



The UN and humanitarian organisations are failing in their response to the sexual abuse of children

Sexual exploitation and abuse of children by UN peacekeeping and humanitarian staff has been so frequent as to call into question the complicity of these institutions in the exploitation of the very people they are supposed to protect. These abuses, by UN-mandated military personnel, police, civilian and humanitarian staff, continue to be committed with impunity.

Allegations made against senior UN and humanitarian officials have been undermined or dismissed. The accused have been allowed to resign, avoiding justice thanks to a disciplinary system shrouded in secrecy, while the internal investigation mechanisms of the UN and humanitarian organisations have failed to provide victims with the justice and redress they are owed. Although steps have been taken to address this abuse, the response of the UN and other humanitarian organisations remains deeply concerning. Recent reports show that some UN and humanitarian organisations still respond to allegations of abuse and exploitation of children by silencing victims, in an attempt to protect institutional reputations.

While CRIN welcomes the recently updated UN whistleblower protection policy, those who report abuse continue to be blacklisted for reporting their colleagues. Women and child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse must be empowered to speak out, and no survivor should be silenced. Those who identify wrongdoing must be protected from retaliation when they make public disclosures to the media, civil society or governments. Individuals responsible for sexual exploitation and abuse, and those who fail to hold these individuals to account, must be immediately removed from the UN system.

Sexual abuse and exploitation allegations continue to undermine the credibility of institutions vital for the realisation of children's rights. Stating that there is zero tolerance for such behaviour is no longer sufficient. Concrete, and transparent action needs to be taken by the UN, Member States and humanitarian organisations to put victims first.

The UN, Member States and humanitarian organisations must:

- Ensure the prompt, effective and independent investigation of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Ensure transparency about how they address complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, including by publishing information about how they address complaints.
- Publish data regarding the scale and scope of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN-mandated peacekeepers, civilian, and humanitarian agencies.
- Ensure that the provision of support to child survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse is a top priority with all victims receiving the legal, social and psychological assistance they need.
- Ensure there is a transparent disciplinary procedure for all UN staff and humanitarian staff and that senior staff are held accountable for their actions.
- Strengthen existing whistleblower protections.