



Sub-working group on improved reporting

Narrative report on the results of the 2023 survey of CEB entities on **Improved Reporting of Sexual Harassment in the UN System**

September 2024

BACKGROUND

1. In the framework of the UN Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment (the Executive Group), WFP and UNICEF are co-chairing a technical sub-group on improved reporting of sexual harassment. The sub-group is tasked with conducting an annual survey of CEB entities on reporting of sexual harassment (the survey).
2. This report sets out: (i) the structure and purpose of the survey, (ii) the main findings, and (iii) the recommended next steps, based on self-reported aggregated data across all participating entities.¹
3. This report has been shared with all participating entities and the UN Executive Group to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Harassment who may then decide to share externally. Accompanying the narrative report is the annexed questionnaire and its methodology and accompanying power point presentation.

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

4. In total, the survey contained 50 questions on the entities' policies and practices on sexual harassment as of the end of 2023. The survey was divided into three main sections: (i) policy, (ii) investigations, and (iii) disciplinary matters.
5. The purpose of the survey is to allow the Executive Group to: (i) identify progress in the UN System's wide efforts to eradicate sexual harassment, (ii) identify risk indicators to allow for more focused prevention initiatives, and (iii) identify areas in which entities can strengthen how they address sexual harassment.
6. Some questions have been added or partially modified this year to allow the survey to track the implementation of the Results Framework's indicators of good practice in preventing and responding to sexual harassment which was endorsed by the CEB entities in January 2024.

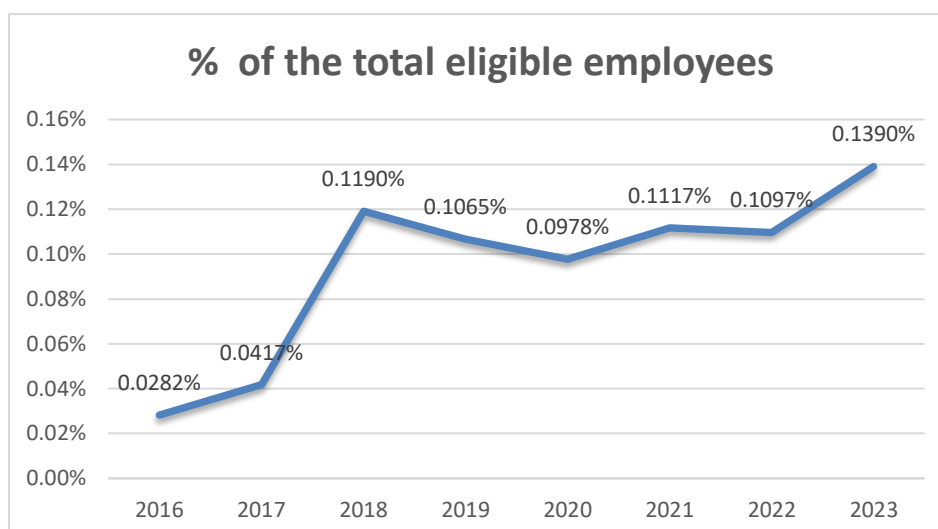
¹ FAO, IAEA, ICAO, IFAD, IMO, IOM, ITU, UNEP, UN Secretariat, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNFPA, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNOPS, UNRWA, UNWOMEN, UNWTO, UPU, WFP, WHO, WIPO and World Bank.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Twenty-seven (27) entities responded to the survey,² representing a workforce of over 300,000 employees. The findings focus on (i) a snapshot of 2023 reflecting progress made and risk indicators, and (ii) areas to strengthen, based on aggregated data.

i) Snapshot of 2023

- The snapshot is focused on how incidents of sexual harassment were reported, an overview on the affected individuals and perpetrators, as well as an indication of the type of sexual harassment alleged to have been perpetrated.



- Number of formal reports:** Formal reports can trigger an investigation and, where allegations are substantiated, result in sanctions against the perpetrator. In 2023, responding entities received a combined total of 427 formal reports of sexual harassment (0.1390% out of the total employees eligible to make formal reports, which means that out of 719 employees, 1 employee filed a sexual harassment report). This represents a significant increase both in the overall number of reports received as well as proportionally to the eligible workforce compared to previous years (1 out of 912 employees filed a report in 2022).
- The data shows that these 427 formal reports were received by 21 of the responding entities. This means that 6 entities received no reports of sexual harassment³ and that 8 entities received 20 or more reports with a combined 366 reports corresponding to 86% of all formal reports.
- Informal reporting:** The survey also requested data on informal reports of sexual harassment, *i.e.*, those which do not trigger an investigation but are addressed by internal functions such as management and Human Resources. The data showed that similar number of entities are keeping records of informal reports (13 compared to 14 in 2022). In 2023, the entities received 207 informal reports, down from 210 in 2022. The data also showed that these 207 reports were received by 13 entities, and that of those, 3 entities received 152 informal reports, or 73% of all such reports.
- Affected individuals:** The majority of formal reports continued to be from affected individuals and bystanders (76%). There is a continuous increase in reports from

² A decrease from 29 in 2022 – see footnote 1 for the list of participating entities in 2023.

³ A decrease from 7 entities in 2022.

bystanders (witness of third person) from 20% in 2021 and 26% in 2022 to 34% in 2024, as well as in reports originating from internal referrals from a function or body within the entity such as Human Resources (from 14% in 2022 to 15% in 2023).

13. The data once again confirms that sexual harassment is a gender issue and one related to power differentials. The affected individual was female in 92% of cases and the alleged offender was male in 98% of cases. In the majority of cases, the alleged offender was more senior than the affected individual (55%), although this represents a slight decrease from 57% in 2022, and in 13% of reports received, the affected individual was an external person (down from 20% in 2022). Moreover, as in 2022, one fifth of cases under investigation had more than one affected individual.
14. **Type of sexual harassment:** The majority of responding organisations reported the office environment as one of the most frequent situations where sexual harassment took place (83%), with most incidents continuing to occur in the field (78%) where operational entities normally carry out their core operations. This percentage is slightly disproportionate to the geographical distribution of personnel within the entities (an average of 74% of personnel are in the field).
15. Entities were asked to indicate the types of sexual harassment reported to their organisations. The two most indicated types were attempted or actual sexual assault other than rape and verbal sexual harassment (both 54% of the entities). There was a significant increase of entities receiving reports involving visual or non-verbal sexual harassment from 4% in 2022 to 33% in 2023. In addition, 1 entity reported having received at least one report involving rape in 2023 (against 3 in 2022).

ii) Areas for strengthening

16. While progress has been made by entities in incorporating the principles of the UN System Model Policy on Sexual Harassment (the Model Policy), there remains scope for advancement and system wide harmonization around actioning policies:
17. **Timeliness:** Most entities prioritized sexual harassment reports during the intake process and, overall, intake decisions are being taken more quickly with 84% of the entities taking on average up to 2 months for decisions (compared to 70% in 2022). However, nearly half of the entities are still taking longer than 1 month on average for intake decisions (48% compared to 52% in 2021). Fewer investigations were completed in less than six months (46% in 2023 compared to 61% in 2022) and 18% of the investigations took more than 12 months to be completed (similar to 2022, 20%).
18. The number of disciplinary processes which took less than six months to complete slightly decreased from 55% in 2022 to 49% in 2023 but fewer disciplinary processes took more than 12 months to be completed (15% in 2023 compared to 26% in 2022). The main challenges to timely completion of these processes included (i) lack of resources/understaffing and (ii) complexity and volume of material to review.
19. **Accountability - investigation:** Of the 427 formal reports received in 2023, 148 were closed following intake (an increase from 90 in 2022). 212 cases (50%) resulted in a formal investigation (a slight decrease from 54% in 2022). The reasons for not initiating investigations included that (i) the affected individual did not want to proceed, (ii) the facts did not meet the threshold for an investigation, (iii) the facts were not deemed to constitute sexual harassment even if proven, and (iv) not enough information/evidence due to the report being anonymous or due to the passage of time.

20. There was an increase in the matters which did not result in an investigation which were referred within the entities to be addressed by a different function (from 24 in 2022 to 34 in 2023). The number of investigations completed increased significantly from 146 in 2022 to 191 in 2023 (which is proportionally higher than the increase in formal investigations). The number of completed investigations with facts being established also increased in absolute numbers (69 in 2022 to 107 in 2023) and as a percentage of the number of reports received (from 47% in 2022 to 54% in 2023).
21. **Accountability - disciplinary:** There was an increase in the absolute number of disciplinary matters completed in 2023 (from 44 in 2022 to 59 in 2023), and the percentage of such cases which resulted in disciplinary or administrative measures being imposed also significantly increased from 59% to 78%. In addition, the data showed that when disciplinary matters result in sanctions, more resulted in separation or a disciplinary review following separation than sanctions whereby the perpetrator remained in the entity. 81% of the personnel who were found to have engaged in sexual harassment following a disciplinary process were separated from service (87% in 2022) and 19% of the measures imposed were demotion, written censure or suspension without pay.
22. **Accountability - ClearCheck, referrals to national authorities and retaliation:** Of the 26 entities participating in ClearCheck in 2023, 13 entities also opted in to including individuals who left the entity with pending allegations of sexual harassment. Only 1 entity indicated that they did not participate in ClearCheck in 2023 but has since joined the scheme in 2024. Referrals to local authorities for criminal investigation also continued to be limited – 7 sexual harassment matters were referred in 2023. 16 formal reports of retaliation were received by the responding entities (18 in 2022) and 6 *prima facie* cases of retaliation were established, which is a decrease compared to 10 in 2022.
23. **Victim-centered approach – protective measures and support:** Although most entities have available a range of support options and protective measures for affected individuals, the survey was not able to collect consistent data on implemented protective measures. This may be due to lack of systematic record-keeping and the fact that the implementation of such measures is not centralized within the entities. In addition, not all entities provide protective measures when a report was made informally (6 entities only provide them when a report is made formally). Finally, entities diverge in when and how they communicate with affected individuals about the status and outcome of the investigation and disciplinary processes.
24. **Further UN System alignment - background checks:** On Clear Check, 89% of the entities are consistently screening all new staff but only 52% are screening new non-staff personnel. A very low number of entities periodically screen existing staff and non-staff personnel through Clear Check (7% and 4%). Moreover, most entities ask candidates during recruitment to disclose if they have been subject to disciplinary or administrative measures for misconduct (85%) as well as if they are currently under investigation or a disciplinary process (81%), though fewer entities ask if candidates have resigned during an investigation or disciplinary process (67%). Finally, the use of the Interpol Wanted Persons List is still very limited among the entities.
25. **Further UN System alignment - Model Policy:** All entities allow reporting by all personnel against all categories of personnel but, despite progress, not all entities allow for reporting by and against any person, irrespective of whether they have an employment relationship with the entity. The data also showed that not all entities: removed deadlines for reporting; allowed anonymous reporting; and allowed for investigations to be initiated

in the absence of a report, all of which creates potential reporting barriers. In addition, entities were not aligned on their policy obligations on personnel to report sexual harassment formally and informally.

26. Finally, while almost all entities established general contractual provisions on zero tolerance for sexual harassment, only 52% of the entities establish specific contractual requirements in relation to addressing sexual harassment that may lead to termination of their agreements with vendors and cooperating partners.
27. **Further UN System alignment - awareness:** Most entities provide specific training to prevent sexual harassment, but there are significant differences in the types of training available. 19% of the entities do not share disciplinary practice reports with personnel.

NEXT STEPS: RECOMMENDATIONS

28. In conducting the 2023 survey, the co-chairs have met the objective of collecting consistent information across all agencies. The purpose of the survey results is now to lead to action by the UN system and individual entities.
29. In order to support the entities in meeting this objective, a more complete presentation on the survey results accompanies this report, along with a copy of the “Results Framework” endorsed by the CEB entities in January 2024, which contains concrete indicators of good practice in preventing and responding to sexual harassment to address the areas for strengthening identified by the survey.