



## Background

The first Victims' Rights Advocate (VRA) was appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General in August 2017. The Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (OVRA) began its work in January 2018 and focuses on integrating a victim-centred approach into all United Nations' policies and efforts related to the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. This is in line with the [Secretary-General's strategy](#) on these issues which consists of (i) prioritizing the rights and dignity of victims; (ii) ending impunity; (iii) engaging with civil society and external partners; and (iv) improving strategic communication.

## What we do

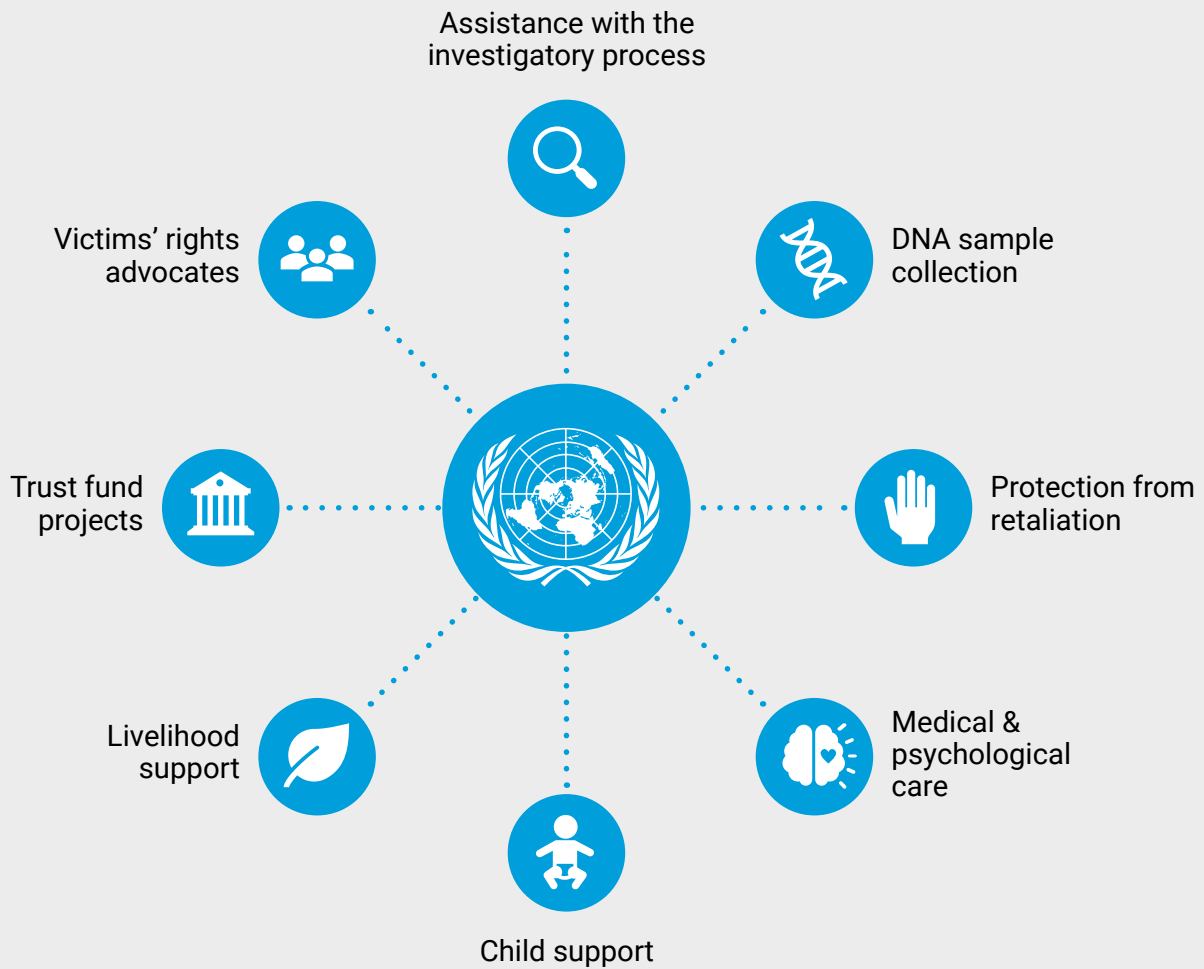
The OVRA supports the VRA who seeks to put the rights and dignity of **victims of sexual exploitation and abuse** by United Nations staff and related personnel at the forefront of the United Nations' prevention and response efforts. The **mandate of the VRA encompasses the entire United Nations system** which means that OVRA works with all United Nations entities so that victims get the assistance and support they need. Operationalizing the role of the VRA, Field Victims' Rights Advocates and Senior Victims' Rights Officers are in place in four countries and are the main point of contact for victims on the ground. As with the VRA, their role is system-wide.

They work closely with humanitarian structures, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse networks, conduct and discipline teams, gender-based violence focal points, child protection officers, gender advisors and others to bolster support to victims. In collaboration with United Nations and other stakeholders, they conduct **outreach, awareness-raising and sensitization sessions, and facilitate victims' access to services**, including to medical assistance and to psychosocial care. They facilitate DNA sample collection to expedite efforts to resolve paternity and child maintenance claims and in developing livelihood projects financed by the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The Advocates also provide on the ground support to victims in United Nations and Member State investigations.

The OVRA supports the VRA's collaboration with State institutions, civil society, including national, legal and human rights organizations to provide assistance and support to victims in line with the Secretary-General's strategy and the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2007 ([A/RES/62/214, Annex](#)).

The OVRA supports the preparation and conduct of visits by the VRA to countries where the United Nations is present to gain firsthand understanding of how sexual exploitation and abuse are addressed. During visits, where possible, the VRA connects with victims directly to hear and learn from them so the design of prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse is centered around victims' needs.

## Victim assistance and support




## How we work


Where present, Field Victims' Rights Advocates and Senior Victims' Rights Officers work to ensure that a **coherent victim-centered, gender- and child-sensitive and non-discriminatory approach is integrated into United Nations efforts to provide support to victims.**

They maintain regular communication and follow-up with victims through mobile phones, email and

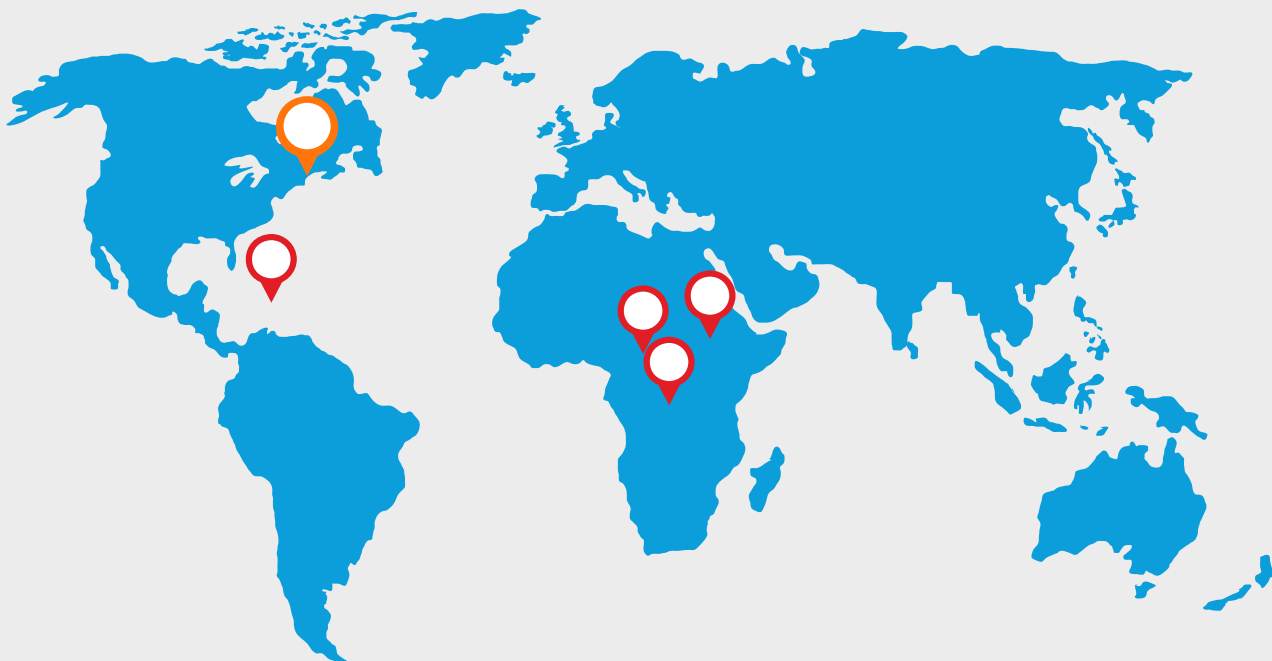
hotlines which are also available in the local language. Field Victims' Rights Advocates have functions beyond their role as advocates and focal points for victims support and assistance. Senior Victims' Rights Officers hold full time positions dedicated to this role.

## Where we are

 UN Headquarters

 Field Victims' Rights Advocates and Senior Victims' Rights Officers

The VRA and OVRA are located at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Field Victims' Rights Advocates and Senior Victims' Rights Officers are based in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and South Sudan.



## Mapping of services available to victims

In line with the Secretary-General's request to the Victims' Rights Advocate (A/72/751) to undertake a comprehensive mapping of services available system-wide, building on the work already undertaken in this area, the OVRA implemented a project to map internal and external capacities to provide victims of sexual exploitation and/or abuse with assistance and support services in 13 countries. These were: **Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Haiti, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, and South Sudan.** These countries include peace operations, humanitarian and development settings reflecting the system-wide mandate of the VRA. The mapping is the largest project undertaken by OVRA so far and has ongoing impact. The VRA is

following up on the progress and implementation of the recommendations resulting from the project's findings. Summaries of findings from each country can be found on OVRA's webpage.

### Contact

For more information, visit us at: <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/office-victims-rights-advocate>

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