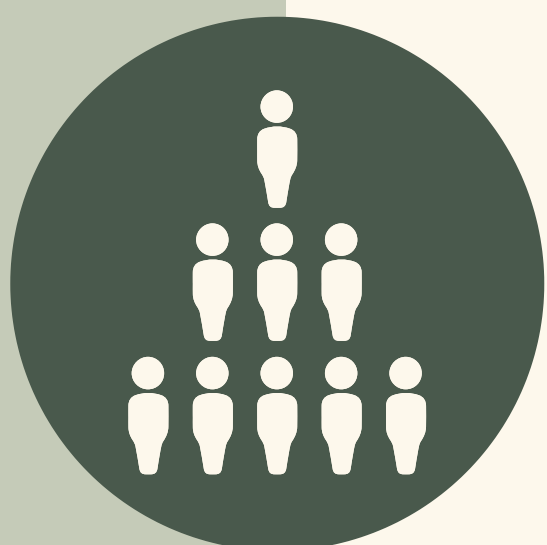
Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse constitute acts of serious misconduct and are therefore grounds for disciplinary measures.



Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of maturity or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.

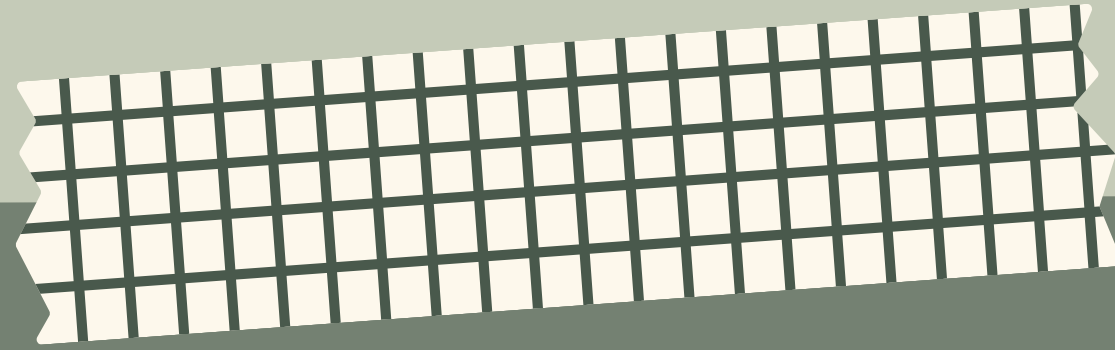


Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favours or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behaviour, is prohibited. This includes any exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries of assistance.



Sexual relationships between UN staff and beneficiaries of assistance, since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics, undermine the credibility and integrity of the work of the United Nations and are strongly discouraged.

# Prevention



All forms of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are unacceptable and are prohibited in UNDP, whether perpetrated against a recipient of assistance or a coworker. It is our collective priority to prevent such behaviors and to support those affected.

UNDP conducts rigorous pre-employment checks of personnel to prevent the rehiring of known offenders. As such, UNDP participates in a joint project with other UN agencies to maintain a system-wide database called "Clear Check" to ensure that former personnel involved in substantiated cases of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse with one entity in the UN system cannot be employed by another entity.

UNDP is committed not to partner with entities that fail to appropriately address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. All individuals and entities should accept standards followed by UNDP on prohibition of SEA through a written undertaking prior to entering into any cooperative agreements.

UNDP has developed and requires all personnel to take inter-agency online training courses on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment in the workplace as part of orientation and capacity building of staff.



# Response

UNDP investigates all allegations of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, imposes disciplinary and/or administrative sanctions when allegations are substantiated, and may, through the UN Office of Legal Affairs, refer matters to national authorities for criminal prosecution.

## Assistance and Protection

UNDP staff members are protected from retaliation for reporting allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse or sexual harassment in good faith. Retaliation is prohibited and, if established, constitutes sanctionable misconduct.

Staff members who believe that they have been the victim of retaliation may seek informal redress or make a formal complaint to the Ethics Office at [ethicsoffice@undp.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@undp.org)

## Transparency

UNDP publishes annually information on the disciplinary actions taken against its personnel, including in cases of sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse.

UNDP also provides real-time reports on the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse to the Office of the Special Coordinator. In addition, consolidated data on allegations and substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse are published in the Report of the Secretary-General on Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

# Dispute Resolution Processes

UNDP and external personnel have several options available to them to report prohibited conduct and seek resolution.

## PROVISION OF INITIAL GUIDANCE ON OPTIONS AVAILABLE

Personnel may reach out to management, HR or peers to report prohibited conduct. They may also contact the Office of the Ombudsman who will guide them on their options under the current policy.

## INFORMAL PROCESS

Personnel wishing to pursue informal resolution may consult the Office of the Ombudsman to examine options for solutions or mediation after the incident of alleged prohibited conduct. The Office of the Ombudsman offers informal advice to staff who do not wish to proceed immediately to a formal process. Should staff wish to pursue the informal mechanism they are encouraged to do so as soon as possible after an incident has taken place.

## FORMAL PROCESS

Formal complaints of sexual harassment may be reported to the Office of Audit and Investigation (OAI) at any time, regardless of when the alleged conduct occurred. For other types of prohibited conduct, a formal complaint must be filed with OAI within one year from the date of the last incident. The time limits for filing a formal complaint are suspended while informal resolution is being pursued. In exceptional circumstances, the time limits may be extended by the Director, OAI.

Additionally, anyone with information regarding possible wrongdoing where it involves United Nations property, assets, personnel, vendors or implementing partners, can report the matter to the Investigations Division using the [Report Wrongdoing Platform](#). Individuals may choose to report anonymously as well but as much details as possible including contact information is encouraged. The Division has discretionary authority to decide which matters to investigate and, where suitable, may also decide to refer a report to another entity for appropriate action, including investigation.

## REQUEST FOR A MANAGEMENT EVALUATION OR A DISPUTE RESOLUTION REQUEST

A staff member may request a management evaluation. It must be filed within sixty (60) calendar days from the date of notification of the challenged decision in accordance with Staff Rule. Other members of UNDP personnel may contest a decision in accordance with the dispute resolution mechanism provided for in their contracts.

# Contact Details

## OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN FOR UNITED NATIONS FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES

Mailing address: 304 East 45th Street 6th Floor, Room FF-671 New York, NY 10017 USA

Website: <http://fpombudsman.org/>

Telephone: +1 646 781 4083

Fax: +1 212 906 6281

Email: [ombudsmediation@fpombudsman.org](mailto:ombudsmediation@fpombudsman.org)

---

## OFFICE OF AUDIT AND INVESTIGATION

Through an Online referral form

Independent telephone service: +1 770 776 5678 (worldwide)

Email: [reportmisconduct@undp.org](mailto:reportmisconduct@undp.org)

Mailing Address: Deputy Director (Investigations), Office of Audit and Investigations, One UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

---

## ETHICS OFFICE

Helpline: +1-212-909-7840

Fax: +1-212-906-6153

Email: [ethicsoffice@undp.org](mailto:ethicsoffice@undp.org)

Skype account: ethics.office.undp

---


## OHR

General enquiries about the UNDP Policy on harassment, sexual harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority can be sent by e-mail to: [harassment.ohrfocalpoint@undp.org](mailto:harassment.ohrfocalpoint@undp.org)

---

## SPEAK UP HELPLINE

Sexual harassment may also be reported to the external helpline where the counseling and guidance on the process will be provided. Helpline can be reached via phone at +1 (917) 367-8910 or through email: [speakup@un.org](mailto:speakup@un.org)



**UNDP endeavours to inform and promote awareness  
among partners on the standards of conduct.  
Together we can create and maintain an environment  
that prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and  
harassment and take appropriate measures for this  
purpose.**

