



UNITED NATIONS

UN Pre-Deployment Package For Staff in High-Risk Environments

1 Acknowledgements

This package has been developed under the direction of the United Nation's Duty of Care Taskforce. A number of people have given time and input into developing it, including representatives from the IASMN / UNDSS, UNMD, UNMSD, and UNSSCG. It has been overseen by a Working Group comprising of representatives from IOM and UNDP. Other members of the Duty of Care Taskforce have also contributed to ensure alignment.

Sincere thanks to all those who have been involved.

2 Abbreviations

- DEET - *N,N*-Diethyl-*meta*-toluamide or diethyltoluamide (the most common active ingredient in insect repellants)
- DO – Designated Official (In each country (or designated area) where the United Nations is present, the most senior United Nations official is normally appointed the Designated Official (DO) for security by the Secretary-General and accredited accordingly to the host Government)
- EPST – United Nations Secretariat Emergency Preparedness and Support Team
- GBV – Gender Based Violence
- HIV / AIDS - Human Immunodeficiency Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- IASMN – Inter-Agency Security Management Network
- ICSC – International Civil Service Commission

- IHR – International Health Regulations
- IOM – International Organisation for Migration
- MAIP – Malicious Acts Insurance Policy
- MIP – Medical Insurance Plan
- NFSA - Non-Family Service Allowance
- PEP Kits – Post Exposure Preventative treatment kits (for individuals who may have been exposed to HIV, ideally taken within 2 hours and no later than 72 hours following exposure).
- PPE – Personal Protective Equipment
- PrEP – Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (used when people at very high risk of HIV take medicines to lower their chances of infection).
- R&R – Rest and Recuperation leave
- SMT – Senior Management Team
- SRM – Security Risk Management
- S-SAFE - Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (security training)
- TRIP – Travel Request Information Processing
- UN – United Nations
- UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
- UNLP – United Nations Laissez-Passer (travel document issued by the United Nations)
- UNMD – United Nations Medical Directors
- UNMSD – United Nations Medical Services Division
- UNSMS – United Nations Security Management System
- UNSSCG – United National Staff / Stress Counsellors special interest Group
- WSAT – Women’s Security Awareness Training

3 Glossary

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions will apply:

- **Family** - Your relatives or friends with whom you have a close, personal relationship. This is different from definitions related to eligibility for benefits and entitlements such as a ‘beneficiary’ and ‘eligible family member’ which are determined by your agency as your employer.
- **Gender-based violence** - Acts of physical, mental or social abuse (including sexual violence) that are attempted or threatened and may involve some type of force (such as violence, threats, coercion, manipulation, deception, or weapons, or may be linked to cultural expectations or economic circumstances) and are directed against somebody because of perceived failure to conform to cultural or gendered expectations of expression, roles, and behaviors.
- **Personnel** - means persons other than staff members who perform services for the United Nations, under the regulations of the UN Charter, such as consultants, individual contractors, Standby Partners, technical assistance experts, and UN Volunteers. This distinction is required for this package as it contains information about policies, procedures and entitlements which is different for staff and personnel. However, it should be noted the UNSMS definition of UN “personnel” incorporates both staff and personnel.
- **Staff** - Staff members, both International Professionals and locally-recruited, are appointed by the Secretary-General under the regulations established by the United Nations General Assembly. The terms and conditions of appointment of staff members are set out in the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules.

4 Disclaimer

The information provided in this package represents general guidance for United Nations staff deploying to high-risk environments to support their preparation. Some of the information it contains, including the security provisions, apply to all United Nations personnel. You can refer to your local HR contact for clarification if you are unsure whether the information in this package applies to you.

This package as a whole does not represent organisational policy or procedure and in the event of any discrepancy between information in this package, and current or future organisational policies and procedures, the policies and procedures will always take precedence.

The United Nations does not necessarily endorse the content and / or products of external resources and websites cited in this guide and accepts no responsibility or liability for their content.

Please note that, even with the best information, it is impossible to entirely eliminate risks, particularly in designated high-risk locations. While the Staff Regulations and other policies may involve some assumption of responsibility of risk by the United Nations, this package does not reflect any extension of those assumed responsibilities. The overarching guidance pertaining to responsibilities for the management of security risks, including your own, can be found in the UNSMS Framework for Accountability.¹

¹ UNSMS *Security Policy Manual*, 'Framework of Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System'.

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

1 Foreword

As our world changes, the United Nations must consider how ‘to stay and deliver’ and carry out its essential work and mandate in diverse, fragile and increasingly challenging environments. Appropriate balance must be found in maintaining operations in these contexts, whilst ensuring the associated risks are identified and mitigated as far as possible.

Reflecting this, and as part of the remit of the United Nations’ ‘Duty of Care’ Taskforce, the High-Level Committee on Management has approved a series of recommendations to strengthen support to United Nations staff working in high-risk environments. This pre-deployment package represents the implementation of some of these recommendations.

2 Welcome Note (Agency Specific and Optional)

In this section, United Nations Agencies can opt to include a personal welcome note from a relevant senior Director. Some typical messages agencies may wish to convey in this section include:

- *Current agency context regarding its work in high-risk environments (e.g., drivers, mandate).*
- *Importance of the agency’s work undertaken in high-risk environments.*
- *Recognition of the sacrifices staff make and the challenges they face whilst serving in high-risk environments.*
- *Importance of individual responsibilities for risk mitigation (including security, medical/health etc.).*
- *Brief overview of accountability with regards to risk (e.g., internal mechanisms such as SMT/DO decision making, SRM).*
- *Brief introduction to available resources/teams to support risk mitigation. It is important these positions are sensitized to staff at each possible pre-deployment stage with strong executive level support, e.g., ‘I trust you will engage with security and medical personnel in your location of deployment, who serve as a valuable resource in the management of risk during your assignment.’*
- *Reassurance about the support the agency will provide during the assignment.*

Example UNICEF Welcome Note [for information]:

Dear colleagues,

You have joined UNICEF at a challenging time for the world’s children.

Today, nearly one in every four children -- an estimated 535 million children -- lives in countries affected by conflict, natural disaster, epidemics or other emergencies. The world faces the largest global migration and refugee crisis since the Second World War. And the intensifying impact of climate change exacerbates risks to children who are already vulnerable.

UNICEF staff and personnel are at the heart of our ability to respond to these increasingly numerous, complex and often protracted humanitarian crises and emergencies. They work relentlessly, with our

partners, in some of the toughest places on earth to reach the children at greatest risk, taking bold and innovative action to deliver results. Before, during and after a crisis, UNICEF is there – and never gives up.

You have been selected to work for UNICEF because of your skills, your experience, and your commitment to the cause of children. During your assignment, you will use all of these qualifications -- and add to them -- as we work together to make a positive difference in the lives of children living through emergencies and in other high-risk environments.

This guide has been developed to support you in preparing for your important mission. We encourage you to become familiar with it, and to use it.

Every child has the right to grow up healthy, educated and protected from harm. Your work will help protect these rights for the world's most vulnerable children – helping them survive and thrive today so that someday as adults, they can help build stronger societies.

Across our organization, not a day goes by when we do not recognize the enormous contributions of UNICEF staff and personnel deployed in emergencies and other high-risk environments. We are also acutely aware of the risks you may face and the personal sacrifices you may be called on to make. We are committed to doing everything we can to support you. Please know that your safety and wellbeing is our priority.

We look forward to our work together and wish you every success in your assignment with UNICEF.

Anthony Lake

Manuel Fontaine

UNICEF Executive Director

Director, UNICEF Office of Emergency Programmes

3 Purpose

Working in high-risk contexts can be the most exciting and fulfilling work you will ever do, but at the same time, the personal and professional demands can be overwhelming. The United Nations and its agencies work hard and strive to ensure staff are provided with the support they need at every stage of their assignment.

Every high-risk environment is unique and will present new challenges and new opportunities, no matter how much experience you have gained. The conditions you will be living and working in will vary enormously. You may witness human suffering, including children and vulnerable people in distress. Your colleagues may be traumatised, bereaved, or struggling in their daily lives. You may be working seven days a week. You may be living in a tent or a modified container, and under a strict curfew with significant limitations on your freedom of movement. You may be required to adopt and manage a range of additional and unfamiliar security requirements. You may experience threats of physical harm to your person, your residence, or during your travel and work. You may be situated close to armed conflict or be working in heavily armed environments. You may be required to respond to emergencies or crises entailing the use of bunkers or evacuations. You may have intermittent access to power, running water, and the internet. You may be sleeping in a small room with the same colleagues with whom you work every day.

When and what you eat, who you associate with, the hours you work, what you can do in your free time and where you can go, your personal safety and security, how you dress, how you are expected to behave

in public, and how frequently you can connect with your friends and your family back home may be determined by the context you are working in.

Question for self-reflection:

Re-read the section above. What do you think this will feel like? How will you cope? If you already have experience of working in such environments, what coping mechanisms did you use that worked well for you?

Wherever you go and no matter how easy or difficult you perceive your new environment, there are adjustments you may have to make in order to adapt. These packages will support you, United Nations' staff and your families, to prepare holistically and as comprehensively as possible before deployment so you are ready to begin your important work.

4 How to use this package

It is recognised that preparing to deploy to a high-risk context is a highly personal practice. The level of information and support you need varies dependent on your experience, how long you have worked for the United Nations and your agency, your level of familiarity with the local context, your family and personal situation, and your general health and wellbeing at the time of your assignment.

You are well-placed to manage your own preparation and research to meet your individual needs and are encouraged to use these packages to help you to do so.

Your pre-deployment package is in three parts:

- General pre-deployment package (this document).
- Country-specific pre-deployment package.
- Information for Families.

You are encouraged to use all of the information provided in these different parts, but you can also use the Contents pages to select the information most relevant to your individual needs.

5 Risk Management

The United Nations and its agencies recognise and take seriously the responsibility to inform staff deployed to high-risk environments about the nature of the risks they may face during their assignment and how to mitigate them, where possible. This includes, but is not limited to, specific local risks pertaining to:

- Health and medical
- Local hazards
- Security

These risks are explained in a general sense in this section of the package and in a more specific way in the local package for the country you are deploying to, including information about how to mitigate them, where possible.

It is important to be aware that the mitigation of risks you may face during your assignment is a combined responsibility; your agency has responsibilities, but you personally also have responsibilities to ensure you have read and understood the information provided, and to behave in a way which minimizes these risks.

MISSION READY: WHAT YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE YOUR DEPLOYMENT

6 Health and Medical Clearance

Your health is precious. You understand your own medical history and you must be honest and transparent in declaring medical issues as part of the medical clearance process before your deployment so appropriate advice and support can be provided. It can sometimes be difficult to access quality health care during your assignment and you may be living and working long hours in a difficult environment, so ensure you have taken all the medical advice you need before you travel.

6.1 Medical Clearance (Agency specific and mandatory)

Agency-specific medical clearance procedure information to be inserted here. The following is included as a general guidance but may need to be adjusted in accordance with different agencies' particular medical clearance procedures.

Your medical clearance will be based on four factors:

Factor	Considerations
1. Assessment of your health	Pre-existing conditions, individual risk factors, medication you take, your immunization status relevant to the health risks of your duty station, etc.
2. Your Assignment	Health risks and hazards in your specific duty station, dates and duration of your deployment, type of work you will be undertaking, and any specific equipment needed (e.g., PPE for health care workers).
3. Specialist input (only if required)	Dependent on the analysis of factors 1 and 2 above, you may be referred to a specialist for further input, and / or the doctor responsible for your medical clearance may require further investigations (e.g., laboratory or radiologic assessment).
4. Training (only if required)	You may be required to undertake specific training to help mitigate health risks associated with your specific assignment.

Medical fitness and clearance to deploy will only be granted once these four points have been considered.

6.2 General Health Information – What You Need to Do Before Travel to High-Risk Environments

You are responsible for ensuring you are in optimal health before you travel. Following the guidelines for pre-deployment actions below will help to mitigate risks of health or medical issues arising during your assignment:

- i) Go for a dental, eye check-up and any other specialized and / or regular medical exam you may require (e.g., blood pressure, cervical smear test, mammogram etc.) to mitigate the risk of needing treatment whilst you are on assignment. Medical evacuation, applicable in case of an acute illness or injury, will not be granted for routine medical appointments and it is expected you will schedule these during breaks from your duty station.

- ii) Check in advance with your duty station, either via UNMSD / UN Examining Physician, before you travel so advice can be obtained on the following:
 - In case of chronic health conditions.
 - Do not make any assumptions about the availability of any medication you may need at your duty station – check in advance with UNMSD / UN Examining Physician. You may also need to exercise caution about counterfeit medication in some countries.
 - It is recommended you make yourself aware of your assigned country's laws and customs before bringing medication into the country, coordinating with UNMSD / UN examining Physician as needed. If you are permitted to bring your own medication you are advised to bring the full supply you will need for the duration of your assignment with the original prescription and in its original packaging.
- iii) If you are immunocompromised, pregnant, have a disability, or a chronic illness, or are a trans-identified person who is in transition, then do not travel without advice and clearance from a doctor who will work with you to assess the health risks you will face in your assigned location. You can find general travel advice for some of these groups here:
CDC Health Information for International Travel: Chapter 8 Advising Travellers with Specific Needs.
- iv) Find time for activities your mind and your body need before you travel – whether that is rest, exercise, or spending quality time with family and friends.

6.3 Vaccinations

- A copy of your updated vaccination card must be shared with your UN Medical Services as part of your medical clearance. If you decline vaccinations recommended as part of your medical clearance, then your agency may choose not to proceed with your deployment and / or ask you to sign a waiver of liability for the consequences of this. A decision not to have the recommended vaccinations could constitute a risk to yourself, your colleagues, and others, including community members you may interact with during your assignment.
- Vaccination requirements will be advised as part of your medical clearance, and will depend on the travel destination, your vaccination status, your role and the duration of your assignment.
- The UN Medical Directors have developed Vaccination and Malaria Prophylaxis Recommendations for all United Nations staff on Official Travel. Please be sure to consult this document in preparation for your travel. This policy also covers specific recommendations for vaccines for United Nations healthcare workers who work directly with patients or handle material that could spread infection.
- Country-specific vaccine recommendations can be found by selecting your destination country at CDC Travellers Health website. A general list of travel-related vaccines and vaccination schedule can be found at CDC Travel Vaccine Summary Table or via the WHO international travel and health website.
- In addition to any vaccines that are specifically required for your duty station, ensure you are up-to-date and current on routine vaccines before you travel. These vaccines include: Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (DTP); measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), Polio, Hepatitis B, and Seasonal influenza (annual shot).
- Be aware that certain countries require proof of specific vaccinations for entry or exit. For example, official proof / certification of yellow fever vaccination is required to enter many countries and is not

valid until 10 days after you have had the vaccine². You must therefore be aware and comply with the destination country's entry and exit requirements. Individuals should also check with the relevant consulate or embassy for the latest information.

- Start the vaccination process as early as possible, as certain vaccines require multiple shots and take time to become fully effective (on average two weeks).

6.4 Communicable diseases in host country

It is important you understand the specific health risks in the location you are travelling to and how to mitigate them. Read the country-specific package carefully and learn about the prevailing health risks in the country you will be deploying to, and how to avoid contracting an illness - be it air borne, food borne, insect bite, or from direct contact.

General information about infectious diseases can also be found on the following sites:

- [CDC](#)
- [WHO](#)
- [UN-specific](#)

Example: Malaria Prophylaxis

If travelling to a malaria endemic country, prophylaxis may vary. Four types of malaria prevention (Types A, B, C, D) are specified by WHO, depending on a country's malaria risk profile. United Nations staff travelling to countries with malaria transmission areas should consult the [WHO site](#) or [UNMD recommendations](#) on which type of malaria prevention to follow. Note that the choice of malaria prophylaxis will depend on the exact location(s), duration and type of stay, and be based on a specific health risk assessment.

Oral prophylaxis: Start medications for malaria prophylaxis as advised. Depending on the medication, it may need to be started 1–2 weeks before exposure, while other medications to prevent malaria need to be started 1–2 days before exposure.

- You may be advised to use the medication provided as stand-by treatment only.
- Since no malaria prophylaxis is 100% effective and there are also other insect-borne diseases, you will need to take steps to avoid mosquito bites.

Mosquito bites standard precautions:

- Avoid stagnant water (ponds, lakes, plants in pots).
- Avoid leaving lights on in bathrooms or bedrooms when not using them.
- Use insect spray on exposed skin (containing DEET min. 20%, or Bayrepel molecule) and renew application according to the indications on the spray.

² From 11 July 2016, the certificate of vaccination against yellow fever is valid for the life of the person vaccinated. This lifetime validity applies automatically to all existing and new certificates, beginning 10 days after the date of vaccination. Accordingly, effective from this date, revaccination or a booster dose of yellow fever vaccine will not be required for international travellers as a condition of entry, regardless of the date that their international certificate was initially issued. Currently, valid IHR international certificates of vaccination are now automatically valid for life of the traveler indicated. Nothing needs to be modified in the certificate; under the IHR, any changes, deletions, erasures or additions may cause a certificate to be rendered invalid.

- Use an impregnated (permethrin or deltamethrin) mosquito net that you can tuck under your mattress.
- Wear protective clothing - long-sleeved shirts and long trousers (80% of bites occur under the knee).
- Take a flying insect spray on trips to help keep your room clear of mosquitoes. The product should contain a pyrethroid insecticide.

7 Security Clearance

It is mandatory for all United Nations staff to obtain security clearance before all official travel. Security clearance enables the in-country Designated Official to provide important security information to incoming staff, and to ensure all registered individuals can be contacted and provided with information in the event of a crisis or emergency. It is therefore critical that all travellers understand their responsibility for their security while on official travel. This includes obtaining:

- Security clearance prior to all official travel.
- Destination-specific security information and advice prior to travel, including the TRIP Advisory sent to staff once they have applied for clearance (see below).
- A 'New Arrivals Briefing' from the appropriate security official upon arrival, within the time specified by the duty station or Country Office.

Security Clearance requests must be submitted through the [Travel Request Information Processing site](#) at least 7 days before the start of travel to ensure sufficient time for approval. To obtain your security clearance, you will need to have completed within the past 3-years both:

- **Basic Safety and Security in the Field II** - <https://training.dss.un.org/course/category/1>
- **Advanced Security in the Field** – <https://training.dss.un.org/course/category/2>

Each course will take approximately 3 – 4 hours and you will need to complete the Basic course prior to the Advanced course. Your insurance may be invalidated if you have not completed both trainings within the last 3 years. It is recommended you travel with copies of the certificates of completion for both courses.

For most high-risk locations, you will also need to have undertaken the **Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (S-SAFE) training** before travel. This is a face-to-face workshop for those working in high-risk security environments. For a brief overview of this training, you can review these videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z94OSLjNUo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-alqS4fZ8E>

In other locations, the S-SAFE training will be provided after your arrival in-country in line within the locally specified timescales. There are also a small number of countries where you will need Designated Official Approval before you travel; your assigned Country Office will advise you about this.

8 Training

Agencies to add any specific training required before deployment to high-risk environments here and links to any e-learning components included.

The United Nations provides its staff with a variety of training to ensure its staff are ready for their work in high-risk environments. You can use the table below as a simple check-list to ensure you have completed the relevant training before your travel:

Area	Title and Description	✓
Security	Basic Security in the Field (BSITF II): 3 – 4 hours - Provides vital security information for staff, family members and others covered by the UN Security Management System (UNSMS). It contains 7 modules, 6 of which are assessed.	
	Advanced Security in the Field: 3 – 4 hours - How to avoid or minimize dangers and risks building on the “Basic Security in the Field II”. You will learn how to take precautionary and preparative action, apply practical techniques to reduce risks and react appropriately in the event of actual danger, threat or injury. You will also develop a deeper understanding of a wide range of safety-related issues and security concepts and techniques to help ensure your safety, health and welfare.	
	S-SAFE - this instructor-led in-person course is designed to achieve a global standard for UN staff operating in high-risk environments. It is run as a simulation so staff experience first-hand some of the security risks they may face, and thus learn how to deal with them. It may be delivered in-country upon arrival or you may be required to complete it beforehand.	
	W-SAT – an instructor-led in-person course delivered by women security professionals to women personnel within the UNSMS, aiming to improve their security awareness, understanding and capability. The course is currently available in select locations whilst IASMN evaluate how to make the course more widely available. You can contact UNDSS Training and Development Section or your security contact point at your duty station to ascertain whether this training is available in your assigned location.	
ICT	Depending on your duty station, you may require training in the use of the ICT equipment you will be issued with.	
Medical (variable dependent on duty station and risks)	Depending on the type of risk exposure, you may be requested to undergo training related to your safety, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific infectious disease training. ▪ Use of PPE ▪ First Responder Course training is designed to provide pre-hospital emergency medical intervention in support of host Government or United Nations professional medical support, and in response to an incident which results in casualties or the occurrence of a medical emergency. The training consists of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emergency Trauma Bag (ETB) training for providing first response medical support in locations where the response of medical professional is likely to be delayed for more than 30 minutes ○ Individual First Aid Kit (IFAK) training when deploying to conflict zones with risk of exposure to penetrating injuries (e.g., gunshot wound, blast injury). 	

Standards of Conduct and Behaviour	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – Raises awareness about Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, develops knowledge of a range of measures to combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and helps participants understand what the impact of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on victims is, and the consequences for those who commit it	
	Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority - Provides an overview of the UN's policy and procedures on harassment with a view to fostering the creation of a harmonious working environment, free from intimidation, hostility, offence and any form of discrimination or retaliation.	

9 Travel, Visa and Passport

It can sometimes take time to process a visa application and this may also entail a phased journey to your final destination whilst you await your visa approval. You will therefore need to:

- Submit all documents required for your visa and travel arrangements for yourself in a timely manner.
- Ensure your passport has at least 6 months before it expires and sufficient clean pages for all required visas, considering potential entry and exits from the country for duty travel, R&R etc.
- *Agencies to include details about UNLP application / renewal process here.*
- Keep a copy of all these documents on a USB key and store it separately from the original documents
- Consider that deployment to a particular destination may preclude future travel to other countries, or subject you to additional queries from host Government customs and immigration services in line with their sovereign rights and priorities. Your agency can provide more information about this if relevant to your deployment.

10 ICT

Ensure you coordinate with ICT prior to travel in order to:

- Establish what ICT equipment you will need to take with you /use during your assignment and if there are any local restrictions to be aware of. This may include communication tools such as satellite phones or radios.
- Undertake any training you require in its use and practice the use of these tools as required.

It is your responsibility to ensure all ICT equipment you are taking is operating well and your mobile phone is unlocked so you can use local SIM cards in your new location. If you cannot unlock your mobile phone you are advised to take an old / spare phone for this purpose.

11 Packing

Packing for a high-risk context is – to a certain extent - common sense and what you will take with you is personal, will vary from context to context and evolve over time.

Hints and Tips:

- Do not over-pack. Take note of luggage allowance limits and adhere to them whilst also considering there may be limited room to transport and store your belongings when you arrive at your duty station. The luggage allowance for UN-coordinated flights is usually 15kg per person.

- Take note of the local guidance provided by the Country Office / duty station you are travelling to about what to bring and not to bring and adhere to it.
- There is always a risk check-in luggage can get lost, delayed or tampered with so use the check-list in this package to ensure you take the right items with you in hand luggage.
- Do not take any valuable items you would be upset to lose. This includes jewellery, personal electronic equipment, and items of significant sentimental value. Any valuable items you do decide to take should be transported in your carry-on rather than your check-in luggage.
- Read the section on documents to bring carefully and ensure there are electronic copies stored where they can be retrieved easily in case you lose your laptop or memory stick.
- Think about items to help you relax when you are not working – books, films, TV series, music, fitness / sports equipment etc. Remember internet access in your duty station might not be reliable so download large files / videos before you travel.
- If you have special dietary requirements check the availability of the food you need at your destination – you may want to bring certain items with you.
- Ensure you pack appropriate clothing for the context you will be working. This may include attire and footwear appropriate for working environments (camps, work in rural areas, frequent travel, meeting formalities, etc.) as well as the local cultural context (shawls, long trousers and sleeves, etc.).
- Consider taking small security items, such as pad locks, head lamps and torches, or a whistle – a longer list is provided below and needs will vary according to the assigned duty station.
- Check with colleagues who are already on the ground working if there is anything they would like you to bring that they forgot to pack or are particularly missing.
- Consider bringing a small token item for the new team you will be working with such as biscuits or candy – it is often appreciated and helps make a positive first impression.
- **If in doubt, check with the Country Office / new duty station before you travel.**

11.1 Documents

The list of documents included in this package is in addition to any documents or certificates you are required to provide as part of your onboarding process, such as original copies of education qualifications and marriage certificate.

Hints and tips:

- Passport / National ID, UNLP / UN ID (if you have one) and vaccination history and certificates (e.g., yellow fever) must be carried in your hand luggage as they may be required as part of the immigration procedures.
- Carry hard copies of all your documents in your hand luggage.
- Store copies of relevant documents electronically and securely so they can be accessed in case of loss of any hardware such as your phone or laptop.

Area	Description	✓
Documents	Driver's License / International Driver's License	
	Health card with information about blood type, known allergies and prescribed medication	
	Passport / National ID + colour photocopies + copies of visa – ensure your passport is valid for at least 6 months from your date of travel	

	Copies of the certificates of completion of the required online UN Security trainings.	
	Passport photos (at least 6 recommended)	
	Prescription for glasses	
	Prescription for medication for existing health conditions	
	UNLP and UN ID (if applicable)	
	Vaccination history and certificates (e.g., yellow fever)	

11.2 Hand Luggage

Your check-in luggage can sometimes be delayed, lost or tampered with so the following items are recommended for packing in hand luggage:

Area	Description	✓
Hand Luggage	Passport / National ID, and UNLP / UN ID (if applicable) and other documents (see above)	
	Vaccination history and certificates should be carried in hand-luggage with other travel documents as they are sometimes required as part of the immigration procedures	
	Change of clothes and at least one spare set of underwear	
	Glasses and / or contact lenses and solution	
	Medication for pre-existing medical conditions	
	Mobile phone and laptop charger / cable	
	Toiletries to last you a few days (Note: Dependent on your journey, these may need to be <100ml to comply with air travel security regulations)	

Travel clothing should be loose and comfortable, and it is recommended you check with the local Country Office / Duty Station about appropriate dress for arrival based on the local context.

11.4 Packing List

This list includes items recommended for high-risk environments. It does not represent a full packing list and you will need further guidance from the Country Office and to consider your own personal needs.

Health	First aid kit. These can often be bought as a basic pre-made pack or may be supplied by your Agency, but if you are bringing your own, some items to include are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhesive tape 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antiseptic wound cleaner / alkaline soap • Bandages • Cotton swabs • Disposable gloves • Safety pins • Scissors • Thermometer • Tweezers <p>Non-prescription medications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antacid • Antidiarrheal • Antibacterial ointment • Anti-histamine tablets • Eyedrops (lubricating / wetting) • Anti-histamine cream • Mild laxative • Nasal decongestant / cold remedies • Oral rehydration salts • Pain and fever relief (simple remedies such as paracetamol, ibuprofen) • Water disinfectant / purification tablets <p>If trained in their use and suitable to the risk environment, you can also consider taking pressure bandages and tourniquet.</p>	
Prescription Medication	All prescription medication should be in the original packaging, with copies of the prescriptions attached. Check with your duty station there are no legal issues associated with bringing your medication into the country.	
Clothing	Clothing for the local cultural context	
	Sturdy, comfortable and waterproof walking shoes	
	Water-proof / wind-proof jacket (weight / thickness depends on climate at your assigned location)	
Other	Back-pack (small) that can be used as Grab / Go Bag in case of emergency evacuation. Your country briefing will advise on any specific items required for this grab bag, though this will usually include water and provisions, personal medical and sanitary requirements, additional chargers etc.	
	Earphones with mic for Skype calls	
	Earplugs and eye-mask	
	Flashlight / torch and spare batteries (a head-light is often useful for reading in the dark and a flash-light that can be hung somewhere is also recommended)	
	Food / spices / snacks / treats (items to reflect personal preferences and dietary requirements)	
	Impregnated mosquito net/dome	
	Kindle (or similar) for ease of transporting multiple books	
	Leatherman / small multi-tool or penknife (put in check-in luggage)	
	Mobile phone handset (unlocked so local SIM cards can be used)	
	Nail clippers and small scissors (put in check-in luggage)	

	Padlock (small – for securing your bag during travel)	
	Phone charger (multiple)	
	Sarong (cotton – has multiple uses including as a substitute for a towel or a curtain)	
	Sheet sleeping bag / sleeping bag liner	
	Sunglasses	
	Toiletry bag (waterproof with hook for hanging is recommended)	
	Travel towel	
	Universal travel adaptor(s)	
	USB / external hard drive(s)	
	Water bottle / cup for drinking	
	Whistle	
	Ziplock plastic bags (assorted – useful for various items)	
Based on Personal Needs / Duty Station	Altitude sickness medication (if indicated)	
	Anti-biotics to treat common travellers' infections (e.g., travellers' diarrhea, infections of respiratory tract and urinary tract)	
	Anti-malarial medication (for malaria endemic country)	
	Condoms / oral contraceptives	
	Door jam – if advised by Security it may be useful in the local context	
	Duct tape (e.g., to seal tarpaulin)	
	Dust mask	
	Epinephrine auto-injectors (e.g., EpiPen) if indicated based on history of severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis	
	Extension lead and multi-socket adaptor	
	Moisturising cream for dry skin	
	Rape/physical assault alarm – if advised by Security it may be useful in the local context	
	Sterile syringes	
	Tampons / sanitary towels / menstrual cup (for additional advice for women, you can refer to the Guidance for Women section)	

MISSION READY: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR DEPLOYMENT

12 Health and Medical

Maintaining good health and a sense of wellbeing whilst working in a high-risk context are important - and often challenging. You may feel overwhelmed by the demands you perceive, witness intense human suffering and be living in poor conditions where illness is common. However, there is much you **can** do to optimize your health and wellbeing during your mission; this section of the pre-deployment package explains how.

General Health Hints and Tips:

- Avoid and treat animal bites and scratches.
- Avoid and treat sun exposure.
- Eat and drink safely.
- Ensure road safety.
- Keep your hands clean.
- Protect against sexually transmitted diseases.
- Protect against mosquitos and other insect bites.
- Stay hydrated.

Information about medical and life insurance can be found in the **Error! Reference source not found.** section

You can access additional information about specific diseases and travellers' health at:

[UN HR Portal: Health & Wellbeing](#)

[UN Travel Health News & Alerts](#)

[WHO International Travel and Health](#)

[CDC Travellers Health](#)

12.1.1 First Aid and PEP Kits

On arrival in-country, ask your security focal point or the UNDSS representatives in country where the First Aid and PEP kits³ are located and who the custodian and manager for them are.

12.1.2 HIV / AIDS

In crisis and high-risk environments, the risks of HIV infection can increase as chaotic conditions can accelerate the spread of the epidemic. You can protect yourself by following the hints and tips below:

- Take responsibility for preventing HIV infection by carrying condoms and practicing safe sex.
- Inquire with your duty station, via UNMSD/UN examination physician about the availability of PrEP, which is medication that can lower your chances of HIV infection.

³ Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) Treatment is an emergency medical response for individuals who may have been exposed to HIV and should be used within 2 hours and not later than 72 hours after exposure.

- In the event of potential exposure to HIV, utilize the PEP kit
- UN Cares – the UN-system wide workplace programme on HIV – represents an extensive network of people and resources to help you learn more about HIV and provide support and information to staff and families where required: <http://www.uncares.org/>

12.1.3 Medical Evacuation

Agencies can add to this section to provide further information about medical evacuation procedures as needed.

Medical evacuation allows UN staff to secure essential medical care or treatment for a severe illness or injury requiring medical intervention that is locally unavailable or inadequate, according to your agency's Medical Services' assessment of the situation. UN Secretariat Agencies medical evacuation provisions are covered by the [Administrative Instruction ST/AI/2000/10](#)

Know which rules your own agency follows and who to contact in case of an urgent medical problem.

13 UN Staff Accommodation in High-Risk Environments

A global accommodation website for United Nations staff has been developed which allows staff to view the available UN guesthouses, including photographs, look at their facilities and services and book rooms on-line. In some locations, staff are also able to arrange for Airport Pick-up through this site. The site also allows staff to provide feedback on their experiences in the specific guesthouse, facilitating central monitoring of service levels, and providing support to staff in case issues cannot be resolved in-country. To register, staff can go to accommodation.wfp.org.

UN-provided accommodation is defined as a place to rest and recover from fatigue, either built or rented or loaned for use, and managed by any UN Agency. Its management services can be directly provided by the UN Agency, in collaboration with other humanitarian partners (UN Agencies and NGOs), or outsourced to commercial parties.

UN-provided accommodation may be classified as:

- Permanent: accommodation of a durable nature such as guesthouses; or
- Temporary: accommodation of a non-permanent nature such as camps for a rapid response in emergency onsets.

All UN-provided accommodation in high-risk environments are currently designated as non-family duty stations based on the prevailing security risks. As part of its Duty of Care, the UN will ensure all UN-provided accommodation is compliant with the requirements of Security Assessments and the Security Risk Management (SRM) process in terms of security risk management measures such as physical security (including bunkers/safe havens, as required), access control and integrated security systems. Fire and building safety certification are required for all UN premises, as well as seismic-safety certificates where applicable.

As part of its Duty of Care, the UN and its agencies recognise the importance of adequate, secure, safe, and comfortable accommodation for its staff. In line with this, common quality standards are agreed for five distinct service aspects detailed in the UN minimum living and working standards. You are encouraged to report any issues you may experience with your accommodation during your assignment via the relevant mechanism so they can be resolved.

14 Benefits and Entitlements (mandatory and agency specific)

This section needs careful review by each agency to ensure it accurately reflects the benefits and entitlements provided. It is recommended the information is kept informative but general to avoid the requirement to regularly update it. Ideally, the reader of the document should be able to identify in the text or through links whether an entitlement is applicable to them in their specific duty station.

In accordance with its Duty of Care, the United Nations recognises its staff working in high-risk environments face challenges that need to be reflected in the benefits and entitlements provided. This section outlines the benefits and entitlements which are of most relevance to staff working in these contexts and are provided as guidance only. They are subject to change and the information provided in this package cannot be used by any staff member as a basis to make a claim for a particular benefit or entitlement. You will receive information about your individual benefits and entitlements as part of the offer and contracting process before your deployment and these will form the terms and conditions of your employment / assignment with your agency.

The information included in this section is a quick reference guide summarising the most relevant benefits and entitlements for staff working in high-risk environments. The following should also be noted:

- There are differences in the general benefits and entitlements between different types of appointments not covered in this package such as leave, travel entitlements etc.
- **Not all benefits and entitlements may be applicable in all high-risk duty stations.** In case of doubt, you can consult with your local HR team.
- Some benefits and entitlements may be subject to a minimum duration of service.

Agencies to review table below and edit as required in accordance with their own terms and conditions.

Entitlements	International (IP)		Locally-Recruited (NO/GS)	
	Fixed term	Temporary	Fixed term	Temporary
Rest and recuperation travel	Y	Y	N	N
Danger pay	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hardship allowance	Y	Y	N	N
Non-family service allowance	Y	Y	N	N
Special leave with full pay for 30 calendar days upon completion of tour of duty ⁴ served in a non-family or 'E' duty station	Y	N	N	N
Special Emergency Compressed Time Off (SECTO)	N	N	Y	Y
Residential Security measures	Y	Y	N	N
Insurance				
Health/medical insurance	Y	Y	Y	Y
Life Insurance	Y	Y	Y	Y
Malicious Acts Insurance Policy	Y	Y	Y	Y
Others				

⁴ Tour of duty is the expected duration a staff member is expected to stay at his/her duty station. It is determined by the hardship classification as approved by International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) as follows: H and A five years, B four years, C and D three years and E two years.

Death benefit	Y	Y	Y	Y
Funeral allowance	N	N	Y	Y
Compensation in the event of death, injury and illness attributable to the performance of official duties	Y	Y	Y	Y

i) Rest and Recuperation (R&R)

The R&R framework is established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)⁵. It is in place to provide time off and allow international staff members and eligible individuals a break from the dangerous, stressful, isolated working and living conditions in which they service. The time off consists of five consecutive working days of authorized absence not charged to annual leave plus actual travel time in each direction to and from the R&R destination. The frequency of R&R travel, as mandated by the ICSC, is determined in accordance with the category, level of hardship and the prevailing security situation.

Individual agencies can provide information about their specific R&R policies including:

- *Link to the designation*
- *Explanation of different R&R cycles*
- *What will be paid*
- *Length of leave*
- *Who is eligible*

ii) Special Emergency Compressed Time Off (SECTO) (if applicable)

In certain designated offices, locally recruited staff (National Officer and General Services Staff) are permitted, in accordance with SECTO provisions, to compress their working weeks within a designated period in order to accrue leave that is granted over and above annual / other leave. Where possible, your agency may provide transportation from the sub-office to the duty station where the Country Office is based.

iii) Danger Pay

Danger Pay is a special (non-pensionable) allowance established by the ICSC for internationally and locally recruited staff who are required to work in locations where very dangerous conditions prevail; i.e. duty stations where UN staff, owing to their association with, or employment by a UN organization are clearly, persistently and directly targeted, thus presenting an imminent and constant threat to staff and activities, or non-protected environments where medical staff are specifically at risk when deployed to deal with public health emergencies as declared by the World Health Organization. It is approved by the ICSC on quarterly basis in accordance with the recommendation of the Under Secretary-General for Safety and Security or that of the Director-General of the World Health Organization.

Agencies to add information about:

- *Link to designation*
- *Amount (for P and GS)*

⁵ The ICSC is an independent expert body established by the United Nations General Assembly. Its mandate is to regulate and coordinate the conditions of service of staff in the United Nations common system, while promoting and maintaining high standards in the international civil service (<https://icsc.un.org/about/default.asp>).

iv) Hardship allowance

Hardship allowance, established by the ICSC in the context of compensation package for international staff members, is a special allowance designed to compensate for the degree of hardship experienced by international staff with appointments longer than one year in B, C, D or E duty stations.

v) Non-family service allowance (NFSA) (if applicable)

Non-family service allowance, as part of the compensation package established by the ICSC for international staff members, is paid in recognition that service in non-family duty stations represents an increased level of psychological and financial hardship in terms of involuntary separation from families. NFSA is paid in addition to the Hardship Allowance.

vi) Insurance

The Medical Insurance Plan (MIP) is a health insurance scheme operated by the United Nations and related organizations for the benefit of locally-recruited active staff members both in the General Service and National Officer categories, eligible former staff members and their eligible family members, serving at designated duty stations away from the relevant Headquarters locations. Locally recruited staff are enrolled in this medical insurance scheme under conditions established by the Secretary-General as a mandatory requirement.

The plans are different for internationally and locally recruited staff members and it is not mandated for Internationally-recruited staff to enroll in this scheme provided they can demonstrate they have adequate insurance which is equivalent to the United Nations' insurance plan.

vii) Malicious Acts Insurance Policy

The purpose of the Malicious Acts Insurance Policy (MAIP) is to cover eligible individuals for death or disability caused by a malicious act. A determination of MAIP award includes a statement by UNDSS that the claimant was in compliance with relevant security guidelines applicable in-country.

viii) Compensation for service incurred death, injury or illness

The United Nations and its agencies provide compensation to all staff in case of death, illness or injury attributable to the performance of official duties, established by United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules. Details are provided in Appendix D to the Staff Rules. See <https://hr.un.org/topics/staff-regulations-and-rules-0> for up-to-date information about the Staff Rules and Regulations.

15 Standards of Conduct

Sometimes you may be working in a remote and isolated field location, a long way away from the Country Office and Headquarters. Sometimes you may feel stressed or exhausted, and this may impact on your own behaviour and the behaviour of others.

In high-risk environments United Nations staff like other humanitarian actors, are often conspicuous. Your actions and behaviour both inside and outside of work are frequently under scrutiny and can affect the overall reputation of the United Nations and its ability to operate effectively and securely. It is important to remember the communities with whom you are working are often more vulnerable in high-risk environments, and the power balance between the community members and you as United Nations staff are not equal and must never be exploited for personal gain.

No matter what environment you are working in and no matter how you are feeling, all staff, regardless of their contractual status, must continuously uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. The concept of integrity includes, but is not limited to, probity, impartiality, fairness, honesty, non-discrimination and truthfulness in all matters affecting your work and status as staff of the United Nations.

At all times, you must remember the following requirements:

- All United Nations staff members must comply with the laws of the host *country unless exceptional circumstances warrant it, such as laws that the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights has determined are contrary to any human rights instrument adopted by the United Nations system. These can include laws that prohibit any LGB or T expression.*
- All United Nations staff are prohibited from abusing United Nations privileges and immunities, and acting or behaving in a manner that would discredit the United Nations.

It is your responsibility to ensure you are aware of your obligations and duties under the applicable UN Staff Regulations and Rules and your own agency's policies and procedures and understand what is permissible and what is not; saying you were not aware will not be an acceptable defence.

This section of the package helps you understand your obligations and duties and provides additional hints and tips to support you.

15.1 Key Policies and Procedures

Agencies to review and add any other relevant policies and guidelines relevant for staff operating in high-risk environments (e.g., Use of Social Media).

The policies and procedures listed below have been highlighted as being of most relevance for staff deployed to high-risk environments. You must ensure you are familiar with and understand them all before your deployment:

Title	Link
UN Charter	https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/ctc/uncharter.pdf
Standards of Conduct for the International Civil Service	https://icsc.un.org/resources/pdfs/general/standardsE.pdf
United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules	https://hr.un.org/handbook/index/
Special Measures for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse	
Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority. ST/SGB/2008/5	
Protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits of investigations	
Disciplinary Measures	

15.2 Reporting your issues, concerns or suspicions:

Reporting and grievance mechanisms vary across UN agencies so it is recommended the specific reporting mechanisms and grievance channels are outlined in this section with reassurances about support that will be provided in case of issues arising.

The United Nations standards, policies and procedures reflect that upholding the highest levels of integrity, ethical conduct and behaviour entail both taking responsibility for your own conduct, and a requirement to report your concerns or suspicions about potential policy breaches or misconduct others may have committed.

To support staff to feel safe to report their concerns, the United Nations has a policy providing protection against retaliation for individuals who report misconduct, provide information in good faith on alleged wrong-doing, or cooperate with a duly authorized audit, inspection, or other oversight activity: <https://hr.un.org/handbook/index/>

Further information about reporting concerns across the UN system can be found in [“The Roadmap: A staff member’s guide to finding the right place”](#).

15.3 General Issues

Some information is included about some of the issues which may arise in high-risk environments. Under each area, you will see what is prohibited under United Nations policies and what are general hints and tips for your consideration. No two contexts are the same so it is important to always be aware of and adhere to your agency’s policy and procedures, and exercise sound personal judgment.

15.3.1 Alcohol / substance abuse

Sometimes in high-risk environments people drink alcohol to excess or self-medicate with drugs as a means of coping. This may have significant implications for individuals and their colleagues, particularly when housed in close-proximity. Excessive alcohol/substance use and impaired inhibitions or decision-making abilities may negatively impact your own security, or that of others.

Policy:

- *Agencies to add any local policies concerning alcohol, including drink-driving.*
- You must comply with the local law.
- The UN Staff Rules and Regulations prohibit the sale or possession of illegal substances.
- Should you have or develop an alcohol or substance abuse problem, for which you seek assistance, this will be treated as a health issue and you will not be subject to discrimination for seeking assistance.

15.3.2 Local Culture and Customs

You must show respect for local cultural customs and practice in your assigned location as failure to do so may undermine your personal and professional credibility, damage the United Nation’s reputation and ability to work, and / or create a security issue.

Policy: ICSC Standards of Conduct: Respect for different customs and culture

40. The world is home to a myriad of different peoples, languages, cultures, customs and traditions. A genuine respect for them all is a fundamental requirement for an international civil servant. Any behaviour that is not acceptable in a particular cultural context must be avoided. However, if a tradition is directly

contrary to any human rights instrument adopted by the United Nations system, the international civil servant must be guided by the latter. International civil servants should avoid an ostentatious lifestyle and any display of an inflated sense of personal importance.

Hints and Tips:

- Seek advice from your Country Office / duty station about appropriate dress, behavior and norms based on the local context. Not only are these important in demonstrating respect for the country but adopting to local circumstances may help to mitigate security risks.
- If you do engage in any behaviour outside of local cultural norms then you may wish to exercise due caution and discretion and avoid doing so in public places where you may risk attracting unwanted attention.
- Ask a trusted local staff member for guidance if you have any questions about what may or may not be acceptable.

15.3.3 Personal relationships

During emergencies and in high-risk environments you are often working in heightened environments where close personal relationships are forged quickly. Most of these will be excellent sources of support for you during your assignment but there may be times when close personal relationships could affect your work. It is also important to remember there is zero tolerance on sexual exploitation across the United Nations system (UN General Assembly resolution A/71/L.59).

Policy – Relationships with non-UN Staff:

- UN Measures for Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse prohibit:
 - Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18), regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defence.
 - The exchange of money, employment, goods, or services for sex.

Under these Measures, sexual relationships between United Nations 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.

Policy – Relationships between UN-staff:

- The UN's policy concerning sexual harassment prohibits unwelcome sexual language, touching or advances. It is your responsibility, and that of your managers, to ensure that harassment and discrimination are not practiced in your workplace. *Agencies to insert information about reporting resources (how to report the misconduct) here as well as support provided.*
- A familial relationship with another UN staff / personnel member within a line management structure is usually prohibited. Any other kind of relationship that may give rise to a reasonable perception of a conflict of interest is also usually prohibited. If in doubt, seek advice from your HR contact.

Hints and Tips:

- Some people working in a high-risk context use sex as a means of coping. Think carefully and use your discretion and judgment before entering into a new sexual relationship during your assignment.
- Practice safe sex during your assignment.
- If you are dating and particularly if you are meeting new people on-line, then use your common sense and follow basic safety tips such as those included in this [article](#). In the event of a security incident following online dating, your security focal point or a member of the UNDSS security team are able to

provide assistance. You can also contact UN-GLOBE for further support if appropriate (see section for Staff of Diverse Sex and Sexual and Gender Identities).

15.3.4 Working in Diverse Teams

During your assignment you are likely to be a member of a diverse team working with people from different cultural backgrounds and their own ways of working. Learning to adapt, build trust and work effectively as a member of this team is one of the most critical ways you can ensure your assignment is completed successfully. There will undoubtedly be moments of frustration, misunderstanding, miscommunication and conflict and these may be compounded by your own feelings of stress, anxiety or exhaustion but you must comply with the policies below:

Policy:

UN Staff Regulation 1.2: Basic rights and obligations of staff:

‘Staff members shall uphold and respect the principles set out in the Charter, including faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women. Consequently, staff members shall exhibit respect for all cultures; they shall not discriminate against any individual or group of individuals or otherwise abuse the power and authority vested in them’.

Hints and Tips:

- Ensure you treat all people at all times with courtesy, dignity and respect.
- Acknowledge your basic responsibility to adapt to your context rather than expecting others to adapt to you. This includes not only in your country of deployment, but in your workplace.
- Be mindful about the impact your own emotions and behaviour are having on others. Keep an open mind and be receptive to feedback from others.
- Actively work to identify and manage your own unconscious bias. UN Women recommends taking the [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#) which helps you to identify some of your own unconscious bias.
- As a manager, hold regular discussions on the importance of integrity and respect in the workplace. Ensure you act as an example and hold yourself, and others to account in accordance with the UN values.
- [Building Trust in Diverse Teams: The Toolkit for Emergency Response](#)⁶ (toolkit – external)

⁶ <http://www.bvsde.paho.org/texcom/desastres/oxfbuid.pdf>

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND WELLBEING

16 Psychological Resilience

UNSSCG has recommended all agencies adopt the use of a resilience briefing with a Counsellor for all staff prior to their travel to high-risk locations. Once this is implemented, this section of the package can be edited to reflect this, focusing solely on the Resilience Briefing information.

Psychological resilience refers to an individual's ability to competently function in a variety of difficult circumstances, including personal health or family related problems, a highly stressful job, or high-risk working and living environments. Resilient people are those who are able to experience hardship without becoming overwhelmed by negative emotions or thoughts. **Resilience is not a trait that people have or do not have. Resilience involves behaviours, thoughts, and feelings that can be acquired through learning and experience.** This section of the pre-deployment package helps you understand how to build your psychological resilience in preparation for deployment to a high-risk duty station.

If you are interested in learning more about psychological resilience then you can refer to this site for further information: http://www.resilience-project.eu/fileadmin/documents/Guidelines_en_2014.pdf

Your agency will offer you a resilience briefing with a Counsellor as part of your pre-deployment preparation process. If for any reason you are not able to attend this, or your agency does not provide it, then you are encouraged to use the self-assessment tool before you deploy and consider what it tells you about your strengths and where you may benefit from additional support as part of your preparation.

16.1 Self-Assessment Tool: 7 Aspects of Psychological Resilience

This [self-assessment tool](#) will help you to think about different aspects of resilience and prepare for your resilience briefing session with the counsellor. By using this tool, you will better be able to identify your current strengths and internal resources which will help build your personal resilience and your capacities to deal effectively with difficulties which may arise during your assignment.

The self-assessment tool is based on seven aspects shown by research as critical to building strong personal resilience:

1. **Perception** – this is about having a sense of purpose and meaning in life. Building this helps to create a sense of stability and the ability to be present in the moment. In turn, this strengthens understanding that emotions are transient and pass in time, and you can better manage tendencies to either deny or become overwhelmed by how you are feeling.
2. **Getting a grip of one's life** – this is about exerting influence when you can and owning and resolving these issues, but also recognising when events may be outside of your control and learning to accept this.
3. **Forming relationships** - building – and maintaining - positive and supportive relationships with others is another building block of personal resilience. An active network of people who you trust, both during your assignment and after it can be a valuable source of support. It is important you do not neglect your relationships with your family and friends at home. No matter how distant they feel and how difficult it is for you to explain the experiences you are having, your assignment is temporary and having this network of strong long-term relationships is important for your health and wellbeing.

4. **Acceptance and optimistic thinking (confidence in the future)** – this is linked to the way you think, and whilst this is not easy to change, being mindful about the times when you do experience a loss of confidence and self-belief can help you better prepare for future adversity.
5. **Orientation on solutions and aims** – focusing on the positives in difficult situations is a skill that can be nurtured and built over time and is another important component of personal resilience.
6. **Healthy Lifestyle** – it is common knowledge that adequate rest and sleep, good nutrition, and regular varied exercise are important to our wellbeing. Translating that knowledge into effective self-care, particularly in hardship and high-risk environments is even more important (see below).
7. **Self Efficacy** – this is about understanding your own strengths as well as recognising when you need support and ensuring you know how to access it during your assignment. It will be vital to get help immediately if you feel stressed, anxious, depressed, very angry, or are having thoughts about hurting yourself or others. It is a sign of strength – not weakness – to recognise when you need support and to get it.

16.2 Resilience Briefing: FAQs

Below you will find answer to some of the most common questions about the pre-deployment resilience briefing:

1. What is a resilience briefing?

A resilience briefing is a phone, video or in-person session with a psychological / Staff Counsellor. It is designed to address some of the anxiety and stress associated with an assignment in a high-risk environment by helping you explore your own personal situation and the likely scenarios you may face. The goal will be to support you to develop an individual preparedness plan for your assignment focused on your own psychological wellbeing.

2. What difference will the resilience briefing make for my preparedness?

As a result of the resilience briefing you will:

- Better understand both your personal motivation and individual concerns related to your assignment. The resilience briefing will therefore help you prioritise your needs and address your own specific concerns.
- You will learn strategies and concrete practices to support and strengthen your personal resilience and wellbeing during the assignment.
- You will learn about some common psychological reactions associated with assignments in high-risk environments, and practical steps to mitigate the psychological risks.
- You will understand what psychological support will be available to you during your assignment and how to access it, should you need it.

3. I am an experienced staff member, and I have managed without the resilience briefing so far. Why do I need it now?

Experience does not always translate into knowledge, insight or wisdom. The resilience briefing facilitates this process by exploring your own reactions and coping mechanisms. Everyone has a tipping point with stress and fatigue, after which your normal coping mechanisms are no longer helpful. It is important you do not take your resilience for granted but take proactive steps to ensure your psychological wellbeing.

4. Is it confidential? How does the Counsellor record and use the information gathered during the briefing?

The content of the conversation is kept strictly confidential by the Staff Counsellor and it is not recorded anywhere in UN files. The only information recorded is:

- When the briefing was done.
- With whom.
- By which Counsellor.

The Counsellor may keep some information for personal records but only with your explicit consent. The Counsellor would use such information for reporting on trends, common concerns of staff deployed to high-risk environments, and other generic information that may help the UN to fulfil its responsibilities for staff.

5. How do I arrange a resilience briefing?

Your agency will advise about the procedure to arrange a pre-deployment resilience briefing. *Agencies that have the facilities for pre-deployment resilience briefings to insert procedures for arranging them here.*

6. Do I need to prepare anything in advance of the briefing? How will the self-assessment questionnaire be used during the resilience briefing?

You must complete the self-assessment questionnaire before the briefing and send it to your Counsellor in advance of the meeting. The Counsellor will help you understand the meaning of your responses during the briefing session. Some of your responses may help to guide and inform the conversation.

7. How long will it last?

Normally, it lasts 60-90 minutes.

8. What will happen during the resilience briefing?

There will be a confidential and genuine discussion between you and a professional Counsellor tailored to your individual circumstances and personal needs.

9. What happens after the resilience briefing?

No action is required after the resilience briefing unless you request a follow-up session. As part of the briefing, you will be informed about the sources of psychological support available for you in case you need it during your assignment.

10. What happens if, following the resilience briefing, the Counsellor thinks that I am not psychologically fit for an assignment in a high-risk environment?

The Counsellor would raise this concern with you and help you to identify the options available to you in this scenario. However, if you still decide to accept the assignment for any reason then this is your personal decision and the Counsellor will not intervene; the choice is still yours. The Counsellor is bound by an oath of confidentiality and is not permitted to share any information about you without your explicit consent, unless there are well-grounded concerns about possible suicide or homicide.

16.3 Tips for Maintaining Psychological Resilience

Some practical tips to help you maintain your resilience on your assignment include:

- Eat as healthily as you can and ensure you stay hydrated throughout the day.
- Exercise as regularly as you can. This may be difficult depending on your location or type of residence on account of security requirements. Work with your colleagues and security professionals to ensure that there are designated places or times when you are able to exercise freely and safely.

- Ensure you have some rest each evening before you go to sleep. Try to stop working 1 – 2 hours before you go to sleep - and focus on ensuring you are getting sufficient good-quality sleep each night. Avoid caffeine 4 - 6 hours before bedtime and avoid alcohol after dinner.
- For some people, taking time for spiritual practice, whether that is prayer, or an activity such as meditation can be helpful.
- Take time for breaks and try to ensure there is at least one full day every week for full rest. If you become exhausted, you will not be able to function properly and your ability to assist others will be hampered.
- Ensure you remain connected to a network in your area of deployment. Creating social groups around shared interests may be a useful way to build relationships and take a break from work.
- Take your R&R / holidays when they are due and switch off during them.

16.4 Directory:

Agency specific and UN-wide links to Wellness, Stress Relief and other relevant materials can be inserted here.

<http://mindfulnext.org/>

<http://www.headington-institute.org/>

<http://www.konterrargroup.net/knowledge/>

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20161104-how-expats-cope-with-losing-their-identity>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/apr/11/secret-aid-worker-humanitarians-flawed-individuals>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/oct/27/secret-aid-worker-is-there-life-beyond-the-field>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/11/five-tips-for-staying-fit-as-an-aid-worker>

<http://www.headington-institute.org/blog-home/421/how-to-approach-sleep-in-a-disaster-response-context>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/aug/24/going-on-holiday-how-to-switch-off>

PERSONAL PREPARATION: BEING SEPARATED FROM YOUR FAMILY

17 Preparing to Leave Your Family:

Leaving your family and the comfort of your home and domestic routines is hard. It is often tempting to ignore the emotional aspect of this by focusing on the logistical arrangements of your deployment. Whilst you are busy making practical arrangements and adjusting to your new environment, it can be difficult for those left behind who are continuing with their daily lives in your absence.

This section of the package will help you:

1. Prepare yourself for being apart from your family.
2. Prepare your family so they understand more about your work and your assignment and what to expect whilst you are away.
3. Help you ensure your personal affairs are in order before you leave.

17.1 Preparing yourself for being apart from your family

- For your own peace of mind and for the sake of your family, no matter how stressful or fast your departure is, try to leave without angry words and let your family know what they mean to you.
- Pack small items such as photos or mementos which will remind you of your family, but always remember there is a risk they could be lost during your assignment so do not take anything you cannot replace or would be upset to lose.
- Consider key milestones or events happening whilst you will be away (birthdays, anniversaries, school events, medical appointments etc.) and consider how you can still be involved. This may include leaving presents or hand-written cards / messages before you depart, or arranging a call for a particular day.
- Agree in advance regular contact but also explain to your family individually in ways they can understand the reasons why there may need to be flexibility within this (e.g., field visits, limited internet connectivity, poor mobile network coverage etc.).
- If you are facing a situation where you have ageing relatives and / or someone close to you who is seriously ill then it is recommended you raise this with a Staff Counsellor as part of your pre-deployment briefing. The Staff Counsellor will be able to work with you to help you identify practical steps you can take before you depart based on your own particular situation so you are prepared for all eventualities.
- You know your family so you are best placed to carefully consider and make decisions about the information you will share with them about your specific assignment. In making these decisions, it is important to consider how your family would feel if something happened to you whilst you were away, however unlikely this scenario is.

17.2 Helping your family prepare for your assignment:

- Share the UN Pre-Deployment Package for Families of Staff in High-Risk Environments with your family members.
- Share information about the history and mission of the UN so your family understand the purpose for which you are working. Some useful links to support this include:
 - UN's main public website explaining the origins of the UN in the desire for peace following the devastation of World War Two: <http://www.un.org/en/about-un/index.html>

- Fanfare for all Peoples - 70th anniversary film for UN: (3-minute video outlining history and purpose of the UN created for its 70th anniversary in 2015):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCOkMWv5TB0>
- *Agency-specific information can be inserted here*
- Ask about their questions or concerns individually so you can provide them with the information and reassurance they need.
- Reassure your family that the UN takes the safety and security of its staff seriously. You may choose to share local security information so your family understands the mitigating measures in place. It is also important your family understands the UN will provide support in the event of an emergency or crisis.
- Establish:
 - Your own emergency contact details. These may not be available in advance of arriving at your duty station as you are likely to be using a local SIM / cell-phone so should be shared with your family as soon as possible after your arrival.
 - Key contacts in your duty station who can be reached in case of emergency.

17.3 Arranging Your Personal Affairs

The chances of you falling seriously ill, getting injured, or being involved in an accident or security incident are slim. You may have read about high-profile cases in the media or heard colleagues discuss them and whilst these do occur, it is important to understand they are rare. Nevertheless, it is important for you to consider the necessary preparations so in the event of a serious incident occurring, your family is protected and your personal wishes are known and understood.

To support you with this, the UN has developed two comprehensive guides for use by its staff and their families providing detailed information about the support, benefits and entitlements available in the event of an emergency and how they can be accessed:

- [Taking Care of Those Who Serve Us: A Resource Guide for Staff and Families](#)
- [Putting your house in order: A Brief Guide for Expecting the Unexpected](#)

If you are interested in learning more, the UN Secretariat Emergency Preparedness and Support Team also offers the following training:

- **Personal Preparedness and Financial Readiness Forum**

<https://www.un.org/epst/content/training-opportunities-0>

If you do not have time to read the full guide then use this checklist to help you and your family ensure your personal affairs are in order before you travel:

Area	Description	✓
Beneficiary, emergency contact, and eligible family member information	<p>All staff must ensure beneficiary, emergency contact, and eligible family members details are reviewed before you travel to ensure they are up-to-date. You are responsible for ensuring life events such as marriage, divorce and new information about eligible family members (birth / adoption / dependents for whom you have legal responsibility) are reflected in the information your agency holds about you.</p> <p>https://hr.un.org/page/update-your-emergency-contact-information</p>	

Family Emergency Plan	<p>Discuss and agree a plan for what would happen in case of emergency affecting both yourself in the duty station and / or your family back home. This may include where, when and how you would contact other family and friends.</p> <p>Dependent on where your family is located, it may also be appropriate to plan for natural disasters / emergencies at home and consider how your family can prepare and respond in your absence, including evacuation plans and preparation of an emergency supplies kit if appropriate. This should be based on an assessment of the common local hazard risks.</p>	
Key Documents and Passwords	<p>Collect and organize key documents in one place so a family member / trusted friend knows where they are in case of any issues arising. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bank and savings account details ▪ Credit card account information ▪ Documents related to your rental lease / mortgage / home ownership ▪ Documents related to any vehicle you own (e.g., tax, insurance) ▪ Insurance policies ▪ Pension ▪ Regular bills including utilities, internet, mobile phone etc. 	
	<p>Leave your passwords and log-in details for key accounts including social media, with a family member or trusted friend, so they can be accessed in case of emergency</p> <p>http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/your-money/forgotten-in-estate-planning-online-passwords.html?_r=0</p>	
Financial Planning	<p>You will need to consider how financial matters will be managed in your absence bearing in mind your own access to cash machines, wiring and local e-banking services may be limited during your deployment. Further information about local money matters can usually be found in the country-specific information.</p>	
Legal Planning	<p>Different countries have different practices in terms of planning for death or a situation where you are unable to make decisions for yourself (e.g., if you were in a coma). These may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A legal will – this explains to your family and local authorities your wishes in the event of your death, including who would be the guardian of your children, if applicable, and what would happen to your assets. ▪ Power of attorney – in some cases you may want a legally competent adult relative, friend or professional (e.g., a lawyer) who can act as a recognized agent to manage your financial affairs in your absence if needed. ▪ A living will – this is a document outlining your wishes about your healthcare in the event you are not able to make decisions for yourself about this. ▪ A healthcare will / medical power of attorney – this is used to authorize a trusted family member or friend to make any necessary healthcare decisions on your behalf in accordance with your wishes. 	

	In most cases, ensuring compliance in your country of nationality is priority. However, if you and your family own property or assets abroad or are legally resident in another country then you may wish to consider taking legal advice about applicable laws and taxation that would apply in the event of your death.	
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MISSION UNDERWAY: ARRIVING AT YOUR DUTY STATION

18 Arrival

Arriving at your duty station can sometimes feel overwhelming and is recognised as a time of stress for many people. The airports / borders / travel hubs in high-risk environments can often be chaotic. You are likely to be working with a new team and a new supervisor, sleeping in new accommodation, and adjusting to a new climate, culture and ways of working. Deployment to a high-risk duty station often means working in high stress situations over a sustained period of time and adjusting to significant security restrictions during your work and personal time. It is vital you understand these requirements prior to your deployment, as well as prepare for the psychosocial strain this may place on yourself, and your family. More advice about building your resilience is available 16.

Below are some hints and tips to help you plan your travel and arrival:

Hints and Tips for Travel:

- Ensure you are aware of local security information pertaining to your journey and adhere to any restrictions, including those pertaining to what can legally be brought into the country.
- Be familiar with the types of threats and risks in your area of duty; this will support you to be better informed with regards to security precautions in-country. Pay particular attention to those impacting women, LGBTI, nationality or other factors, including researching the laws and dominant social norms in your country of deployment.
- Try to plan your journey so you do not arrive after dark, where possible.
- If you are being met by a driver who you do not know then ensure you have seen his / her ID before you give them your luggage or get into a vehicle with them. Ensure you have all relevant phone numbers both printed and saved into your phone, and the means to use a phone on arrival.
- It is useful to request specific information from your local office about your arrival at the airport (e.g., specific requirements for incoming UN staff, location of pick-ups, any security warnings)
- Ensure your transport / hotel / accommodation is approved by UNDSS, and that you adhere to any restrictions on transport (e.g., in some high-risk locations, international staff are not permitted to travel in soft-skin vehicles).
- TIP: Contact your local colleagues for advice on additional recommendations on arrival; there may be useful 'word-of-mouth' advice or best practices not yet captured in formal guidance.

This check-list is to help ensure your arrival goes smoothly and you receive all the information you will need during your in-country / new duty station orientation.

Hints and Tips for Arrival:

Area	Hints and tips	✓
Emergency Contact Details	You may be issued with a SIM and local mobile number upon your arrival. You will need to ensure you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter local emergency contact phone numbers as needed. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter all relevant security contacts including any radio room, security advisor (UNDSS and/or from your agency, if present) and warden details. • Notify your family of how to contact you in case of emergency. • Notify others within your agency as appropriate of how to contact you in case of emergency. 	
Safety and Security	<p>It is vitally important you understand and comply with local security regulations in your duty station; it is not an exaggeration to say your life may depend on it. It is also your responsibility to familiarise yourself with information regarding the UN security management system at your country of deployment, and comply with all security regulations and procedures⁷</p> <p>In most emergency and high-risk locations, you will be obliged to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhere to all security requirements. These requirements are critical to protecting your own safety, those of your colleagues, and ensuring the UN discharges its duty of care responsibilities. Failing to adhere to security requirements can increase the vulnerability of UN staff, programmes and assets in-country, and are contrary to your obligations as a UN staff member. • Have a security briefing for New Arrivals in line with local protocols. This is a mandatory requirement and outlines which specific threats and risks can be expected in your duty station. This briefing should include specific threats to all categories of staff, and advice on local laws, customs and social norms that may be relevant, as well as advice on how to mitigate against these • Be familiar with all relevant emergency plans, security advisory systems (wardens or other alert systems), medical support facilities and any additional security measures such as bunkers, safe rooms etc. • Understand how to use locally received equipment such as radio, satellite phone and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)) and regularly practice their use. • Attend S-SAFE training (if applicable). This is a face-to-face security training workshop run in the field, often by UNDSS, designed to support you to deal effectively with the security situations you may face during your mission. This is run regularly (usually monthly) and duty travel may not be permitted until you have completed it. • Provide 'proof of life' and / or other security-related information as directed locally. <p>Find out what the local safety hazards are and ensure you know how to mitigate the risks associated with them, both in the office and in your domestic accommodation. This includes ensuring you know how and where to:</p>	

⁷ UNSMS Security Policy Manual, 'Framework of Accountability for the United Nations Security Management System'.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuate and / or shelter in case of emergency. • The location of First Aid and PEP kits (Post Exposure Preventive (PEP) Treatment is an emergency medical response for individuals who may have been exposed to HIV) and the custodian and manager responsible for them. 	
Terms of Reference, Job Description, Handover and Organogram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your ability to add value means you must clearly understand what is expected of you so take time at the beginning of your assignment to ensure you fully understand the Terms of Reference / Job Description assigned to you. It should be tailored to reflect the local context and if not, it is important you discuss this with your assigned line manager. ▪ Wherever possible, seek to ensure continuity by having a handover with whoever you are replacing and take time to talk to the local team to establish what is already in place. ▪ Ask for an organogram of the programme so you can see who is reporting to who and how the teams work together. 	
Local Orientation	Upon arrival, take time to meet with colleagues from both Operations and Programmes so you understand key policies, procedures and information about the context you are working in.	

19 Available Support

You are now settled and oriented in your duty station and your work is underway. The focus of this package is to help you prepare before you travel but rest assured that once you have arrived, there will be many sources of support available to you both in-country and via the wider United Nations system. Whether you have an issue pertaining to yourself, or a family member, or need to report an issue related to somebody or something else, support is there.

The UN has developed a [system-wide guide](#) to help you navigate and find the most appropriate contact point. Other sources of support are also outlined below:

Agencies to review and add contact details of relevant support services

Your line manager / more senior line manager	Your line manager should be your first referral point to support you to deal with day-to-day issues and to help you overcome any problems you are encountering in your work. If you cannot raise the issue with your line manager for any reason then consider referring to a more senior manager, your local HR Manager, or the Country Representative / Designated Official.
RO and HQ	Your agency's Regional Offices and HQ are staffed with people who are technical experts in their areas. They are well-placed to support and share knowledge on technical, operational, and / or management issues that are not possible to resolve at the Country Office level.
HR	Prior to your travel, queries about your benefits / entitlements can be sent to whichever team in your agency is handling your onboarding. This will vary dependent on how you have been hired. Once at your duty station, your local HR team can provide support through the whole 'lifecycle' of your assignment.

Staff Representatives	<i>Agency specific information about the Staff Representative body and access to its membership to be inserted here</i>
Staff Counsellor	<i>Agency specific information about Staff Counsellors and how to access them to be inserted here</i>
UN Medical Clinic (if available)	<i>Agency specific Medical Services information to be inserted here</i>
Local Security	Any security concerns you have can be raised with your entity's Security Focal Point or a member of the UNDSS team in-country. If you feel unsafe or at risk then raise your concerns and discuss them. It is vitally important you ensure you have the phone number of your local security contact at hand at all times.
UN GLOBE	UN Globe is a body established of staff from across different UN agencies advocating for the equality and non-discrimination of LGBTI staff in the UN system and its peacekeeping operations.

MISSION COMPLETE: LEAVING YOUR DUTY STATION

Many UN staff working in high-risk environments report some of the greatest challenges they experience are not during the assignment, but when it has finished and they return home. It is common to experience a period of transition as you re-integrate into your home culture, which may feel strange and even difficult after your assignment. It may take time for your personal relationships to regain their equilibrium and you may feel like you have changed after the experiences you have had during your assignment. Below are some hints and tips to support you:

Hints and Tips:

- Some of the most common issues in high-risk environments relate to poor practice around handovers and knowledge management, particularly when staff turnover is high. Ensure you have completed a thorough handover before you leave. This includes:
 - Ensuring you have handed back or accounted for any resources and assets you were responsible for.
 - Producing a handover report aligned with the local requirements and agency standards for this.
 - Completing any performance evaluation processes required for your assignment.
 - Arranging a de-brief with your line manager / other available manager to ensure all relevant issues have been flagged, including any you choose to handover verbally rather than including in your written handover report.
- *Before you leave your duty station, consider making an appointment with a Staff Counsellor to help you process and learn from experience of your assignment in a healthy way and to build your resilience for the future.*
- It is normal to go through a period of adjustment upon your return home so allow time for this. Upon return home, some humanitarian workers have reported feeling anger or panic when carrying out day-to-day activities such as shopping as they may be so different from experiences during their assignment. This is sometimes referred to as 'reverse culture shock.' You are not alone when your assignment has finished. There are different ways of connecting with people who are having or had similar experiences.
- Your family and friends have been continuing with their lives in your absence so will also be adjusting to you being there again. Allow them time to do this and try not to take it personally if there are moments of tension during the initial adjustment period.
- When people do find it difficult to re-integrate back home there is a tendency to look quickly for their next assignment and return to a high-risk context as it seems more familiar and comfortable. Whilst this may do no harm in the short-term, it can be difficult to sustain in the longer term and may lead to burnout.

The website below is a dedicated to building the resilience and preventing burnout of humanitarian workers and includes many useful resources and thought pieces, including coping with your return home:

<http://mindfulnext.org/where-is-home/>

Health Hints and Tips for End of Assignment:

- If required, undergo an exit medical assessment and medical debriefing.
- Be aware of the local authorities' regulations / restrictions at the location of destination regarding travellers returning from a particular country.
- If you have been working in a health emergency, it is possible that you may need to undergo a period of quarantine either before you go home or soon after you reach there. Talk to your family about it. Understanding the quarantine process and preparing for it can help to reduce distress for you and your family.
- Upon return, you are advised to monitor your health for a few weeks and seek immediate medical attention if you:
 - Develop a fever – a fever after returning from a malaria-endemic area is a medical emergency and staff who develop fever are recommended to seek medical attention immediately, explaining they may have contracted malaria.
 - Experience illness, including persistent diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal pain, headache, weakness, respiratory symptoms (shortness of breath, persistent cough), skin rash.
- For staff with chronic medical conditions (e.g., cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes etc.), you are advised to consult your doctor for a check-up upon return. Provide your doctor with information on your recent travel, including destination, and purpose and duration of the visit.

Directory:

<http://www.bbc.com/capital/story/20161104-how-expats-cope-with-losing-their-identity>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/apr/11/secret-aid-worker-humanitarians-flawed-individuals>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/oct/27/secret-aid-worker-is-there-life-beyond-the-field>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

20 Guidance for Women

For a variety of reasons, there is a general tendency for more men than women to work in high-risk environments, with research indicating that women represent approximately 40% of international assignments in emergencies in the sector globally, and significant variations between different regions and different countries.⁸

Barriers for women to working in high-risk environments were identified through this research as falling into the following categories:

- Personal safety and security.
- Living arrangements.
- Wellbeing and support.
- Family, childcare, personal relationships
- Personal hygiene considerations.
- Confidence and skills.
- Perceptions and stereotypes (roles).
- Hostile environments (patronising or sexist behaviours).

Recognizing the needs of and threats and risks faced by female and male staff can be different, some additional guidance is included to help women prepare for assignments in high-risk environments., some additional guidance is included to help women prepare for assignments high-risk environments. In addition to helping you prepare mentally for your assignment, these hints and tips will help you make appropriate practical decisions about what to pack, what to wear, and your travel arrangements. It can often be helpful for women to talk to other women already working in your assigned duty station so, if needed, ask your contact point in the local country office / duty station to introduce you to someone.

20.1 Cultural and Other Considerations

Every local context is different and you can expect to encounter different issues on each assignment. Below are some of the issues reported in research as being faced by women in high-risk environments:

- The cultural expectations for women adhering to local dress codes can be greater than the expectations for their male colleagues. For example, in some contexts it may not be common or locally acceptable for women to wear trousers and long, loose skirts / dresses / local dress may be expected.
- You should be aware your non-verbal actions could, in some situations, invite unwanted attention. A friendly gesture or casual touch common and acceptable in your own culture may be viewed differently by other cultures and could put you at risk. For example, in some cultures, making eye contact with a man can be interpreted as a sign you want his company.
- There may be negative local cultural perceptions and you may face stigma if you share housing with male colleagues or friends, even if this is on a platonic basis.

⁸ http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/action_aid_aw_v4_-_final.pdf

20.2 Safety and Security

The security risks and threats women and men may face in high-risk contexts can be different. It is important you are properly prepared for your assignment by learning from local security information about the risks for women in the local context, and particularly around gender-based violence (GBV). In some contexts where the United Nations works, the host Government may have different protocols and / or laws for dealing with GBV than you may be used to. It is worth taking time to do some research around these points before you arrive in-country. You should also be aware of the relevant reporting mechanisms in-country available to you in the event of harassment, discrimination or abuse. Should you experience a GBV related incident, your agency and/or security focal point or UNDSS team will provide support in accordance with your individual needs.

Security Guidelines for Women:

The UN has developed comprehensive [security guidelines for women](#) covering many of the security risks women may face, including those related to sexual assault and rape. These were developed in 2006 and are due to be updated during 2018 so should be read with this consideration in mind. Additional resources recently developed can be found:

- <http://headington-institute.org/blog-home/597/gender-security-for-aid-workers-part-1>
- <https://www.eisf.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/2155-ACT-Alliance-May-2017-ACT-Gender-Security-Guidelines.pdf>
- <https://www.eisf.eu/library/gender-and-security-guidelines-for-mainstreaming-gender-in-security-risk-management/>

WSAT Training:

To cater for the specific needs and security concerns for women, UN agencies provide a Women's Security Awareness Training (WSAT). This is a usually a 6 – 12 hour training package conducted over a 1 - 2 day period. It is not intended to repeat or review lessons from other security trainings but focuses specifically on issues with direct and unique impact on the safety and security of female staff. The package is divided into 3 modules plus an introductory session:

Safer Travel for Women	Surviving as a Female Hostage	Violence Against Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing specific issues at airports as a woman ▪ Hotel safety for women ▪ Public transportation safety for women ▪ Options for dealing with unwanted attention ▪ Knowing how to feel and/or appear confident ▪ Learning to trust your instincts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness of local threats and when travelling ▪ Issues facing female hostages ▪ Coping mechanisms for female hostages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understanding of local threats in relation to local risk levels ▪ Options for enhanced situation awareness ▪ Recognizing predatory indicators ▪ Managing fear ▪ Practical response techniques

You can enquire with your security focal point or UNDSS team or during the New Arrivals Security Briefing about the availability of in-country WSAT training. Some agencies may also provide training in HQ locations to staff prior to travelling to your new duty station.

Gender-Based Security Incidents

The UN Security Management System (UNSMS) has guidelines in place for all UN security personnel involved in response to gender-based incidents applicable in all UN Duty Stations. In the event of a security incident you have the right to be treated sensitively and confidentially, and with dignity and respect.

Should a sexual assault occur, there will be a range of support resources available to assist you in-country. The most important consideration following any occurrence of sexual violence is your immediate safety. Following an assault, it is recommended you move to your residence or a temporary shelter (a hotel, friend's house, medical facility etc.) as soon possible, and before taking further action. Having updated phone numbers of your security focal points, police and emergency services, psychological support, transport options, and trusted friends or colleagues will assist you to make sound and appropriate decisions on your safety.

Reporting such incidents to UN is not mandatory and assistance is provided upon request. The UN can provide services to support you in the incidence of sexual violence, if requested, including medical support (services as well as the PEP kit), psychological recovery, and information on potential legal redress.

20.3 Female Security Focal Points

Many locations (although not all) have a designated Female Security Focal Point. Ask who this is as part of your pre-deployment preparations and make contact with them when you arrive at your duty station. UNDSS also has a dedicated Gender Advisor who may be able to provide advice or refer you as needed to other sources of support: undssgenderadvisors@un.org

20.4 Women's Health

If you know you are pregnant, breast-feeding or trying to conceive before you travel you are advised to discuss this as part of the medical clearance process. You are also advised to ensure you have had any specialized and regular check-ups for women you may be due, such as smear tests and mammograms, before you travel.

If you become pregnant whilst on your assignment, you are strongly advised to seek advice from a medical practitioner as soon as possible to safeguard your health and that of your baby.

General advice for pregnant travellers based on destination can be found by destination on the CDC website: [Pregnant travellers](#)

20.5 Packing

In addition to the general section about what to pack, female staff are encouraged to review the additional suggestions below on items to pack:

Area	Description	✓
Clothing	A loose, light shawl is useful as it can be used in a variety of contexts, both to cover yourself and for an extra layer of warmth if needed. Even	

	in very hot climates, the air conditioning in hotels or meeting rooms can sometimes mean it's useful to have an extra layer.	
Tampons / sanitary towels / menstrual cup	The items you normally use during your period may not be available in the local context so it is recommended you take them with you. Some women – particularly on longer term assignments – have found reusable silicone devices such as the diva cup or moon cup to be useful.	
Toilet	As per the research cited earlier in this section, one of the key concerns women have reported is difficulties going to the toilet whilst travelling in places without easy access to facilities. The website below explains some products that are available for use by women in these situations: https://www.shewee.com/	
Toiletries and Cosmetics	It is recommended you take with you any toiletries and cosmetics you like to use as they may not be available to buy in your duty station. This can include even basic items such as shower gel and shampoo / conditioner.	

20.6 Directory

<http://www.afriquefemme.com/fr/>

<http://globalaidworker.org/women/>

<http://www.headington-institute.org/topic-areas/124/women-and-gender>

<http://humanitarianwomensnetwork.org/>

<http://www.journaldesfemmes.com/mode/>

21 Staff of Diverse Sex and Sexual and Gender Identities

The United Nations is committed to treating all of its staff equally and with dignity and respect. Nevertheless, there are still many countries where lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex persons are at risk of arrest, prosecution imprisonment (and in a few countries, the death penalty) on the basis of laws criminalizing same-sex relationships between adults, or cross-dressing. Alongside this legal context, many people of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities face challenges of discrimination and / or harassment in their daily lives.

Some LGBTI staff who have served in high-risk environments have reported feelings of isolation both inside and outside of work. Within these contexts, the United Nations and its agencies recognise staff of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities may benefit from additional information to help them prepare for an assignment in a high-risk environment and have developed the hints and tips below to support this:

21.1 Hints and Tips for Preparation and Research

- All staff of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities are recommended to research the local context in which they will be working and think about how it may affect them whilst on assignment so they are prepared for it. A useful external resource to support this is the ILGA website which includes maps produced annually showing the current status of all laws around sexual orientation (recognition, protection and criminalization) globally: <http://ilga.org/what-we-do/maps-sexual-orientation-laws/>
- If you are an individual who is transitioning, it may be challenging to access the medical care you need during or post transition in a high-risk context so research around this may be required.

21.2 Safety and Security

It is recognised that people of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities are sometimes targets of gender-based violence⁹. Trans, intersex, and those who are gender non-conforming and do not conform to cultural or gendered expectations of roles, behavior, and expression (such as men who are thought of as being or acting too feminine, or women who are thought of as being or acting too masculine) are recognised as particular targets for gender-based violence. Thus, additional precautions and considerations around personal safety security for staff of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities are important:

- Be mindful of the local cultural context you are working in and use your best judgment if and when expressing your sexual or gender identity in public, or in the office. Not all cultures share the same views on issues and peoples of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities, and therefore different approaches may be necessary, including, at times, a more discreet approach.
- There have been cases of entrapment in which those of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities have been blackmailed or even attacked after arranging to meet a stranger who they have connected with on-line. Some external hints and tips for safe dating practices are included in the Directory for this section.
- The UN Security Management System (UNSMS) has guidelines in place for all UN security personnel involved in response to gender-based incidents applicable in all UN Duty Stations. In the event of a security incident you have the right to be treated sensitively and confidentially, and with dignity and respect.

⁹ See Glossary definition

- **Error! Reference source not found.** details where and how you can access support, including confidential and professional counselling.

21.3 Health

In addition to the general **Error! Reference source not found.** information provided, the following hints and tips can support you prepare for your assignment:

- If you are under regular medical supervision ensure you have discussed your health and medical issues with your doctor before you travel.
- Your access to PrEP / PEP, either for HIV prevention or treatment, may be affected, as can access to medication for those undergoing transitioning. You can discuss this as part of your medical clearance, as well as with your insurance provider.
- Additional health information for travellers who are immuno-compromised can be found by destination on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: [Immunocompromised travellers](#)

Once on your assignment then follow the hints and tips applicable to all United Nations staff including:

- Ensuring you know where the First Aid and PEP kits are located and who the custodian and manager for them is.
- Ensure you take responsibility for preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections by carrying condoms, practicing safe sex, and accessing PrEP medication if available, which can reduce risk to HIV exposure.
- Ensure you know your own HIV status before travel.

21.4 Directory

- While the development of specific courses that address the security concerns of people of diverse sex and sexual and gender identities is underway, the UN Free and Equal campaign has aggregated extensive information about related issues: <https://www.unfe.org/>.
- There is a global network for LGBTI rights and issues in the UN system: <http://www.unglobe.org/>
- This link contains some dating tips to help you keep safe: <http://forge-forward.org/wp-content/docs/Safe-Dating-Tips-FINAL.pdf>
- UN Cares – the UN-system wide workplace programme on HIV – represents an extensive network of people and resources to help you learn more about HIV and provide support and information to staff and their families where required: <http://www.uncares.org/>