

## **Webinar The UN's Efforts to Address Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Peacekeeping Missions: Challenges and Opportunities**

**June 30, 2025**

We are pleased to share the full recording and transcript of our recent webinar, which brought together key voices from the UN, troop-contributing countries, and field experts to explore current challenges and opportunities in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in peacekeeping missions.

Moderated by Lt. Col. Ivana Ferreira Costa (Brazilian Army), the discussion featured insights from UN Special Coordinator Christian Saunders, as well as military officers from Egypt and Bangladesh, offering a rare look at institutional approaches, operational realities, and policy efforts. The [full webinar video](#) is now available.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWE4Q\\_Fb000](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWE4Q_Fb000)

### Q&A

The event concluded with a rich Q&A session, highlighting concerns from participants around leadership, survivor support, and structural barriers to change.

**Q:** Despite all discussions at all levels, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation and abuse against women continues. Have we tried to find out why? Besides education and empowerment, teaching self-protection techniques, girls and women, we need to target the male mindset of considering girls and women as weaker sections and easy targets or targets? Have we done enough as international organizations and member States? How can we get all member States on board to further this reset of the male mindset?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Why does it still continue? I think. For that, you have to look at the root causes and the root causes of sexual exploitation. Abuse the root causes of sexual violence. Or at least the principal cause, is the lack of equality between men and women globally and the fact that we live in a patriarchy. Women are often not in meaningful decision-making roles now. Yes. In the military now, we're starting to see an increase in women in senior ranks, but it's still, nowhere near where it needs to be. And some member states are more advanced than others. So I think that's partly an issue. I think the fact that often, women are not economically independent, so they're reliant on the male member of the household, in order to ensure that the children eat. I think that's an issue. But I think the biggest issue is, is the male psyche, the male way of thinking and, and the fact that, they don't see women as equals and they don't respect women as they need to respect women. I think it's been like that for thousands of years. I think, we are to blame in many respects we men are to blame. But we as society are also to blame because we haven't pushed for solutions. To this we haven't pushed for equality.

And then I looked I've thought a lot about this, and I was thinking, what is part of the problem? I think part of the problem is also when we talk of equality, we talk about the benefits to women, and sometimes we talk about the benefits to society and to communities. But I think where we failed is we have not developed messaging on the benefits to men. What are the benefits to men of equality? And I think if we if we're better at explaining to men the benefits of equality and we get their support, then we will move forward, more quickly with ensuring that we have an inclusive and equal world. And I think it starts at kindergarten. I think it starts with children at a very young age and teaching them in the schools about dignity and respect for one another. Um, and we. Somebody said I think it was the previous, um, emergency relief coordinator that we focus too much on the urgent at the expense of the important. And I think that's absolutely right. I think we need to focus more on the important. And one of the things that is fundamental, I think, to having a successful, peaceful and more equal world is equality. Um, and I think we haven't focused enough on the messaging. I think we also haven't focused enough on what is it that causes men, as the question asked, what is it that causes men to do this and to think like this? Um, and how then do we address that particular issue? I'll leave it there. Thank you. I don't want to.

**Q:** Could the presenters highlight other responsive measures? More so survivor supports for example, children born out of abuse and exploitation.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Okay, so I think it's important to be aware that there is no silver bullet. There is no magic wand when it comes to prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse. And there are many different things that we need to employ from education and capacity building, learning to risk assessments to improving the living conditions of soldiers on the ground in peacekeeping operations, to ensuring that they take their leave, those kinds of things in terms of survivor support. Frankly, I think we fail. I think we fail because I can't think of anywhere that we are providing the requisite level of support to survivors um in peacekeeping operations. Um we normally provide support in four main areas one health immediate medical care. Um, particularly if somebody has been abused. Right. It's important that they receive medical psychosocial support. Many of the countries where we have peacekeeping operations are lower income countries, and they don't have good mental health services, not in particularly in the areas where we're working. The third aspect of support is, um, we provide support in terms of skill, skills and livelihoods. Again, I think we can be much better in that. And I think a lot of what we do is stereotypical and we need to rethink that. And then the last, but by no means least important is. What is legal support so that, um, they can obtain so that the victim can obtain justice? I don't think we provide the level of support in any of those areas. I don't think member states do. I don't think we in the United Nations do. And I think that has to be an area of focus going forward.

It's not a lot of money, but we just seem to want to close our eyes and hope it's going to disappear. And that's not acceptable. Many of these victims suffer great trauma, great stigma. Often they're ostracized from their families and their communities. And that starts a downward circle. And make no mistake. No, no mistake. There is no woman or girl who wants to sell their body in order to survive. It's out of absolute desperation that they offer this. And I think that needs to be clearly understood by the male soldiers, in particular children again. Um, we have over 500 children who are, who have been, fathered by peacekeepers. Who where the fathers have not stepped forward and assumed their parental responsibilities and where member states are dragging their feet and not pushing, um, the fathers to meet their obligations. There are some exceptions. There are some countries now that are stepping up and are working with the soldiers responsible to ensure that they pay child support, that they recognize that the child and the like. But we have over 500 where this is not the case. This is not just a statistic. These are small human beings who are out there, who don't know where their next meal is coming from. Who don't often don't have a roof over their head, who don't have access to medical care and don't have access to school. This is unacceptable to my mind. And we need to we need to fix it. And we can't fix it in the United Nations alone. It has to be you, the member states.

**Q:** Mr. Saunders, you've visited more than 50 countries and all peacekeeping missions during your tenure. Based on these extensive engagements—with high-level officials and personnel in the field—what would you say are the key enablers and barriers the UN currently faces in effectively preventing and responding to SEA?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** The key enabler is proactive leadership. So it's leadership that wants to address this issue. And they do address this issue because in the military, in the police, um, and in the United Nations, we are very hierarchical entities. So we take our cue from the leadership from the top downwards. If you have a force commander or a contingent commander or an SSG that is committed to this issue. And dedicates the resources and talks about this issue, and puts in place the necessary means to prevent it and to respond to it and to support victims. That's really where we're good at responding to this issue. Um, so is leadership is the most is the most important? As I said, there are some member states that are committed to addressing this issue, but not enough. Not enough. And I, you know, I, I give a lot of thought to why some member states are not, um, responsive when it comes to this issue. And I think it all comes back, frankly, to the, um, to the patriarchy and the fact that, um, many military establishments are still very much hyper, hyper masculine environments. It's changing, but it's changing much, much, much too slowly.

**Q:** was it is well known that many women feel fear or hesitation when it comes to reporting cases of harassment or violence. This is due to various factors such as fear of social stigma not being believed, or

even fear of retaliation. So how can we encourage women to speak up about their experience with violence or harassment? To what extent have the policies implemented by international organizations, the United Nations and individual countries. To protect women from violence contributed to increasing women's participation in peacekeeping missions and if possible, mention some numbers or progress or decline.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** I think confidentiality is very important. If the if the women are sure that it will be, um, they trust the one who report, and they are sure that it will not reveal the secret. So, they will trust and they will open up and to talk and speak. But unfortunately, it doesn't happen almost. So, and it depends on the culture. Some cultures Church. They spell, you know, they reveal the secrets easily.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** So I also mentioned before, it's very important to make a safe environment so that it goes continues. It continues with the community as well as the peacekeepers, even the peacekeepers, if they are facing this, you know cases, so, most importantly, the insecurity and also the cultural differences are paying the challenges. So what we can do is to have more engagement. Increasing the female is obviously important. But then we need to also prepare our female peacekeepers, educate them how to handle the cases, how to communicate with the people. So this is also should have in our training modules. It's not only that we increase the number, but to have the meaningful participation of females. Female peacekeeper along with the male peacekeeper and the end user. Now from fit to engagement platoon I do appreciate is very also important that that we are we are transforming from one to another with the need of our require or with the need or with the requirements. So the increase of women participation, as well as to have the meaningful participation is very important. Community engagement. And we also know that there are some missions where it is now often used. That is can system civil come, you know, liaison uh network called community alert network if you can activate those, if you can engage the community, then I think they will feel more safer and then maybe but not to expose them. We have to be very careful so that we are not exposing the victim. Are already mentioned by the, by sharing that confidentiality is very important. So it's all together. We have to make it and, and, and when we are preparing our peacekeeper, especially our engagement platoons. So maybe we have to train them how to deal with the staff and also encourage every individual to report and make a safer environment so that we can report as well as it is not retaliated. That's the thing.

**Q:** Mr. Saunders. Is there a record of follow up of countries that have adopted action plans or protocols to address SEA? If so, how many have done so? Is there a record follow up of countries that have adopted actions?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** We monitor every troop contributing country. And we have ranked them in terms of risk. And there are some troop contributing countries that are much higher risk than other troop contributing countries. And what do we base this on this? We base this on a number of things, including the number of allegations we base it on, um, what measures that country has put in place in order to reduce SEA but also what they put in place in order to respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, including accountability of the soldiers who commit these acts, including support to children born out of sexual exploitation and abuse. And so, yes, we know which countries are high risk and which are lower risk. And in future, this is going to be one of the criteria that is used in the selection of TCS and PCCs for service in UN peacekeeping missions going forward.

I don't have the exact number of countries that have action plans. But there are quite a number that do. I would like to see every country have an action plan. Why? Because it helps. I think it helps focus you on the actions that are required in order to ensure that you mitigate the risks and you reduce the possibility of SEA happening, um, to a minimum, and that when it does happen, that you respond appropriately. So we're actually working on this at the moment, whether or not it will be compulsory in future for all troop contributing countries to have action plans. I think it's a good idea. I mean, it's like with anything, if you have a plan, um, then you it helps focus your mind on what you need to achieve to achieve success.

**Q:** We should put effort into questioning and transform the concept of masculinity. On the other hand, gender equity is not possible without caring policies and adequate economic conditions to allow women to feel independent. So it's much more a comment that maybe you can also comment on it, but it comes with this gender equality. And the other one is considering the cultural stigma and societal pressure in many Asian countries that discourage women. Both peacekeepers and community members from report incidents of sexual abuse or harassment. What suggestions would you give for policymakers, decision makers, particularly for strengthening safe reporting mechanisms and supporting systems that are culturally sensitive yet effective in empowering Empowered women to speak up.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** I can try and help respond to Brenda Suarez's question, which was we should put effort into question and transform the concept of masculine. And I think that's right. And I think, I'm not a great fan of the term positive masculinity. I think we need to as I said, I think we need to improve our messaging to show men or to convince men why equality is important and the benefits to them as men because there are many benefits to men of equality. So I think we need to improve our messaging on the other hand. Gender equity is not possible without caring policies in adequate economic conditions. I agree. I think the fact that that women are not economically independent is one of the big drivers of sexual violence and domestic abuse, and why women stay in abusive relationships. If they were economically independent, they would have the ability to leave. And so, Brenda, I completely agree with

you. We need to spend more effort as the United Nations, not just peacekeeping, but as the United Nations with programs that support women to become economically independent. Same with the World Bank and the I and the international financial institutions. Same with governments. They need to work on this as part of their priorities.

**Q:** From prevention, wouldn't it be possible to adopt a lines about education in the military schools and in the units through professional conventions of the public functions? Wouldn't it be possible to use the education of the troops through military schools and through the fact that this is a public function and public job that we could that these lines of protection preventions could be adopted through these mechanisms and through these institutions.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** This is, as you have said, in the military academy. So we start from the military academy? Yes. If it would have been possible that we start from there, it would have been very good. It would have been great. But I cannot be that superficial or that, you know, now, at present I cannot say that, but we have started that the gender itself is at times very new, and at times it's when I'm trying to teach and I'm a trainer here. So when we are trying to teach the gender. So sometimes it is not communicated to the people and very newly they are adopting or listening. But nowadays it's more but still. So um, that gender training and gender sensitive, training, awareness training that we are starting but we could start in the BMA and you're talking about the risk assessment or risk analysis? May not be in that way, but we are doing, uh. But it's not that in a comprehensive way. The way, uh, we talk about, the, you know, see, uh, or initiating the, uh, complying with the UN standard, but it is there are punishments in the academy if you do something like that, these are there.

But, it's not something we have a module, that that is being taught there, but we have started in the centers after we become the officers. We already last year, we have formulated a gender awareness module, which we have circulated for the all the officers as well as the incentives where we are recruiting the troops. So it has started maybe academically we can do more. Uh, and in Bangladesh we have punishment as well. If there are such cases, it is there. But still the stigma is there. The report, even the women are not coming out. They are not reporting. So it is. It is there. So if you can make it safer in an environment, maybe in the course of time, and if you integrate the men into it in this procedure, then maybe it will be it will be normalized. I hope so.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** So before any promotion for officers or noncommissioned officers, we have courses before promotion to take, like it's from the moral affairs side or from security side. They take these kind of issues and courses like, um, gender awareness, but not

actually not indeed. But at least this will make all the military personnel aware of the gender equality and the SEA.

**Q:** Another thing that we need to move forward also is try to have more men in charge of SEA and gender training, because usually this kind of trend is raised on the women's role. So we need to have more men also aligned in this in this sense. One action that could make a real difference in reducing SEA in peacekeeping missions today, what would it be and who should take the lead?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Far too often when I go to conferences or I participate in these types of things, people talk about female Email engagement teams or engagement teams. Can I say I don't think that's helpful? Because that almost puts a glass ceiling on women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Women can be anything and everything. Women need to reach for the sky. You can be the force commander. You can be the God in your particular country. Do not limit yourselves. And do not let people put you in a pigeonhole to be just on the female engagement team. You can do anything, and that's what you should be pushing. We need to see women in every, every position within peacekeeping, um, and at every rank.

**Full transcript:**

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** Thank you very much, everyone, and thank you for being here with us, especially since I know that, uh, the time for some of you is very, very late. Um, welcome to Rosales first webinar of the year. My name is Elisa Rial, and I have the honor of serving as one of the program officers at Rizal. Uh, we would like to begin by sincerely thanking all of you for joining today. Um, it is a privilege to welcome such a diverse and engaged audience from across the globe. We are truly proud to host participants from so many different regions. Uh, this webinar is part of our series of and continental dialogs from the Global South, which aims to foster exchange between Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Mena region. On the role of women in peace operations with a specific focus on the prevention of sexual harassment and sexual abuse within the security and defense sectors.

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** We'll be holding additional sessions in the coming months, so we encourage you to stay tuned if this is a topic that resonates with you. This series is part of the broader project, Women in Peace Operations Supporting Inclusive Environments through Inter-Regional collaboration and Engagement at the national level, funded by Global Affairs Canada through the Elsie Initiative. We are sincerely grateful for their support. This project examines how national legislation addresses sexual harassment and sexual abuse within military and security institutions, based on the understanding that what is tolerated at home often carries over into operations abroad. This current webinar, the UN's efforts to address sexual abuse and exploitation in peacekeeping missions. Challenges and opportunities will explore the UN's ongoing initiatives, its policy reforms, the protocols he has created over the years, and the accountability mechanisms aimed at preventing and addressing sexual orientation and abuse during peacekeeping operations. To that end, we would also like to thank special Coordinators Kristen Saunders for agreeing to be our main speaker. Before we begin, if any of you have any questions or commentary during this discussion, please write them down in the chat below so we can ask them after during our Q&A session. So with that, let us start. I'm pleased to introduce our moderator, Lieutenant Colonel Ivan Ferreira Costa of the Brazilian Army, formerly of the UN's office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. So, Ivana.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you very much, Elisa, for this introduction. Thank you everyone who participated with us today. So this event, I believe it's one of the most important because it's going to discuss the efforts of the UN in order to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. What is challenges and opportunities so could have. Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening everyone. Your Excellencies, and colleagues. It's a true honor to welcome you to this important conversation on the United Nations efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions, which is a subject that is as urgent as it's sensitive, and one that has shaped much of my



professional focus over the past years. My name is Ivana, and I'm a Lieutenant Colonel from the Brazilian Army. And I have the privilege of moderating today's panel as a military officer who has been deployed in UN peacekeeping missions. And more recently, I had the honor to be part of the office of the Special Coordinator on UN response for Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. And in this sense, I've had the opportunity to witness both the challenges and efforts being made across missions. I had the chance to visit MINUSCA in Central Africa, and UN amazing South Sudan. What I've seen confirms a difficult truth. Despite of the best intentions, SEA continues to undermine the trust placed in us by the people we are mandated to protect.

And yet, what I've what I've been seeing is through the community outreach and leadership reform is the power of genuine accountability, inclusion and action. That brings us today's conversation, one that will be grounded in leadership. Live the experience and learns and lessons learned. We are honored to be joined by Mrs. Saunders, the UN Special Coordinator on improving United Nations response to sexual exploitation and Abuse. Under his leadership, the organization has made progress in shifting from a reactive to a system wide, victim centered prevention framework. One that has been trying to emphasize transparency, victim and institutional frame responsibility. Equally important, we will hear from the three female military officers, Colonel Sheridan and Lieutenant Colonel Alameda, from both from Egypt, and Lieutenant Colonel Nilufar from Bangladesh, who brings a critical field experience and perspective. These are not only peacekeepers who have operate in complex environment, they are also trainers, mentors and leaders shaping the way military personnel should understand and must act on the protection of responsibility. Their insights are key to unpacking both operational realities and the institutional opportunities we face in reducing or as we would like to see, eliminate and respond to SEA. As we begin, I'd like to offer a few framing points. This conversation is not about blame, but about boldness, the courage to acknowledge where we fall short and the clarity to act decisively.

SEA is not a standalone issue. It is deeply connected to power, gender, impunity, and culture. Address it effectively requires a holistic approach. Bridging the gap between policy and practices, between headquarters and the field. And finally, uniform personnel are not only part of the problem, they are central to the solution. Leadership, discipline, cohesion, education and training all have a direct impact on how we uphold the zero tolerance policy. So I encourage all of us to listen, actively, engage honestly, and leave this room with renewed commitment not only to speak out, speak out against SEA, but to actively design and support environment where it cannot take root first and in. Which is with great honor that I would like to introduce our guest of today Under Secretary General Christian Saunders, special coordinator of the UN of the on the UN improving the response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. Mr. Saunders as the special coordinator. Across the entire system is spent in peacekeeping, humanitarian operations and developing settings. Mr. Saunders brings to the position over 30 years of experience in

international affairs, much of it focused on delivering results and overseeing major reforms, leading to improve the organizational effectiveness and efficiency. He served as a member of the High Level Task Force, established by the Secretary General to develop a strategy to improve the organization's approach to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Mr. Saunders has brought experience from across the United Nations in significant humanitarian and field experience, have begun his career with the Save the Children Fund in the Sudan and then in Mozambique and his United Nations career with Unwra in Gaza. He also served in various other positions with the office of nation of the United Nations Commissioner for refugees, UNHCR peacekeeping, the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA. In this role, USD Saunders has been a relentless advocate for a victim centered system, a wide response rooted in prevention, transparency and accountability. Over the past three years, he has visited more than 50 countries, including all the UN peacekeeping missions, meeting with ambassadors, senior military authorities and frontline peacekeepers, civilian, police and military alike. He has actively participated in numerous training initiatives and high level discussions on women's business security, gender responsive leadership, and gender equality. Through these efforts, he has amplified the voice of those most affected by ACA and championed active leadership and field level prevention as the most effective tools for sustainable challenges. Our military participants here today, our other speakers are Colonel Sharon Abacha here. Head of training development, Institutional Medical Center in Egypt. She has made history as Egypt's first female military officer to join a UN peacekeeping mission, serving as a civilian military coordination officer in Monaco from 2018 to 2019.

With over of 20 years of service, she brings a wealth of field experience and unmatched commitment to training. Mentorship. Colonel Sharon is currently head of the training and development at the Gypsy International Medical Center, and a certified United Nations visiting instructor. Lieutenant colonel Nilufar Sultana. Lieutenant Colonel Sultana is a highly respected officer in the Bangladesh Army with over 20 years of military service. She is currently as the as I am. She is currently an instructor at Bishop where she specializes in gender integration, intelligence, Protection of civilians, CRC, SEA prevention, civil military coordination and probation curriculum development. She served Cordova as a civic officer and as an intelligence analyst and the other one, Lieutenant Colonel Ahmed, also from Egypt. She's a senior military officer with over 18 years of experience in planning, training, and international supervision. She served with distinction as chief of the DDR and Chief of Liaison Officer. Lieutenant Runda plays a key role in Egypt's liaison with international organizations. So with that, I am honored to begin our discussion. So let me now give the floor to our first speaker, Mister Christian Saunders, a special coordinator on the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse. Mr. Saunders, the floor is yours.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Thank you. Colonel. Good morning. Good afternoon everybody. I'm really delighted, uh, to be here. Um, it's a real honor for me to join you today. And I'd like to thank for the opportunity to speak at this inaugural session, uh, of inter-continental dialogs from the Global South, focusing on the UN's efforts to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations. The challenges and the opportunities. Sexual exploitation. Abuse. In short, SEA is a violation of human rights and a profound abuse of power. It exists in every society in the world and causes deep harm to victims in peacekeeping settings. Such acts are especially unacceptable. Those entrusted to protect must never exploit the vulnerable. When this trust is broken, it undermines our mission and damages the credibility of our institutions. SEA is rooted in power imbalances, as Colonel Amara said, including inequality between men and women. It thrives in silence and stigma. In my nearly three years as special coordinator, I've seen the challenges faced by the United Nations peacekeeping missions and civil society in addressing SEA. Since 2010, the United Nations has received over 1100 allegations in peacekeeping missions, with about 70% of these involving uniformed personnel. In 2024 alone, 102 allegations were reported involving 125 victims, including 27 children. These numbers reflect only a fraction of the reality, as many victims remain silent due to fear and stigma. Behind each statistic, however, is a human being. Victims may suffer lifelong trauma, social exclusion, and physical harm. Children born of SEA often face poverty and marginalization. We must also acknowledge that peacekeepers themselves can be victims facing exploitation and harassment from within their own ranks.

A recent study found that nearly 1 in 3 female peacekeepers surveyed had experienced sexual abuse. These figures reflect entrenched patriarchal environments. But we're part of the system and we have the power to change it. In 2017, the Secretary-General established My office to help eradicate SEA from the United Nations system. Our goal is a coherent, victim centered, transparent and accountable approach across peacekeeping, development and humanitarian operations. We've made some progress. Clear standards, policy frameworks and training tools are in place, but documentation alone is not enough. Every personnel must understand what is expected and the consequences of sexual misconduct to support leadership. We've developed tools like the PSA Leadership Toolkit and the United Nations Military Commanders guidelines. The United Nations has also launched Clear Check in 2018 to prevent rehiring of individuals with substantiated allegations against them. As of December 2024, Clear Check has blocked 14 such rehire across the United Nations system. Still, many challenges persist. Our 2024 system wide survey had over 68,000 participants. Nearly 5000 of these reported awareness of SEA cases. Yet over 1500 chose not to report, often due to the fear of retaliation or lack of trust in the system. The average time to resolve SEA cases in 2024 was about 9.2 months, and many of them remain unresolved. This fuels the perception of impunity and leaves victims feeling abandoned. Leadership is key. Its absence allows SEA to persist from headquarters to field missions. Leadership must show resolve and accountability in military context. Leadership defines a mission and there must be no room for hesitation. SEA does not occur in isolation.

Other misconduct, including discrimination and harassment, racism and the like, persists. The 2020 study found that 96% of women in the United Nations peace operations had experienced sexism, and 94% had encountered or heard of sexual harassment. These are huge figures. These environments enable SEA and we must transform the culture that allow such behavior. Distinguished guests. Dear colleagues, responding to SEA is not optional. It is a core priority. PSR policies must be integrated across all stages of peacekeeping operations. Training alone is not sufficient. We must embed SEA prevention into operational planning, strengthening accountability, and strengthening accountability for troop contributing countries. We need to conduct risk assessments on a regular, regular basis and include community input into our initiatives. Each of us has a duty to act because silence enables misconduct. If someone knows something, they must speak up regardless of the perpetrators rank or relationship. We must foster a culture of respect and responsibility. We must also intensify efforts to include women in decision making. True transformation requires their full and equal participation, and it requires the support of men and respect for the intrinsic value of both men and women. SEA and harassment are not women's issues. They concern everyone. If we fail to expand women's roles, we fail to protect them. Silence and reluctance to discuss SEA perpetuate abuse. We need leaders who confront these issues with courage and with clarity. Only through collective action and unwavering commitment can we fulfill our duty to protect. Together, we can build a world free from exploitation, abuse, and violence. A world rooted in dignity and respect for all. Thank you.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Your words echo in our ears and make us to reflect a little bit more on this. When you said that SEA is not, it's a violation of human rights. It goes deeper in this analysis. And when you also say that we need a collective action, I believe that this kind of event is it's the beginning of this collective action. Another very important point that is said that SEA and harassment is not a woman's issue. This is everyone's issue, so we need to take action in this sense. So thank you very much for your participation. Now the floor is for Colonel Sheridan and Lieutenant Colonel Mohamed. And we go back to you, sir, during the Q&A hours.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhair Roshdy Mohamed:** Thank you all. And it's my honor to participate in this webinar and share Egypt's perspective on addressing SEA prevention, prevention, you know, and peacekeeping mission. And the critical issue requires a sustained commitment from all contributing nations. So we're gonna tackle next, please. So the presentation will cover the national policy and the protocol and allow you. Allow you is the liaison agency with international organizations. This is our training center for peacekeeping operation. So we tackle the training program and the impacts and the current challenges and the observation and the lessons learned and best practice and supporting you and efforts and future commitment. So next, please. So actually, Egypt remains one of the largest troop contributing

countries to UN peacekeeping. We currently rank the 10th the 10th globally. And that's from the US inside. Because maybe yes. So as you can see here on the screen this is from the UN website. We our rank is the 10th one. And the regarding the women participation from Egypt. Uh, we are, um, combined like 25.33% of our peacekeeping contribution as military observers and military staff officers. So regarding the regarding the in alignment with the UNSCR 1325, the Egyptian armed forces are dedicated to increasing women's role in UN peacekeeping missions. Moreover. And it's something. What? Does it exist before? So we have now two women instructor officers and lawyer. And actually it was there was no, no officers before.

So women officers. So and this achieved a historic first by appointing two women officers as instructors, uh, marking the beginning of women leadership in our training center for peacekeeping missions. This milestone supports our broader strategy of deploying Egyptian women as gender advisors in UN missions. And now we have a gender advisors post in MINUSCA. Okay. I'm going to talk about the training, our training center and the actually it operates as our comprehensive training center for peacekeeping missions providing education across three critical phases. The pre-deployment the preparation ensure to ensure all the personnel are properly trained before departure and the intra deployment supports. Maintain the standards during the mission and the post deployment evaluation. Captured lessons learned and addresses any issue that arise. And let's tackle each one aside. So for the stage of the pre-deployment training, all the Egyptian peacekeepers receive mandatory comprehensive training on gender sensitive programs before deployment. And the training includes the six core component. As you can see, like the women specific orientation, uh, by standard intervention training and gender awareness training. And I was really lucky to join a seminar in Vienna. It was for women, peace and security and also the last October in Brazil. So I was lucky to join this seminar. And also here in Egypt, we join especially in the on the International Women's Day.

We, uh, we join the any seminars regarding to these issues. So additionally, um, we also get the, uh, we have deployed protective measures. The training is specifically focused on three key areas. The personal safety protocol, with a specific guidance for women in high risk environments and security procedures, the covered Accommodation and transportation uh protocol and the risk assessment, education for teaching threats, identification and mitigation. Next. So and this is also for reporting a mechanism. We have a chain. So we report any issues to the senior who is deployed in the mission. And we have chain of command reporting and peer support network and UN focal points. And any issue it should be uh, with confidentiality assurance to support the system mapping. Next regarding the intra deployments. So during the missions. We maintain continuous support system through scheduled communication with you. Because this is the core. So we report it directly to allow you to monitor welfare and address concerns and maintaining the secure channels between deployed women and providing access to counseling services. We also provide real time training updates, and our monitoring and evaluation includes regular assessment of women. So we have like monthly reports directed to allow you while we are in the mission.

And now I leave the floor to my colleague Amir Aranda to tackle the part of the post deployment phase and the other points.

**Lt. Col. El-Amira Randa Awd A. Mansour:** Thank you so much, Coronel for this important overview. Now, I would like to take you through the next phase of our presentation. Focus on the post-deployment support. After returning from missions, Egyptian female peacekeepers go through a structured support process led by the Liaison Agency with international organizations known as Lao. First, they receive a comprehensive debriefing, providing a safe and private space to reflect on their experience and report any incidents or challenges they faced. Then, psychological and medical support is offered to ensure that any signs of trauma, burnout or integrity are identified and addressed early. Finally, we support their career development and reintegration, helping them translate their mission experience into growth opportunities and in many cases they become monitors or trainees for new peacekeepers. Following my mission, I was honored to be assigned as a certified instructor through the liaison of agency with International Organization. Since then, I have delivered the training in protection of civilians and the conduct discipline to national, regional and international also audience helping transfer field experience into structured capacity building for future peacekeepers. Despite progress, female peacekeepers still face layered challenges, what we call dual vulnerability. They are both potential victims and expected protectors. When viewed through Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The situation becomes clearer if women lack basic safety, uh, psychological support or a sense of belonging in the mission environment, then expecting them to take over on complex roles like preventing SEA becomes unfair and unrealistic, and also create gap between what is expected from here and what is provided to her. For example, at the basic level, if secure accommodation or reporting channel channels are missing, their physical safety is already compromised and the next level has absence of proper support system impacts their mental health and confidence. And when their contributions are on undervalued or stereotyped, it's prevented them from reaching their full, full potential in leadership roles. So before we empower women as agents of protection, we must ensure that their own human needs safety, dignity and recognition are fully met within the mission structure. Next, please. Supporting UN efforts in Egypt. Egypt remains strongly committed to the United Nations zero tolerance approach. Our pre-deployment and in mission training include clear modules on conduct, reporting mechanisms and survivor centered approach. We ensure rapid and coordinated responses to any allegations. Egypt effectively contributions to United Nations databases by sharing lessons learned and good practice. So, through the value, we offer regional training platforms to support the African TCC and strengthen their internal system in the future. Commitment. Looking ahead. Egypt is taking further steps to enhance and expand our pre and post deployment training programs and coordination with the United Nations headquarters and regional partners, and also localize global frameworks to better fit national institution and cultural setting. The last. The last. Next, please. In conclusion, it's truly an honor to represent Egypt. Next, please. In conclusion,

it's truly an honor to represent Egypt and the liaison agency within our national organization, within the Ministry of Defense. In this slide, this image represented the reality of our commitment to Egyptian peacekeepers, both men and women, serving with dignity across multiple content, building trust with local communities, and upholding the highest standards of conduct. This is the legacy we are building through comprehensive training and unwavering accountability. Our commitment goes beyond to policies. It reflects a national belief in the dignity of every believer, and in the role of women as an active agent of protection and accountability. Together, we with shared responsibility and continued partnership. We believe we can shape peacekeeping missions that are not only effective, but also deeply human. Thank you for the opportunity and thank you for the listening.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you both. Colonel Sheridan and Lieutenant Colonel El-Amira, thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and for sharing, of course, your experience in the field. You're both in very important points, such as in terms of reporting mechanism, which is something that we believe it has to be enhanced because we know that this report mechanism also brings some, um, fears in terms of retaliation. And, you know, the retaliation is something that preventing people to, to, to increase the numbers of allegations to another point that you, as Saunders has been mentioned also, uh, during his visit and during his speech, is that the ups and the increasing of the presence of women in the field, both WPS and SEA, they have they share the same root causes. It's like, you know, gender inequality, um, sorry, general poverty, patriarchy and misogyny. And we've been also read a lot of, of articles in which many researcher has increased the not only the numbers of course, but also call the attention for also for SEA, from police, from UN to UN. So this is another point that we need to discuss to another comment is on, um, that increases the number of women in the field is not going to be responsible also for the reducing of the number of allegations. But the situation is it brings more women. We're going to have a more equal environment. So we're going to have more discussion later during the Q&A. So now I'm very happy to give the floor to Lieutenant Colonel Nilufar from Bangladesh. Nilufar for the floor is yours.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** Thank you so much. It's really an honor to be here and to talk about the, uh, see, and in the context of Bangladesh. So as, uh, as I will say that the first. Please. Next, please. So the first thing is that who is responsible? Every individual in personal and professional sphere. And especially when we are working in UN peacekeeping mission. So we are responsible to prevent and protect and also to address the SEA. Uh, it's very important to have our own personal discipline as well as we have the duty to have a very safe, free environment in the machinery as well as in our, um, in all these spheres. So it's also a responsibility of ours to report if there is anything. Because most of the time we lack reporting. Poverty that underreporting goes on in three cases. So if you talk about the context, then I should say that, already, Mr. Saunders, you have mentioned that, uh, different cases of see that how it, uh, undermine the contribution of peacekeepers during different times. So, that's why it is very important

and it's very sensitive issues and, uh, very important for the peacekeepers as well as everyone working there. So Bangladesh, as one of the top, uh, two contributing and police contributing country.

So, as you know, that most, uh, mostly, uh, we are, uh, deployed, almost 6000 plus personnel are currently deployed in the UN mission. And amongst uh, 493, uh, approximately 493 are women. So with that, the responsibility and national ownership of Bangladesh has a lot, and this is the key for every country and TCC that we have the national ownership and interest to prevent the, um, uh, the, the sea cases, as well as to have ethical peacekeeping and accountability in the peacekeeping mission. As also, we mentioned that this undermines our trust to the people. Next, please. And also to mention here. Uh, with that, Bangladesh is always emphasized, uh, to align with the UN, uh, policies as well as the initiative that is being taken. Uh, we all are. We are always, um, strictly complying with all those, uh, such as the zero tolerance policy on sea as well as we have the a very good communication as we try to coordinate with the different agencies like the office of the Victims Rights Advocate. Conduct and Discipline Team to maintain the coordination and cooperation with them, as well as we try to teach our individual and personal own regarding these movements as well. And for us, see, training is mandatory for all the peacekeeper peacekeepers that we are going to deploy in the mission.

So, as I had been saying, the Bangladesh's contributions and the initiatives that we are taking. So primarily we thought, as you know, that one of the prime, uh, peacekeeping center where we are, uh, training not only the Bangladeshi peacekeepers, but also the international peacekeepers, um, we are training on different courses, and we have different curriculum, and modules are not going in details for that. But I can tell you that in every in every training, pre-deployment training, we have integrated modules for the, uh, sea training, uh, the sea training. And then also we are collaborating with different agencies as well. Like we had been working with DLF and SC initiative. Uh, we have also the, the LCD on research here in Bangladesh. So we had been working and also we had been researching on the challenges of female peacekeepers that they are contribute how their contribution, uh, can be better and what are the challenges they are facing. So we had been working on that as well. So, and another thing I have to mention is that the mechanisms of the investigation during the mission. So we have National Investigation Officer deployed in almost every mission nowadays. And then, uh, we often interact with the DPO personnel as well as, the other agencies on the disciplinary issues of our own troops. So we review the things, uh, for example, one example I can give is that we have integrated female engagement teams. Is quite long in Mali and DRC. Now it is engagement party. It's no more female engagement team versus a combination of male and female, uh, who are doing, uh, very good. And also, the contribution, has a good impact on the on the community. So we have also our national frameworks that Bangladesh Armed Forces has their own code of conduct aligned with the UN standards. We have gender focal points as well as gender advisor in almost all the institutional organization. We have also a memorandum of



understanding with UN on the conduct. And we are obliged to do. Um and also we are have the understanding, um, how what are the disciplinary action will be taken when they do such cases at home. And also we have national task force formed to handle the post deployment case. If there is any. So we have a release, but still, if there is any and every before every deployment, we have gender sensitive training as well as the female employment or female deployment. We are increasing nowadays. So I can also highlight the case study of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in, uh, Democratic Republic of Congo, uh, where Bangladeshi female contingent started in the. We have initiated the community awareness drives and community engagement, which, you know, we gave very good results, in preventing cases, knowing the vulnerability of the people around the contingents, area response area of responsibility.

And then, they can. The women peacekeepers often held dialogs with the local women, and that's how they encourage to report on if there is any abuse. So the outcome is are we trustworthy the next place? Now, as like other, contingents and other uh, we also face some challenges which are almost common to everyone, like the stigma that is, uh, on the underreporting from both the cases, the perpetrator as well as the, uh, people victims. So these are often seen that there are stigmas and also there are sometimes delayed investigations happening, and there are cultural gaps in understanding sexual exploitation and abuse. Um, so these are the things hindering the results and also to deal with the things. And also there are some difficulties in, in investigating different nations. Um, also there are different. There are different, uh, times we see that there are gaps between the coordination between national and UN investigative procedures. So that also hinders our active to take action against this case. If that is happen, that something happen and another one is maybe somebody will not agree. But there are some reputational concerns hinder sometimes when uh, we are reporting in open reporting. Now few progresses and lesson we have learned. Those are like, um, we, we are trying to have a stronger screening and waiting and, uh, we are, as I have said, mentioned before, we are trying to cooperate with other UN agencies like the acidity teams, um, and all, and also the female peacekeepers deployment and also the increased number of female peacekeepers that is improving the prevention.

So these are the progress we are making. And also there are some proactive engagements that is being taken with the communities and also other UN agencies, which also reduces the stigma. And Bangladeshis joint training not only before the mission but also during the mission. Different engagement to improve the conduct, tracking the different cases. So listen, that we have learned is that, uh, there has to have the national ownership, which improves the synergy. And also there has to be protocols that can streamline the responses. And continuous training is always vital, which we are emphasizing. And also civil society involvement is very important. Sometimes you don't get the feedback as well as the reporting as I've seen. So it can, uh, increase. So that I also have there's also opportunity to even reform and how best we can integrate all the agencies as well as the civil societies, uh, to deal with these cases. Next, please. Now,

how best the TPC can engage their increase their engagement? Uh, strengthening the investigations I mentioned before. Improving the data sharing with other agencies as well as the supporting the victims in any cases.

If we can support the victims, even our contingents can take a little endeavor to support the victims that will increase and that will be trustworthy and it will improve the communication between the, uh, community as well as the peacekeepers. So the reporting will, uh, more Nope. And, uh, also the female participation, there's no doubt of increasing the number of female participation, which is still less so if you can increase it, I think, uh, there'll be more reporting. So Bangladesh is trying to enhance the post deployment review process. We already have the evaluation process, but still we are trying to, uh, emphasize more on this. And then we are trying to share the best practices with different, uh, as well with other as well in different, uh, engagement and also with other agencies, as I have said, that we had a commitment or we had engagement with the UN women and other agencies as well to know more. And also if we can create victim support, even a small amount that will be national jurisdiction. So that will increase, uh, you know, the more trustworthiness and or and also within our national periphery. We are encouraging to have a, you know, ministerial cooperation between the Ministry of Defense, um, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as police all together to have a, you know, combined, uh, cooperative one, um, one stop solution to deal with the cases. Next, please. Now, I think, uh, we can give you recommendations to monitor to integrate, see monitoring in the national assessment.

If it is not, if we are doing it only in the peacekeeping mission, maybe it is not going to help. Rather, we have to integrate it in our national sphere as well, if we want to contribute more, which is very important. And I have already said the collaborating with the civil societies and other agencies and post-deployment reviews very important, and the promoting the regional and international cooperation is very important. So, I will keep my if you have any query later on in the question and answer session. So trying to finish it with my given time. So that's why my last call to action will be um, the UN Bangladesh as well as other resources. Cooperation is essential to uphold the accountability, which is very important, the accountability. And then to have a stronger national system, um, which I have mentioned, and also so that we can our national efforts that also complements within international mandates as well as un different policies and initiatives, and that's how only we can make a safer and more ethical peacekeeping, in future. Uh, that's the thing I can say. So thank you very much for listening. I'm extremely sorry for the, um, you know, inconveniences. Uh, and if you have any queries so we can talk with you. So.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you very much for this comprehensive presentation. I, I see that you start by saying who is responsible? You know, during my time with USDA, Saunders at his office, we've been discussing that everyone is responsible. So it's not only women, women's issues, not all men's issues,

everyone's responsibility. So this is something that we need to have in mind. Also some, uh, actions that are, that are, that have been taken like deployment of NATO training. But then when we think of training, there is something that calls also our attention. What kind of training are the militaries having? Who is in charge of the training? How powerful is the training? How much time is delivered for training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse? Another request that we've been also trying to do is to bring in every kind of training. When we train about to include SEA when you train about. When you train about legal or legal framework include SEA. So everything needs to be like a mainstreaming SEA in all the trainings. And another aspect that's been also raised is education versus training. What is really yours. I'm going to go to us to Sandra's. And it's very interesting because he's here. So I cannot say without reporting here. So he's been also saying that it's very important to train in gender before as the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. So there are a lot of things that can be done.

But when you mention about the stigma and underreporting, uh, many people are afraid of reporting because of the fear of retaliation or the stigma of what is really a, um, report. And another comment that in terms of cultural resistance to reporting. This is also another topic that many people have been discussed about this cultural resistance of reporting or how the culture, how cultural background seen the SEA. When you think call to action, I think there is a very good initiative now, uh, within the UN, which was something that our office also, uh, worked on with the group of friends of PSA. So there are around now at, uh, around 30 member states who has joined in this group of friends and Bangladesh is part of it. Egypt too. And Uruguay too. Thanks God. So I think it's going to we're going to move forward on this. And when you talk about promoting regional cooperation, regional cooperation is very important because if we think of the numbers of the TCC deployed in the field, that region that Bangladesh is in search. We have a lot of the big pieces and pieces are in that area. So maybe this the regional cooperation is something very important too. Um, another thing that I think is important that you mentioned here is these procedures in investigation, which is another topic that maybe we should bring together. What kind of how the investigations are taken.

And you mentioned about cooperation with CDs. Maybe we can also raise the importance of cooperation with OCA, with the office of the Special Coordination on and improve the UN response, Because there are so many things that it's been that this office has been done that should be also addressed. Um, so now we have some questions, so let me start. And the questions are we so far have five questions. The first one was raised by Major General Goswami, which is the director of the center of the UN studies at the United Institution in India. He said that despite all discussions at all levels, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation and abuse against women continues. So. And he says, have we tried to find out why? And then he also says that besides education and empowerment, teaching self-protection techniques, girls and women, we need to target the male mindset of considering girls and women as weaker sections and easy prey or targets? Have we done enough as international organizations and member States? How can we get all member States on board to further this reset of the male mindset? So this is the first

question. I think I'm going to read one by one so that you have time to, to, to think of it, and I'll give the floor. Now, if you, as Saunders, would you like to start by giving some insights on these questions?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Sure. Thank you. And thank you to the other presenters for a very interesting presentation and for the good practices that they're pushing within their respective, troop, militaries. Why does it still continue? I think. For that, you have to look at the root causes and the root causes of sexual exploitation. Abuse the root causes of sexual violence. Or at least the principal cause, is the lack of equality between men and women globally and the fact that we live in a patriarchy. Women are often not in meaningful decision making roles now. Yes. In the military now, we're starting to see an increase in women in senior ranks, but it's still, nowhere near where it needs to be. And some member states are more advanced than others. So I think that's partly an issue. I think the fact that often, women are not economically independent, so they're reliant on the male member of the household, um, in order to eat and to in order to ensure that the children eat. I think that's an issue. But I think the biggest issue is, is the male psyche, the male way of thinking and, and the fact that, they don't see women as equals and they don't respect women as they need to respect women. I think it's been like that for thousands of years. I think, we are to blame in many respects we men are to blame. But we as society are also to blame because we haven't pushed for solutions. To this we haven't pushed for equality.

And then I looked I've thought a lot about this, and I was thinking, what is part of the problem? I think part of the problem is also when we talk of equality, we talk about the benefits to women, and sometimes we talk about the benefits to society and to communities. But I think where we failed is we have not developed messaging on the benefits to men. What are the benefits to men of equality? And I think if we if we're better at explaining to men the benefits of equality and we get their support, then we will move forward, more quickly with ensuring that we have an inclusive and equal world. And I think it starts at kindergarten. I think it starts with children at a very young age and teaching them in the schools about dignity and respect for one another. Um, and we. Somebody said I think it was the previous, um, emergency relief coordinator that we focus too much on the urgent at the expense of the important. And I think that's absolutely right. I think we need to focus more on the important. And one of the things that is fundamental, I think, to having a successful, peaceful and more equal world is equality. Um, and I think we haven't focused enough on the messaging. I think we also haven't focused enough on what is it that causes men, as the question asked, what is it that causes men to do this and to think like this? Um, and how then do we address that particular issue? I'll leave it there. Thank you. I don't want to.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you very much. Our other speakers would like to make any comment on this. Okay. We still have questions. So now we have a question by Richard Oneka. So, beyond the reporting. Could the presenters highlight other responsive measures? More so survivor supports for

example, children born out of abuse and exploitation. As this is a very, um, specific question. I believe it has to Saunders has response for this question. So if you may, sir.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Can you repeat the question, please?

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Yes, sir. Beyond the reporting. Could the presenters highlighted other response measures. Responsive measures. More so, for example, survivor support like children born out of abuse and exploitation.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Okay, so I think I think it's important to be aware that there is no silver bullet. There is no magic wand when it comes to prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse. And there are many different things that we need to employ from education and capacity building, learning to risk assessments to improving the living conditions of soldiers on the ground in peacekeeping operations, to ensuring that they take their leave, those kinds of things in terms of survivor support. Frankly, I think we fail. I think we fail because I can't think of anywhere that we are providing the requisite level of support to survivors um in peacekeeping operations. Um we normally provide support in four main areas one health immediate medical care. Um, particularly if somebody has been abused. Right. Um, it's important that they receive medical psychosocial support. Um, many of the countries where we have peacekeeping operations are lower income countries, and they don't have good mental health services, not in particularly in the areas where we're working. The third aspect of support is, um, we provide support in terms of skill, skills and livelihoods. Again, I think we can be much better in that. And I think a lot of what we do is stereotypical and we need to rethink that. And then the last, but by no means least important is. What is legal support so that, um, they can obtain so that the victim can obtain justice? I don't think we provide the level of support in any of those areas. I don't think member states do. I don't think we in the United Nations do. And I think that has to be an area of focus going forward.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** It's not a lot of money, but we just seem to want to close our eyes and hope it's going to disappear. And that's not acceptable. Many of these victims suffer great trauma, great stigma. Often they're ostracized from their families and their communities. And that starts a downward circle. And make no mistake. No, no mistake. There is no woman or girl who wants to sell their body in order to survive. It's out of absolute desperation that they offer this. And I think that needs to be clearly understood by the male soldiers, in particular children again. Um, we have over 500 children who are, who have been, fathered by peacekeepers. Um, who where the fathers have not stepped forward and assumed their parental responsibilities and where member states are dragging their feet and not pushing, um, the fathers to meet their obligations. There are some exceptions. There are some countries now that are stepping up and are working with the soldiers responsible to ensure that they pay child support, that

they recognize that the child and the like. But we have over 500 where this is not the case. This is not just a statistic. These are small human beings who are out there, who don't know where their next meal is coming from. Who don't often don't have a roof over their head, who don't have access to medical care and don't have access to school. This is unacceptable to my mind. Um, and we need to we need to fix it. And we can't in the United Nations fix it alone. It has to be you, the member states. That has to sort it out. Thank you.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you. We have more questions. There is a question, sir, directed to you. So I'm going to read it first, and then I'll go to the other ones with more open. Let me see here. This is from Ana Lorenzo, and she asked Mr. Saunders, you've visited more than 50 countries and all peacekeeping missions during your tenure. Based on these extensive engagements—with high-level officials and personnel in the field—what would you say are the key enablers and barriers the UN currently faces in effectively preventing and responding to SEA?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Okay, so that's a great question. Thank you. The key enabler is proactive leadership. So it's leadership that wants to address this issue. And they do address this issue because in the military, in the police, um, and in the United Nations, we are very hierarchical entities. So we take our cue from the leadership from the top downwards. If you have a force commander or a contingent commander or an SSG that is committed to this issue. And dedicates the resources and talks about this issue, and puts in place the necessary means to prevent it and to respond to it and to support victims. That's really where we're good at responding to this issue. Um, so is leadership is the most is the most important? As I said, there are some member states that are committed to addressing this issue, but not enough. Not enough. And I, you know, I, I give a lot of thought to why some member states are not, um, responsive when it comes to this issue. And I think it all comes back, frankly, to the, um, to the patriarchy and the fact that, um, many military establishments are still very much hyper, hyper masculine environments. It's changing, but it's changing much, much, much too slowly.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Thank you again, USG. We have others question I'm going to I'm going to do two more questions if we still have time. I think that we can have our speakers on it. This is Hala Salem. I hope I'm pronouncing correctly. He says, thank you very much for these valuable presentations and sincere thanks for organizing work, this workshop. It was it is well known that many women feel fear or hesitation when it comes to reporting cases of harassment or violence. This is due to various factors such as fear of social stigma not being believed, or even fear of retaliation. So how can we encourage women to speak up about their experience with violence or harassment? To what extent have the policies implemented by international organizations, the United Nations and individual countries. To protect women from violence contributed to increasing women's participation in peacekeeping missions and if

possible, mention some numbers or progress or decline. Any one of our speakers would like to respond to this. I mean, the voice of a man is always good. I mean.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** I know you can't see it, but both lieutenant colonels have their hands up.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** And I'm sorry. I couldn't see it. Sorry. It's because your face is bigger in my screen. Okay. So please.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** Are you okay?

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** I'm sorry. Okay. Colonel.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** I mean, I will.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** I think.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Okay. Please.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** I think confidentiality is very important. If the if the women are sure that it will be, um, they trust the one who report, and they are sure that it will not reveal the secret. So they will trust and they will open up and to talk and speak. But unfortunately it doesn't happen almost. So confidentiality is very important. So and it depends on the culture. Some cultures Church. They spell, you know, they reveal the secrets easily.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Okay. Would anybody else would you, like, know? Okay. Please. I saw your hand.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** Okay. Let me lower my hand. Thank you very much. So I also mentioned before, um, it's very important to make a safe environment so that it goes continues. It continues with the with the community as well as the peacekeepers, even the peacekeepers, uh, if they are facing this, you know cases, so, most importantly, the insecurity and also the cultural differences are paying the challenges. So what we can do is to have more engagement. So increasing. Increasing the female is obviously important. But then we need to also prepare our female peacekeepers, educate them how to handle the cases, how to communicate with the people. So this is also should have in our training modules. It's not only that we increase the number, but to have the meaningful participation of females. Female peacekeeper along with the male peacekeeper and the end user. Now from fit to engagement platoon I do appreciate is very also

important that that we are we are transforming from one to another with the need of our require or with the need or with the requirements. So the increase of women participation, as well as to have the meaningful participation is very important. Community engagement. And we also know that there are some missions where it is now often used. That is can system civil come, you know, liaison uh network called community alert network if you can activate those, if you can engage the community, then I think they will feel more safer and then maybe but not to expose them. We have to be very careful so that we are not exposing the victim. Are already mentioned by the, by sharing that confidentiality is very important. So it's all together. We have to make it and, and, and when we are preparing our peacekeeper, especially our engagement platoons. So maybe we have to train them how to deal with the staff and also encourage every individual to report and make a safer environment so that we can report as well as it is not retaliated. That's the thing.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Perfect. Carina de Los Santos de Uruguay, has said excellent presentation, very comprehensive. Here's the question for Mr. Saunders. Is there a record of follow up of countries that have adopted action plans or protocols to address SEA? If so, how many have done so? Thank you very much.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** That's a good question again.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** USDA, if you don't mind, there is another question for you. So I'm going to read both so that you can answer. So this is from Cecilia Mazzotta excellent presentation, which is a question to you as to Saunders about. The basic point is that should be having the evaluations, risk, risk evaluations that can take can move forward the countries that contribute to troops, if there is any risk analysis I think is risk analysis because it's in Spanish. I think it's risk analysis for the troop contributed countries in this SEA. Okay. And another question. Sorry, does the UN allow the fathers I'm sorry. Yes, that's the UN. Allow the fathers to get those children born of out of SEA in their member states for further nurturing.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Okay, so let me answer the last one. Okay. First, it's not up to the UN. It's up to the mother. Huh? It's up to the mother. And but we have met mothers who want to accompany the father and the child to the country where the soldier is from. But it's not up to the UN. We can facilitate if there is agreement with the mother and the father and the child. Um, then we can facilitate. But it's up to the mother. It's not up to. It's not up to the UN in terms of, um, the child going to the country of um, of the father. But in a couple of cases that has happened, um, for example, to South Africa, that happened. Um, so it is possible. The other question was risk analysis. Yes we do. We monitor every troop contributing country. Um, and we have um, we have ranked them in terms of risk. And there are some troop



contributing countries that are much higher risk than other troop contributing countries. And what do we base this on this? We base this on a number of things, including the number of allegations we base it on, um, what measures that country has put in place in order to reduce SEA but also what they put in place in order to respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, including accountability of the soldiers who commit these acts, including support to children born out of sexual exploitation and abuse. And so, yes, we know which countries are high risk and which are lower risk. And in future, this is going to be one of the criteria that is used in the selection of TCS and PCCs for service in UN peacekeeping missions going forward. And the last question was Ivana.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Just a second. Carina de Los Santos. Just a minute, sir. Is there a record follow up of countries that have adopted actions?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Yes. I don't have the exact number of countries that have action plans. But there are quite a number that do. I would like to see every country have an action plan. Why? Because it helps. I think it helps focus you on the actions that are required in order to ensure that you mitigate the risks and you reduce the possibility of SEA happening, um, to a minimum, and that when it does happen, that you respond appropriately. So we're actually working on this at the moment, whether or not it will be compulsory in future for all troop contributing countries to have action plans. I think it's a good idea. I mean, it's like with anything, if you have a plan, um, then you it helps focus your mind on what you need to achieve to achieve success.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Perfect. This question now I think goes for all these speakers is from Brenda Suarez. We should put effort into questioning and transform the concept of masculinity. On the other hand, gender equity is not possible without caring policies and adequate economic conditions to allow women to feel independent. So it's much more a comment that maybe you can also comment on it, but it comes with this gender equality. And the other one is considering the cultural stigma and societal pressure in many Asian countries that discourage women. Both peacekeepers and community members from report incidents of sexual abuse or harassment. What suggestions would you give for policymakers, decision makers, particularly for strengthening safe reporting mechanisms and supporting systems that are culturally sensitive yet effective in empowering Empowered women to speak up. So it's a very deep question.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** It's a long question and I'm not sure.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** So I think it's much more what kind of suggestion? The ones who make the policies and the ones who take decision in terms of strengthening safety.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** I can try and help respond to Brenda Suarez's question, which was we should put effort into question and transform the concept of masculine. And I think that's right. And I think, I'm not a great fan of the term positive masculinity. I think we need to as I said, I think we need to improve our messaging to show men or to convince men why equality is important and the benefits to them as men because there are many benefits to men of equality. So I think we need to improve our messaging on the other hand. Gender equity is not possible without caring policies in adequate economic conditions. I agree. I think the fact that that women are not economically independent is one of the big drivers of sexual violence and domestic abuse, and why women stay in abusive relationships. If they were economically independent, they would have the ability to leave. And so, Brenda, I completely agree with you. We need to spend more effort as the United Nations, not just peacekeeping, but as the United Nations with programs that support women to become economically independent. Same with the World Bank and the I and the international financial institutions. Same with governments. They need to work on this as part of their priorities.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** There is one more question. I mean, there are so many questions, but we are going to make sure that the question is going to reach out to these speakers. But this one is in Spanish. I'm going to ask Elisa because I'm trying to translate into English. I'm going to ask Elisa to do it. Please, Elisa.

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** Uh, yeah, sure. From prevention, wouldn't it be possible to adopt a relative lines of education to the troops in the military schools and in the units through professional conventions of the public functions? It's like, sorry, that was a bit of a that was a bit of a literal translation, but basically, wouldn't it be possible to use the education of the troops through military schools and through the fact that this is a public function and public job that we could that these lines of protection preventions could be adopted through these mechanisms and through these institutions.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** I could answer that, but I feel that I'm answering to too many. And, uh, the my other panelists, I'm sure, have good answers to this.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** I think it's more connected USG with the idea of, of starting this education in the cadet school as, as we've been advocating for the.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** So if I don't know if the Egypt and Bangladesh has started this in their, in their military academy, in the military cadet schools, because this is something that the US has been advocating because again, it's education versus training. So if we can if I don't know if maybe a colonel

from Egypt and Amira can mention something if there is any action in this sense. We have more five minutes and we're going to make sure that the questions which our panelists to because all of them are very interesting.

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** Let me rephrase that question to make it easier. If we can work on military academy so as to prevent and identify potential risks. Would that be possible?

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** This is, as you have said, in the military academy. So we start from the military academy? Yes. If it would have been possible that we start from there, it would have been very good. It would have been great. But I cannot be that superficial or that, you know, now, at present I cannot say that, but we have started that the gender itself is at times very new, and at times it's when I'm trying to teach and I'm a trainer here. So when we are trying to teach the gender. So sometimes it is not communicated to the people and very newly they are adopting or listening. But nowadays it's more but still. So um, that gender training and gender sensitive, training, awareness training that we are starting but we could start in the BMA and you're talking about the risk assessment or risk analysis? May not be in that way, but we are doing, uh. But it's not that in a comprehensive way. The way, uh, we talk about, the, you know, see, uh, or initiating the, uh, complying with the UN standard, but it is there are punishments in the academy if you do something like that, these are there.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** But, uh, it's not something we have a module, that that is being taught there, but we have started in the centers after we become the officers. We already last year, we have formulated a gender awareness module, which we have circulated for the all the officers as well as the incentives where we are recruiting the troops. So it has started maybe academically we can do more. Uh, and in Bangladesh we have punishment as well. If there are such cases, it is there. But still the stigma is there. The report, even the women are not coming out. They are not reporting. So it is. It is there. So if you can make it safer in an environment, maybe in the course of time, and if you integrate the men into it in this procedure, then maybe it will be it will be normalized. I hope so. Excellent.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Colonel, would you like to say something?

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhair Roshdy Mohamed:** Please have something similar, but it's not in that way. So before any promotion for officers or noncommissioned officers, we have courses before promotion to take, like it's from the moral affairs side or from security side. They take these kind of issues and courses like, um, gender awareness, but not actually not indeed. But at least this will make all the military personnel aware of the gender equality and the SEA.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Okay. Perfect. Another thing that we need to move forward also is try to have more men in charge of SEA and gender training, because usually this kind of trend is raised on the women's role. So we need to have more men also aligned in this in this sense. So, I'm going to leave all of you now. It's just one minute for each one of you, but this is wrap up question. So if I had to name, uh, one action that could make a real difference in reducing SEA in peacekeeping missions today, what would it be and who should take the lead?

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Actually, can I do something slightly different?

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Mhm, yes.

**USG - Mr. Christian Saunders:** Far too often when I go to conferences or I participate in these types of things, people talk about female Email engagement teams or engagement teams. Can I say I don't think that's helpful? Because that almost puts a glass ceiling on women's participation in peacekeeping operations. Women can be anything and everything. Women need to reach for the sky. You can be the force commander. You can be the God in your particular country. Do not limit yourselves. And do not let people put you in a pigeonhole to be just on the female engagement team. You can do anything, and that's what you should be pushing. Uh, we need to see women in every, every position within peacekeeping, um, and at every rank. Thank you.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** Perfect.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Um, anybody else would like to make a comment? I I'm sure that we can stay here for more three hours, and we're going to learn a lot of things, but we need to finalize our engagement of today. This is just the first event. We're going to have chances during the year because this is the celebration of the 1325 anniversary. So this is going to prepare more events. So I would like to thank you very much. But now I'm going to give the floor to Elisa, please to finalize our event. It was just Saunders, thank you very much for your time.

**Lt. Col. Nilufar Sultana:** Um, yeah.

**Lt. Col. Ivana Mara Ferreira Costa:** Yes. And thank you so very much for your time today. It was so written and we learned so much. And, Elisa, please take the floor.

**Lt. Col. El-Amira Randa Awd A. Mansour:** Thank you.

**Colonel Sherihan Abo Elkhir Roshdy Mohamed:** Thank you so much.

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** Thank you all so much. Thank you again to both Christian Saunders, thank you very much to Colonel Sherihan, like Lieutenant Colonel Sultana and lieutenant colonel. All three of you were amazing. And also Christian Saunders was also amazing. Of course. As usual. Thank you again, Ivana, for moderating. And once again, I would like to thank everyone in the audience that has been here, especially those of you who are here at a very end.

**Elisa Rial - RESDAL:** Before we leave, we'd also like to take a moment to share a recent publication that may be of interest to those wishing to delve deeper into this topic. RESDAL has just launched a paper titled ["Sexual Harassment, Abuse and Exploitation in UN Missions: A Roadmap for the Global South"](#) by Cecilia Mazzotta, an expert on women, peace and security, and a current official at the Ministry of Defense and of Argentina. The Spanish title is "El tratamiento del acoso y la explotación y abuso sexual en el terreno: ¿Un posible sendero de crecimiento para el despliegue de las mujeres del Sur Global?". It provides a historical overview of the UN's approach to addressing sexual harassment in the field, and outlines potential strategies for the Global South. So here's a little tidbit. If you guys were left with a bit more interest in this topic because sadly, we can't go on a couple of more hours, even though we've received a lot of very interesting questions and we've received a lot of very interesting responses. Once again, I would like to thank all of our presenters and thank you all for all of your time. We would also like to once again thank Global Affairs Canada and the Elsie Initiative for funding this project. Thank you all and we would wish we would like to wish you all a very lovely day. And for those of you who were very late, a very lovely good night.