

**Webinar: Supporting Those Affected by Sexual Misconduct: The Role of the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre and Lessons Learned. A Practical Experience from Canada**

**Video:** <https://youtu.be/5JaKtwlDMqc?si=gRTV9aA5nx6AdVcV>

**Presentation Segment**

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Good morning, everyone. It's a pleasure to connect with all of you from Buenos Aires, Argentina. My name is Cecilia Mazzotta from RESDAL International. I would like to welcome you all to this new webinar. For this conversation, we wanted to share hands-on experiences that focus on the audience and on the understanding of their needs. So that's why we have invited the Canadian Department of National Defence to join us today, along with a representative from the Pakistan Army. This is the largest event of this kind that we have organized so far, and the interest in these topics just keeps growing. Today we are almost 500 participants. So thank you all for being here as well as to our speakers. The seminar will be conducted in English, but if you prefer, we offer simultaneous translation into Spanish and French. To access, just click the global icon and button at the bottom of the screen and select your audio channel. Regarding questions and comments, please type them in the chat during the presentation and we will address them during the questions and answer session at the end. Finally, before we begin, a special thanks to Global Affairs Canada for supporting us in our project under the Elsie Initiative.

It's now an honor to welcome the Ambassador of Canada to Uruguay, Her Excellency Carmen Sorger, who will give us some opening remarks. Thank you very much for joining us, I give you the floor Ambassador.

**Ambassador Carmen Sorger:** Thank you. Thank you very much. Can you hear me?

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Perfect.

**Ambassador Carmen Sorger:** Okay. Good. Bonjour, good morning. I'd like to begin by thanking RESDAL for the invitation and for convening this inter-regional dialogue. Thanks also to all the participants joining us today from different regions of the world Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Middle East and North Africa, Europe, Oceania, North America. Incredible. When RESDAL first approached me with the concept for today's webinar, I thought it was a brilliant idea, as the Canadian experience is one that we're proud to share and explore, I want to take this opportunity to thank my dear colleagues at Canada's Department of National Defence for leading this important discussion and for their courage to lead change. Past editions of this series have shown us that the most meaningful exchanges are not about prescribing solutions, but about exchanging on best practices and creating a safe and collaborative space

for constructive peer to peer dialogue. The richness of these forums allows us all to reflect on different institutional paths, compare experiences and identify lessons that are relevant to all of our national and regional contexts, particularly in today's global context, where the world needs. For those of us who are like minded to be discussing and exchanging more now than ever, the strong and sustained interest of these dialogues have generated is very encouraging. Also, the diversity of participation across regions highlights the value of maintaining spaces for open and informed exchange. For Canada, it is a privilege to support this initiative through Global Affairs Canada within the framework of the Elsie Initiative, we do so with a clear understanding that fostering safe, inclusive and harassment free environments within defence and security institutions is a complex and long-term undertaking. One that does not lend itself to simple or universal solutions. Progress in this area requires time, sustained leadership, and opportunities for honest dialogue. The inter-regional exchanges facilitated by RESDAL provide an important platform to share these experiences. As we've seen in several of these webinars in the past, in recent years, Canada has undertaken several institutional review processes within the defence and security sector, informed by public and official reports. These processes have helped advance important discussions on organizational practices, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Canada shares its experience not as a model to be replicated, but as an ongoing process that continues to generate lessons learned from a defence perspective, addressing sexual misconduct is fundamental to operational effectiveness. For Canada, this work is essential to strengthening a defence institution that reflects our national values of dignity, respect and inclusion, and to ensuring that all members can serve in an environment free from harm. At the global level, this effort aligns with a broader international recognition that the credibility and performance of defence and security institutions depend on their ability to protect their own personnel, uphold human rights, and model the standard expected in peace operations and multinational cooperation. We hope that today's exchange. In fact, we know that today's exchange will contribute to strengthening a global conversation grounded in mutual learning and to reinforcing connections amongst regions that, while operating in different contexts, face similar challenges. I wish you a productive and meaningful discussion. And again, thanks to all for your courage and your willingness to make change. Thank you.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you, Madame Ambassador, for your opening word. We now have the honor to welcome our speakers for today. Miss Elizabeth Cyr is a Director General of Service Delivery at Canada Sexual Misconduct and Resource Center. She leads national support services and brings over 15 years of experience in mental health and defence, including senior leadership roles in policy, research, partnerships and programs, as well as a systemic change and restorative engagement. LCol Pinsent has over 17 years of military experience and has worked with the military liaison to the SMSRC for the past two years and a half. She has provided direct support to hundreds of individuals reporting and responding

disclosures of sexual misconduct within the military environment. Elizabeth, thank you for joining us today. The floor is yours.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** Thank you. Good morning for some of you, good evening and good afternoon for others. Thank you so much for joining us today and for being here. So today we are going to share information about Canada's experience in supporting members of the defence community who have experienced sexual misconduct in a military environment, and the role of the SMSRC in that effort. As we begin, I want to highlight something important. What we're sharing today is based on the Canadian contacts, our laws, our military culture, our history, and what we've learned about how to better support people affected by sexual misconduct along the way. As mentioned, we're not presenting this as a model to copy, but rather as lessons learned that may help inform your own approaches. You may notice that we use the phrase people affected by sexual misconduct, and we use these words intentionally. Individuals who experience sexual harassment, sexual assault, or other inappropriate sexual behaviors may describe themselves in different ways. Some identify as victims and others identify as survivors. For some, this changes over time. So rather than assigning a label, we use the term affected to respect individual choice and their own personal experiences. We also use this term because the impact of sexual misconduct often extends beyond one person. It can affect families, colleagues, friends, and even entire units. So when we say affected people, affected or affected persons, we are acknowledging both the individual experience as well as the broader impact.

So before I talk about what the SMSRC does today, I want to take a moment to explain why it was created in the late 1990s. There was increased media and public attention regarding sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, and like many other institutions around the world, the Canadian Armed Forces faced criticism over barriers to reporting, lack of trust in leadership and concerns about how incidents were being handled. In 2015, the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces commissioned an external and independent review focused on sexual misconduct. This review was led by former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Marie Deschamps, and the review was conducted outside of the military chain of command, and this independence was intentional to strengthen the credibility of the findings. So this review, which is known as the report, found that many Canadian Armed Forces members did not trust the internal reporting systems and did not feel well supported within the existing structures. It also made it clear that policy changes alone would not be enough. So one of the key recommendations of the report was to create an independent center focused on support that was separate from the chain of command and separate from investigative or disciplinary processes. The Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center were thus created in direct response to that recommendation. Its initial mandate was to provide confidential and independent support, information about options and referrals to members of the Canadian Armed Forces who had been affected by sexual misconduct.

The Center did not investigate incidents of sexual misconduct, but instead helped members understand their options and access services that best met their needs. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces could contact the Center whether or not they chose to make a formal report. Since 2015, there have been two additional external reviews on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces that have reinforced the importance of having an independent center dedicated to support this history is important because what we see is that from the beginning, independence, confidentiality, and personal choice have been central to the SMSRC mandate to help address issues around trust that had been identified. So now I'd like to present our current services that are offered at the center. I want to start by saying that although initially the Center only provides services to members of the Canadian Armed Forces, we now also support former members, civilian defence employees and other members of the defence community. So at the core of our services is our 24 over seven support line. This service was the very first program that the SMSRC offered back in 2015. Counsellors on the line are available at any time to provide emotional support and information on resources, as well as referrals related to sexual misconduct. The majority of our referrals for SMSRC services come through the 24 seven lines.

The next program is the Response and Support Coordination Program, which provides ongoing support, accompaniment, and case management. So this program builds on the support that is offered through the 24 over seven lines. After a person is referred to the program, staff will continue working with them to offer tailored supports based on their needs. They can go with individuals to appointments or meetings to help them understand reporting processes and help advocate for their needs. With this program, people don't have to report their story to multiple counselors at the center. They work with the same staff member, which helps build trust and consistency. They also don't have to go through processes alone; they have someone to support and guide them every step of the way. The peer support program is led by trained peer supporters, which are individuals who have lived experience of sexual misconduct as well as SMSRC staff. It brings participants together in a supportive and confidential space so they can connect. They can share their perspectives, learn from one another, and receive emotional support. The program aims to reduce isolation and promote healing and overall well-being. The Restorative engagement program was created through the Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence. It gives class members a chance to speak with a representative about what happened to them, how it affected them, and what changes they think are needed. An important goal of the program is to help the organization learn from these experiences, take responsibility and make meaningful changes.

The Independent Legal Assistance Program provides free, independent legal information, advice and, in some cases, representation in the criminal justice system for people who have directly experienced sexual misconduct within a Department of National Defence or Canadian Armed Forces context. It helps them

understand their rights and options so they can make informed decisions about what they want to do next. The grant program gives funding to community organizations that support members of the broader defence community who've been affected by sexual misconduct. The goal of this program is to expand the range of services available outside of the department and the Canadian Armed Forces to provide more options so people can choose the support that works best for them. Finally, the SMSRC also holds community consultations and does outgoing, ongoing outreach because meaningful support starts by listening to those we serve. Hearing from people affected by sexual misconduct helps us understand their needs and learn what is working well and what might be missing. We use this feedback to improve our current services and help shape future ones. Our center has grown based on what people told us they needed and not just what we assumed they needed. So with that, I will hand it over to Lieutenant Colonel Pinsent to speak about the military liaison team, a very important resource that supports the center.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** Thank you. So, as was mentioned previously, the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center are independent from the Canadian Armed Forces chain of command. This independence is essential to maintaining confidentiality and trust with the individuals being supported. However, because the center supports Canadian Armed Forces members, they recognized early on that there needed to be a way to understand and navigate the realities of military life. Military structures are complex, ranks, chain of command deployments, relocation, operational tempo, and work environments can all influence the choices available to someone who has experienced harm. For this reason, the military liaison team was established. So our team does not belong to the SMSRC, the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center, but we work very closely with the center. Our team is made up of Canadian Armed Forces members who understand military culture, policies, procedures and operational realities. Our main role is to provide clear information about military policies and reporting options relevant to sexual misconduct. We also identify situation specific options based on a member's unique military circumstances and the circumstances of the harm they've experienced. We also facilitate communication between affected members and their chain of command when requested by the affected member, and we provide guidance to chains of command who are navigating complex and sensitive situations. Finally, we provide information and guidance to the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center relevant to military culture policies and the day-to-day realities of military members. The military liaison team is not a reporting mechanism. We do not replace any investigative processes. Instead, we help ensure that individuals receive accurate information about their options and can make informed decisions.

The best way to understand the roles and connection between the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center and the military liaison team is that the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center provide independent, confidential support. The military liaison team helps translate military systems and realities so individuals can understand how these systems impact their choices. Together, this structure

allows us to maintain independence while still providing support that is informed by the realities of military life. So the military liaison team typically responds to between 200 and 250 requests for support annually. These requests come from a wide range of clients, including affected members, chains of command, alleged perpetrators and bystanders. About 75% of our clients are Canadian Armed Forces members. These referrals are pretty evenly split between affected members and chains of command, with a small number from alleged perpetrators of sexual misconduct. The remaining individuals are not wearing a uniform but are connected to the Canadian Armed Forces in some way, either as a civilian employee or friend and family member of a military member. The most common referrals we receive are related to the interpretation of policies internal to the Canadian Armed Forces about sexual misconduct. How to report instances of sexual misconduct. How to support someone through the process and questions surrounding the outcome of investigations. We also receive numerous requests from affected members to help facilitate communication with their chains of command, and we work with chains of command to ensure that they understand and appropriately apply the policies that exist relevant to sexual misconduct. Chains of command often reach out to us to ask for support in understanding the policies that exist.

How to support someone through different investigations and how to reintegrate someone back in the workplace following sexual misconduct allegations. There are several barriers our team often hears about as it relates to reporting. So these largely include the affected member being concerned about retaliation as a result of reporting not wanting career impacts for themselves or the alleged perpetrator, fear of not being believed and fear of breaking up team cohesion. Our team works hard to alleviate these concerns, but we also recognize that not everyone will be willing to report right away. And while our team provides reporting options, we never force someone to report if they aren't ready to do so. In terms of the cultural shifts we're seeing within the organization, what my team has largely noticed includes stronger expectations of transparency. So members want to understand how decisions are made, what the process looks like, what happens next for them if they choose to report uncertainty very much creates distrust with leadership and with the organization overall. There's also an increased expectation of institutional accountability, so people expect the institution to acknowledge harm, take it seriously, and demonstrate that action is being taken to address the harm that has occurred. And finally, we see a greater awareness of institutional dynamics, including how rank, power and gender can intersect in military environments. So we can consider how rank shapes access to opportunities, influences reporting decisions, or perceived risk for those coming forward. This impact is multiplied when it comes to other identity factors such as gender. So these conversations are much more open in the Canadian Armed Forces now than they were ten years ago.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** But we want to end by sharing some of the lessons we've learned along the way. The first one is start by listening. One of the most important things we learned was consulting the defence community early on and continuously. This was really helpful in understanding how sexual misconduct affects people, their daily work, operational readiness and trust. It also ensures that services consider the needs of those who will be using them.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** We also recognize it is highly important to get support and buy in at every level, so cultural change is most effective when it's consistently modeled by senior leaders and reinforced throughout all levels of the organization. Change can be quite challenging, and not everyone may be ready to shift away from familiar ways of doing things. So this provides an opportunity to build understanding, strengthen engagement, and support individuals. Leadership's commitment to these changes must be visible and consistent, and it's important that the problem is openly acknowledged. Another one of our key lessons learned is that meaningful culture change requires sustained investment not only in policies but in people, processes, and structures. So while clear and specific policies are essential to empower members and leaders, and they must be backed by dedicated resources and funding, they are not sufficient on their own. This work must be reinforced through ongoing training and education across all ranks. The integration of culture change initiatives into daily operations, and the alignment of performance expectations and career progression with respectful and inclusive behaviors. Equally important is ensuring access to responsive, well communicated support services and maintaining consistent organizational, wide messaging that reinforces these priorities at every level.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** Next one is be ready to adapt as you learn. Not every initiative will go exactly as planned. In fact, they most likely won't. And as policies, programs, initiatives are put into practice, you'll naturally find areas that need to be adjusted. And this isn't a failure. It's normal and it's a healthy part of improving how things work. The feedback that you will receive will help guide these changes. And trust will grow with time through consistent actions and not necessarily all at once. the next one is plan for questions and public attention. as we've seen in Canada, media interest and public scrutiny can last a long time. So it's important to be prepared. Being open and transparent will help build credibility. And if we underestimate outside attention, it can hurt public trust. So clear and early communication is essential.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** The final key lesson that we'll note here is the importance of independence paired with a deep understanding of military realities. Independence is critical, as some individuals may be reluctant to seek support from an institution they perceive as being connected to their harm. At the same time, support services must understand the unique context of military life in order to be effective and credible. This is where a dedicated military liaison function has played such an important role for us in strengthening coordination and communication while preserving the center's independence.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** So this concludes our presentation. So we are opening it up for questions, in English, or in *français*. *Si vous avez des questions en français*. And Lieutenant Colonel Pinsent and I are, ready to answer.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. So once again, thank you very much, Elizabeth and LCol Pinsent, for your valuable presentation and for sharing your experiences with us. And we'd like to remind you, everyone, that just in a few minutes, we will move to the question-and-answer session. We will revisit the points that have been shared in the chat.

So now it's my pleasure to introduce Lieutenant Colonel Sara Alvi from Pakistan. She joined the Pakistan Army in 2007. As a captain in the electrical, Mechanical Engineer Corps, and she has served in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a team leader for female engagement team. Thank you very much. Lieutenant Colonel, the floor is yours.

**LCol Sara Alvi:** Thank you so much. Distinguished participants, colleagues from Canada and fellow officers. Good day, I am thankful for giving me this opportunity to share Pakistani institutional framework against sexual exploitation and abuse cases. Please allow me to introduce myself. and I am Lieutenant Colonel Sara Alvi. I have got commission in Pakistan Army in 2007; I am basically a mechanical engineer and a Pakistan Military Academy gold medalist. I have performed duties of gender advisor and lead a female engagement team in United Nations DRC during 2021-22. The sequence which I am going to follow today is as flashed here. I am going to apprise you about: Lady officer's induction overview in Pakistan; our Pakistan Army's institutional framework, what mechanisms and procedures we are following to reduce; see the social structures which we have adopted and which have effectively performed reduced; see the challenges; the lesson learned; and the recommendations and a model which I am going to present you at the later stages to reduce.

This is an overview of Pakistan Army. Pakistan is a young, small state, who came into being in 1947. In 1948, our First Lady, Begum Rana Liaquat, started women's Voluntary service to support the medical and logistics, which leads to the 1955 induction of lady officers as doctors and nurses and in corps of medical only. In 2006, Pakistan Army started lady cadet courses, and from 2007, induction in sister arms of Navy and Air Force had also started. In 2019, Pakistan Army has started increasing the number of female officers serving in United Nations missions abroad. Till 2025, lady Cadet Course batches have been commissioned in Corps of Army Ordnance, ISPR, JAG, RVSFC, engineers, ICTOs and signals.

Here in Pakistan's institutional framework, we have got zero tolerance policy for all kinds of sexual harassment, which is prevented by Pakistan Army Act. There are certain service discipline regulations which we follow. There are national anti-harassment laws, United Nations standards on conduct and discipline, strict command responsibility and external oversight mechanism, which we follow to safeguard the SEA cases. We have got multiple reporting channel, but the most important channel is the direct complaint to higher headquarters if needed. Like if I have got certain problem, I can even communicate to the chief of Army staff directly. There's a channel which I have got in Pakistan Army to follow it. There are independent investigation areas, panels, which allows us to open up and to share our experiences. We even have got court of inquiries, military police which follow this.

Again, as a preventive measure, we have got victim support in Pakistan Army. We have got privacy protection, psychological medical and warfare support, reassignments if required, and there are certain strict punishments which have been given by disciplinary directorate we have got in HQ, who is solely responsible for all the disciplinary actions of military forces. Prevention through training, as I have earlier mentioned that we have been also assigned foreign tasks and Pakistan is a premier contributor to United Nations peacekeeping ranking top countries since 1960. Over 35,000 personnel served in 46 plus missions of the United Nations missions across 29 countries and there is a mandatory pre-deployment training for foreign assignments. There are scenario-based drills, there are code of conduct refreshers. And mostly because I also headed the female engagement team in United Nations DRC, we have got a very safe interaction with local communities, which have been supported by Pakistan Army. Now coming towards the social structures which we have embedded in Pakistan Army, first Pakistan Army is deeply rooted in strong ethical and moral framework inspired by religion, faith, discipline, institutional values, principle of honor, integrity, and respect are ingrained due to our religious and cultural upbringing and training. Secondly, strict chain of command ensures accountability at all levels, orders are followed without ambiguity. But the most important factor, which I am going to highlight is a gender segregated environment and interpersonal norms in Pakistan Army, which include appropriate separate accommodations, controlled interactions, non-alcoholic environment, which of course helps maintain professional boundaries in line with both cultural and military norms.

Limited informal interaction between ranks and genders reduce likelihood of inappropriate behavior. And ladies and gentlemen, there's no need to impose it because it is embedded in our society, in our institution, both due to religious and cultural brought ups. A key strength is the honor-based discipline system, which acts as a powerful deterrent. Furthermore, supervision by senior colleagues buddy system is strong family system ensure no individual left unchecked and unsupported. Importantly, Pakistan Army has introduced a female friendly mechanism in like we ensure the initial postings of in inside static installation nearer to spouse or home stations, posting in pairs, posting proper SOPs or proper field

projects, dress codes, even after working hours, family interactions, their involvement in official dinners like so very small things, but they ensure safe environment. However, of course, we are also dealing with SEA cases and there are certain challenges, which of course also faced by Pakistan Army as well, in which maintaining transparency in operational reporting is always a challenge. However, by our cultural religious setup, of strong family ties, comradeship, this challenge is well settled. Secondly, Pakistan Army has maintained preventive strategy by imposing strict control environment procedures policies rather than preventive measures. And I must commend that, in my experience of more than 17 years, I have never witnessed a single case of SEA. Again cultural sensitivity variations since I have all again elaborated that Pakistan is a small state and due to frequent postings, we are very well aware of cultural variations.

And of course, the field environments with high stress are again a biggest challenge because you have a limited supervision over there. But Pakistan Army ensure rotational basis deployment in which soldiers are given psychological assistance, training guidance by superiors in routine interaction so that troops mental and physical state may be relaxed. Next, please. Now, what lessons we have learned coming towards this state as leadership set up the tone? We realize it when zero tolerance imposed by command and lead by personal example, it creates culture of accountability. And I can say that rules and regulations are not enough. As in Pakistan, our foundation lies in values a family system, respect, faith, justice, death, even after death. When these principles are deeply ingrained, then compliance become matter of character, not compulsion. Pakistan Army again have expanding opportunities for women, their presence in command and leadership roles. This build trust and improves reporting environment and again, transparency to ensure transparency. Pakistan Army ensure supervision of lower ranks. Especially if ladies are concerned, then it is by women. Higher command reporting channels are imposed, or harassment policies are there. So these are the lessons which we have learned before. My recommendation or model to reduce SI cases, I want to show a small documentary of lady officers serving in forces and what they say about their experience in forces.

Video: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WkOW1cf58e\\_aCSGOpSCELu9QEE64QEvS/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WkOW1cf58e_aCSGOpSCELu9QEE64QEvS/view?usp=sharing)

So coming towards the recommendations which I am going to give you here, and you can say a model of Pakistan Army. I can recommend through our structural and ethical model, which require incorporation of value-based ethics and training. When values are internalized, behaviors naturally improve. Second, strengthen command responsibility, when those authorities are accountable for their under command, it creates culture where misconduct is less likely occur. Another important step is reduced are reduced environmental risk factors identify unsafe, unsafe spaces, lack of supervision or situation that may encourage inappropriate behavior. Also encourage gender sensitive space management, which I have elaborated before, of separate accommodation. Non-alcoholic environment in which are Pakistan army giving results of negligible cases plus controlled social environment, interaction with families, routine counseling, and finally, structured gender integration ensures equal participation, while maintain safety,

respect and clear boundaries. In conclusion, preventing harassment is not just about rules. It's about building a culture of respect, accountability, and shared responsibility. Last but not least, I recommend to study model of Pakistan Army sop's and practices which make our environment sea free. Thank you so much. For any questions, I'm available.

### Q&A Segment

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Well, thank you very much for your insightful presentation. So we now open the Q&A session. This is the time to share your questions with our panelists or any comments or reflections you wish to contribute. We know time is short, but we can at least highlight a few questions. I have a one question for Kate and Elizabeth. So we'll start with my first, and I would like to know what strategies does the center use to break the ice and help affected individuals to feel comfortable approaching, to report or to seek advice, because sometimes it's very hard for people to, to approach the seeking help. So can you what can you tell us about that?

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** Maybe I can start, and Kate, if you have anything to add, please do so. So I think for us, well, first of all, we do a lot of outreach, we go out to bases and wings across the country, we go to events that are recognizing specific, days or months, that would be relevant for individuals and when we speak with them, we really try to take an approach of what it is that they are looking for, what would meet their needs, and then we provide them with information about options. And so we are not as, Lieutenant Colonel Pinsent mentioned, we're not, recommending a course of action. We're not pushing them to report. We're really starting from where they're at and working through, you know, what their needs are, what some options would be, and then making referrals and sort of staying with them along the way to see if you know how things unfold. Do they need anything else? Do they need accompaniment? Do they need more support? And so we're really working with them through those processes.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Thank you very much. We have one more question here. You spoke about a lot about people affected by sexual misconduct. I understand that there is a framework to sanction those who have been engaged in sexual misconduct. I'm interested in knowing whether you have any programs aimed at men, where men can talk about machismo and their attitudes so they can become aware of their behavior and help reduce cases of sexual misconduct. It seems to me that there is an only punitive framework may be more cautious, but they won't change their attitudes. So there won't be a cultural change. Essential men will not change these attitudes. There are no educational programs.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** Lieutenant Colonel, do you want to take this one?

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** So I can speak to this from like a culture change perspective. I don't think necessarily there are specific programs targeted at those unique situations. However, what we do have is long term culture change plans that seek to identify harmful behaviors like, you know, the old boys club, behaviors, attitudes, opinions that are not inclusive and not respectful to all, and these behaviors are very much not encouraged within the organization. And there are consequences to these actions. So the, the approach that we're very much taking is identifying behaviors that are not in alignment with our values and ethics and taking action from a leadership perspective to ensure that these behaviors are corrected, and are not permitted to continue within the organization and continue perpetuating harm.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you. Kate. We have one question from Maria Granados from Chile. She would like to hear more about star listening lessons and give some examples and more about peer support. What can you tell us about that?

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** So I can actually combine those two questions, because a perfect example of listening of a listening lesson is the creation of the peer support program. So when we first stood up the center, as I mentioned, we had the line. Then we moved on to the response and support coordination program, but we were having engagements with members of the defence community affected by sexual misconduct. And one of the things that they kept saying was, we need a way to support one another that is more structured, that is safe, that is confidential, and a lot of them were asking for peer support and so that was one of the ways that we, you know, that we started thinking about and started working on, well, what would a peer support program look like? And how could we implement something like that at the center? And so, you know, that was, that was a, that's a really tangible thing that has that has an outcome where now we have peer support groups where people can join. We have specific groups for men. We have; we have different activities related to peer support. We'll have like a drop-in group that people can join that is a little less formal, a little less structured. So that has really, that has really gained a lot of interest and people are very much, using those, those programs now.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. We have, Christian, he's writing from Costa Rica, and he's asking, how long does a disciplinary process for sexual harassment typically last in Canada? Or how long is support providing a support provided during the during and after the disciplinary process?

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** Yeah, I can take this one. So it very much depends on the situation itself. We have the opportunity to investigate and deal with certain situations internal to the Canadian Armed Forces. And we also have instances where these sexual misconduct incidents, specifically sexual assault or behaviors of a criminal nature are referred external to the organization to be dealt with through our civilian judicial system. So anything being handled internally, you know, that's regulated through, through our own military, police and, unit disciplinary processes. But again, it can take anywhere from, you know, a few

weeks to several months. And then if we're dealing with the civilian judicial process that can take, you know, upwards of over a year. So these processes are often quite lengthy and to speak to the support provided during and after these processes, the individual has access to support for the duration of the disciplinary processes. After, if they still are interested in being connected, whether it's with the military liaison team or with support provided through the Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Center, there is no firm end date on this.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Very interesting. And Cecilia Lucas is asking says thank you very much for your presentation. To better understand the team's dynamics, who has command over you within the military structure? Very interesting question.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** So for the military liaison team, like was mentioned during the presentation, we are separate from the sexual misconduct support and resource center to maintain that independence. Our team does report to a military chain of command. So we fall within an organization called Chief Professional Conduct and Culture, and our senior leaders report directly to the chief of defence staff.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. For Sarah, can you explain more on the role of military police.

**LCol Sara Alvi:** Military police here in Pakistan. Army is an independent setup, independent organization which is working under the Pakistan Army umbrella. But they are an independent setup which can easily and anytime grass anyone for any disciplinary action. So military police are the one from whom everyone has got scared and they are the one who have got the eyes and the intelligence and they can, ask anyone from any disciplinary action, but they are under the umbrella of Pakistan Army.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you so much, Sara. One more, I thank you for this session is really useful. How do you incorporate gender and cultural considerations into your risk assessment when conducting these exercises? I don't know if that is a question for Sara or maybe for Kate and Elizabeth.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** I can speak to the Canadian military, so we have a federal framework, gender-based analysis plus that is integrated into our planning processes and risk assessments for all activities that we're doing and, the reality is that the work that we're doing is not just focused on risk of mission failure, for example. It's also about understanding who is most at risk during the different operations that we're participating in. So we are very much being proactive in integrating gender and cultural considerations, meaning recognizing that power, identity and context very much shape both exposure to harm and access to support.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you. Here we have another question for our Canadian colleagues. Could you tell us about your relationship with the media? How and how you manage communication with when public reports are released? That is a very interesting question.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** So maybe I can take that. So the department has a centralized group that is responsible for all communication, out about the department and so for example, when we had, the, the last survey that was done on sexual misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces. When that report came out and when those results were made available to the public, the department. So that that includes, the most senior levels of, of leadership were available to journalists, to answer questions about the report to talk about, you know, what this meant for the organization and what the intent was in, in moving forward. And so when I mentioned the transparent communication that that's one of the things that that happens. So that again, people can build trust that the organization is acknowledging what is happening is acknowledging, for example, the results of an external report and, and is doing something about it.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Thank you. Elizabeth. We have more one more question for Sara. Thank you for sharing. Your insight is it is encouraging to hear about such a positive interventions and empowerment initiatives to prevent harassment, harassment, and among the challenges you mentioned, one was ensuring continuous training since sustained continuous training over time can be difficult. May I ask what approaches have proven most effective in maintaining ongoing engagement and reinforcing the training, particularly around this sensitive topic? Dear Sara.

**LCol Sara Alvi:** Yeah. Can you please repeat your question because the internet was interrupted? I didn't get you.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** No problem. They are asking, since, the training is very difficult to be effective in ongoing and maintaining ongoing engagement and reinforcing the training during the time, what are the things that you may learn about training topics?

**LCol Sara Alvi:** Well, we have got a separate training. we have got one institution that is Pakistan Military Academy from where training has been imparted to all the cadets. But we have got separate lines, separate training, criteria where, the lady officers or the lady cadets have been trained. So in Pakistan Army, they have, got models of training, training setups from UK, USA, and from there, the training standards have been, taken and they have given the training to lady on the basis of those standards which have been maintained by USA or UK Army.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Thank you very much, Sarah. Here we have I will share a question in Spanish, and we have a more question that is in French. I don't speak French, so maybe anyone can translate into

English. I will start with the Spanish question says: *Hello everyone, I'm Oscar from Ecuador. Does the family of a victim of sexual violence receive comprehensive support as part of integral reparation, or is reparation provided only to the victim?*

**Director Elisabeth Cyr:** So we do also provide support to family members of, of individuals who have experienced sexual misconduct so they can access the support, the information and, and we can definitely support them at the sexual misconduct support and resource center.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Thank you, thank you. Another one: I like the presentation. I would like to know if there are specific programs to help victims, victims of sexual misconduct, as well as programs to educate those responsible for such misconduct.

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** So I can, briefly speak to, the education piece for those responsible for sexual misconduct. So not just for individuals responsible, for sexual misconduct, but for the Canadian Armed Forces. Overall, we do have a program called respect in the Canadian Armed Forces and the respect piece is framed as a professional and operational requirement. It is not something that is a nice to have. It is a must have for our operational success. Everyone within the Canadian Armed Forces is made aware of this course. The majority of us have completed this course. and it's, it's really focusing on how we can work in an environment that is respectful and is inclusive and recognizes everyone's human rights within this organization to create a space where we can all work together and achieve that operational success. Elizabeth, do you want to speak to anything on the SMSRC side of things?

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** So the program's specific to supporting victims, all of our programs are specific to supporting victims. These services are specifically designed to support victims of sexual misconduct, as well as to provide support services for individuals who have perpetrated such misconduct and are dealing with related issues and can assist the military support team.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you. Elizabeth. Very nice. So we have one more question, and it's a I will kindly ask the speaker from Pakistan to share their perspective. Sara, in your experience, what approaches have been more effective in reducing the stigma around reporting harassment and encouraging individuals to come forward?

**LCol Sara Alvi:** Well, I have mentioned in my presentation as well that, here in Pakistan Army, there is a system in which they ensure the initial postings of lady officers, to the, static installations or to the stations which are nearer to their home station or the spouse station in this way. And secondly, they ensure their postings where already a lady is there, or a higher command or a channel is there. So in this in this way they have got ah, this possibility to reduce the SI cases because they are ah, directly answerable to those

ladies. If a lady ah is involved here or if a lady ah supervision is involved there. Ah. Secondly, they have got their ah, the proper SOPs regarding the code and conduct for or regarding the interaction with the ladies, because this is embedded in our culture. If this is embedded in our religion. So these are the few factors which, which, really work out, ah, to reduce the SI cases because you have got a monitored or a monitored or disciplined interaction with the opposite gender. So it is in our culture.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Very interesting. So we have one more. And the last question, and that is for all our panelists today is a, a they both talk about transparency, building credibility, a how do you combine military personnel about that?

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** So I can start that one. So when we're talking about credibility, that's trust in the organization that they're going to address concerns in a way that is fair, and authentic. So this transparency piece is really about ensuring that the processes are laid out and consistently followed and that individuals can see these processes being followed. It comes from individuals within a chain of command essentially, you know, walking the talk. So what they say is what they do. And when people see that consistently over time and ah, it's proven time and time again that the chain of command is doing what they say they're going to do and supporting people in the ways that they want to be supported. That builds credibility, that builds trust within the organization, and that encourages folks to come forward when they have challenges, because they know that the institution is going to support them and that there are people there who will have their back.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you very much, Kate. That's very interesting. So we are reaching the end of this webinar. And to wrap up, I would like to ask our speaker for a brief closing recommendation of the practical experience. Just a few tips that if you can share with us. Thank you all for your participation.

**Director Elizabeth Cyr:** So I think I will reiterate, listen to people, the people that you, that you want to provide services for and services to that is critical. And, be transparent and do what you say you're going to do. So I'll leave it at that.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you. Okay. Do you have any recommendation for us?

**LCol Kate Pinsent:** Yeah. I would offer, meet people where they're at. If they're coming to you for support, they may not be ready to go through formal routes for reporting, but if they're coming to you, it's because they trust you in some capacity. and also believe folks when they come to you with something. So if they're, if they're telling you something, trust what they're saying is, is accurate and, work with them to move forward.

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Thank you. Kate. Sara, some tips you may share with us.

**LCol Sara Alvi:** What I have witnessed or what I have learned, during preparation of this, inter-regional dialogues are that, in the difference between, the policies we are opting or the Pakistan army scenario or the difference between Canada's, we go for the preventive measures rather than preventive measures. So, this is what I want to suggest that why don't you go for the preventive, measures to adopt in your militaries so that you can reduce the sea cases, as we have done in our, in our society. I don't say that this is not the sea, cases are not here in Pakistan. They are there in Pakistan. But what Pakistan military has done that they, because of their strict discipline, because of their, policies, because of their, SOPs, they have made those cases to the negligible. So because of their preventive measures, we are here standing with approximately negligible cases, which are not in the case of other armies. So why don't, they go for the preventive measures or why don't they go for those policies, which they can induct in their setups and make those cases, reduced?

**Cecilia Mazzotta:** Okay. Well, thank you all for your participation. Thank you, Sarah. Thank you. Okay. Thank you, Elizabeth and Kate. We have reached the end of this webinar, and we hope it has been helpful to gain firsthand insights from those who work every day by supporting personnel affected by this issue. It has been an honor to moderate this webinar with such a distinguished panel, and to welcome such a diverse and committed audience. We invite you to stay connected with international and subscribe to receive updates and upcoming resources on our website. Within the framework of our project that are being supported by Global Affairs Canada. So thank you all so much for joining us today, and we look forward to staying in touch. Have a wonderful day. Thank you. We will see you in a brief time. Thank you, a lot. Goodbye.

### Questions made by participants

Question 1. Community consultations: can you give an example? Do you consult the public, units? And: how many people works at the centre?

Question 2. I have liked the presentation so much, can you please share so that we learn more from Canada. It a good experience. I missed the first part.

Question 3. I would like to hear more about the start listening lesson, please give examples.

Question 4. You spoke a lot about people affected by sexual misconduct. I understand that there is a framework to sanction those who have engaged in sexual misconduct. I'm interested in knowing whether you have any programs aimed at men, where men can talk about machismo and their attitudes, so they can become aware of their behavior and help reduce cases of sexual misconduct. It seems to me that if there is only a punitive framework, men may be more cautious, but they won't change their attitudes—there won't be a cultural change. A sanctioned man will not change his attitudes if there are no educational programs.

Question 5. I also would like to know more about peer support, how it works, what are the risks.

Question 6. How long does a disciplinary process for sexual harassment typically last in Canada?

Question 7. How long is support provided during and after the disciplinary process?

Question 8. Thank you very much for the presentation. To better understand the team's dynamics, who has command over you within the military structure?

Question 9. For the Pakistani LtCol, can you explain more on the role of military police?

Question 10. Thank you for this session, it's really useful. How do you incorporate gender and cultural considerations into your risk assessments when conducting these exercises?

Question 11. Another question for our Canadian colleagues: could you tell us about your relationship with the media, and how you manage communications when public reports are released?

Question 12. Love the peer support idea! Many institutions I have worked with, women and men always ask for peer support! Buddy systems!

Question 13. I have a question for Col. Sara Alvi. Thank you for sharing your insights. It is encouraging to hear about such positive interventions and empowerment initiatives to prevent harassment. Among the challenges you mentioned, one was ensuring continuous training. Since sustaining continuous training over time can be difficult, may I ask what approaches have proven most effective in maintaining ongoing engagement and reinforcing the training, particularly around sensitive topics?

Question 14. Hello everyone, I'm Oscar from Ecuador. Does the family of a victim of sexual violence receive comprehensive support as part of comprehensive reparations, or is that reparation limited to the victim alone?

Question 15. I liked the presentation. I'd like to know if there are any specific programs to help victims of sexual misconduct, as well as to educate those who commit such acts.

Question 16. I would kindly ask the hon speaker from Pakistan to share their perspective. In your experience, what approaches have been most effective in reducing the stigma around reporting harassment and encouraging individuals to come forward?

Question 17. Speakers from Pakistan and Canada talked about transparency building credibility. How do you convince military personnel about that?

Question 18. Kate's recommendation is really one of the points needs to be highlighted in any type of context or environment. Just wanted to praise it