



INTRODUCTION NOTE



Dear Colleagues,

I am glad to introduce this second edition of the MONUSCO Conduct and Discipline Team (CDT) Newsletter to you all. As we are facing challenging times in the DRC, every effort counts, and every voice matters.

This edition highlights the work being done to support colleagues who were evacuated or relocated from one duty station to another, seeks to raise awareness of standards of conduct, and to strengthen prevention mechanisms. In these challenging times, such efforts are a reminder of the critical role each of us plays in maintaining the integrity of the Mission and strengthening confidence in our work while ensuring that the mandate of the Mission is accomplished. As such, this newsletter underscores the Mission's ongoing commitment, particularly through the preventive activities carried out by the CDT, in maintaining the highest standards of conduct.

In the midst of this very challenging and unpredictable time, I take this opportunity to commend all MONUSCO personnel, particularly those evacuated and relocated from duty stations in the eastern DRC, not only for the steadfast dedication, professionalism and the courage displayed at every turn, but also for the demonstrated dedication to upholding the UN values and notably the zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse. Your commitment is our strength.

Our heartfelt appreciation is being extended to the colleagues who have remained in Goma throughout these extremely difficult circumstances. Your unwavering dedication has ensured the continuity of essential services and upheld the protection of civilians, a core component of MONUSCO's mandate.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Paulin Djomo, Director of the UN Regional Service Centre in Entebbe for the critical support he provided during this crisis. His leadership, along with that of his team, was instrumental in ensuring the safe and dignified relocation to Entebbe Base and transit of many of our colleagues to Kinshasa.

I hope you enjoy reading this Newsletter and find it both informative and entertaining.

Bintou KEITA

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the DRC and Head of MONUSCO

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Colleagues,

The recent events in the Eastern part of the Democratic Republic of The Congo have had a profound impact on many of our colleagues, leading to the evacuation of hundreds of international staff members and the transit of thousands of national staff and their family members on their way to Kinshasa.

The United Nations in Entebbe and mainly the Regional Service Center in Entebbe and the MONUSCO logistics base have been instrumental serving as a transit hub and a temporary relocation site, ensuring that those affected receive the necessary support during this challenging time.

Being away from home, separated from loved ones, and adjusting to new working conditions from afar is not easy. I want to acknowledge the resilience of all those who have adapted to these circumstances.

Their dedication in the face of adversity is a testament to the strength and solidarity of our community.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation to our colleagues who remain in Goma, enduring particularly difficult conditions. Their commitment to continuing their work under such circumstances is truly commendable, and we stand in solidarity with them.

Our thoughts are also with the people of the DRC. We hope for a swift return to peace so that those who have been displaced - both among our colleagues and in the communities we serve - can reunite with their families and rebuild their lives in safety and dignity.

In these challenging times, our shared values of integrity, professionalism, and respect must continue to guide us. Even as we navigate these uncertainties, our mission and responsibility to serve remain unchanged.

Let us continue to support each other and uphold the principles that define us.

Paulin DJOMO

Director

UN Regional Service Centre Entebbe

ENTEBBE- BEYOND THE EVACUATIONS, ACCOUNTABILITY AND PREVENTION REMAIN PRIORITIES

While evacuations and relocations ensured the safety of more than 5,700 MONUSCO personnel, affiliated organizations, and their families, maintaining the highest standards of conduct remained equally critical. Recognizing this, the Conduct and Discipline (CDT) GOMA conducted sensitization sessions in Entebbe throughout January and February, with civilian, military, and police personnel evacuated from Goma, Beni, and Bukavu.

While evacuations were a priority, maintaining the highest standards of conduct remained essential.

In this context, the Conduct and Discipline (CDT) GOMA organized sensitization sessions in Entebbe since January, bringing together civilian, military and police personnel evacuated from Goma, Beni and Bukavu.

These interactive sessions focused on key issues such as the different categories of abuses, their impact on victims and communities, prohibited conduct for UN personnel, and reporting mechanisms for SEA and other misconduct.

Even in times of uncertainty, strengthening awareness of conduct and discipline remains critical.

These sessions ensured that, despite the challenges of evacuation and relocation, staff remained informed and committed to upholding the highest ethical standards.

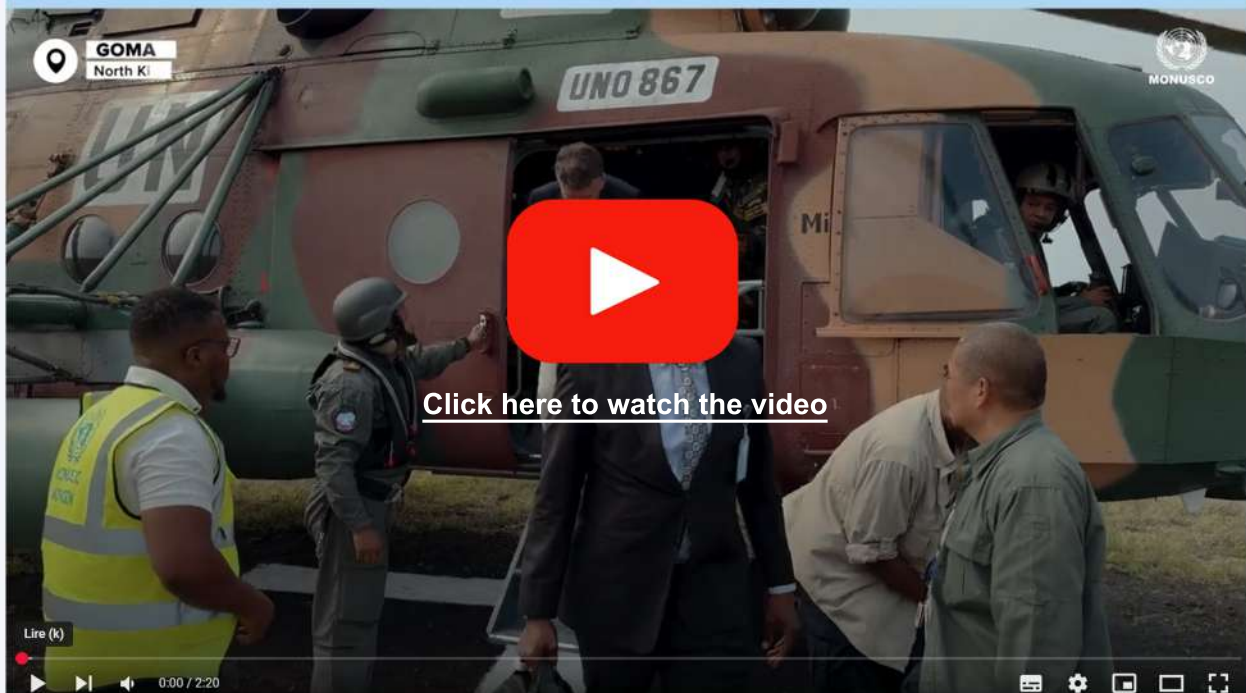


STRENGTHENING PREVENTION EFFORTS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

This second edition of the CDT Connect newsletter also reflects on key developments in January and February, including the visit of Under Secretary-General Christian Saunders, Special Coordinator on improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. His mission to Sake, Beni and Goma from 19 to 22 January, just before the security crisis escalated, was part of his commitment to strengthen accountability and prevention efforts. During his visit, he met with military, police and civilian personnel, as well as local partners and UN agencies, to assess progress, address challenges and strengthen victim support mechanisms.

USG Saunders' visit reaffirmed the UN's unwavering commitment to preventing abuses and supporting affected communities.

Watch the highlights of his visit in the video below.



VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

Meschak Nakanywenge

*President of the Community-Based Complaint Network
(CBCN) North-Kivu*

As a teenager, Aline, now 24 years old, saw her life take a drastic turn after she became a victim of sexual exploitation and abuse by a peacekeeper. Alone and without support, she suffered in silence for a long time, not knowing where to turn.

Thanks to the work of MONUSCO's Conduct and Discipline Team and the commitment of the Community-Based Complaint Network (CBCN), Aline was able to receive help.

She received psychological and medical assistance, as well as legal aid. Gradually, she regained her confidence and was able to receive training in entrepreneurship and community leadership. Today, she has started her own soap-making business and is actively involved in educating other young girls about the dangers of exploitation and how to protect themselves.

Aline's story is not unique. It illustrates the profound consequences of sexual abuse involving UN personnel and highlights the importance of support mechanisms for victims.



MAJOR CHALLENGES HINDERING OUR MISSION

Our commitment is strong, but our resources are limited. Insecurity remains a major obstacle to our work. Clashes between the M23 and FARDC have made some areas inaccessible, severely hampering our awareness-raising and victim assistance activities. In addition, the forced dismantling of displacement camps has made many people even more vulnerable, depriving them of protection and increasing the risk of exploitation.

Lack of funding is another major challenge. Our limited resources undermine our ability to effectively monitor cases and ensure the continuity of our activities.

THE ROLE OF CBCNs IN COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Since 2017, the Community-Based Complaint Network (CBCN) has played a critical role in preventing and combating sexual exploitation and abuse. We are a community-based structure that works closely with affected populations. Our network is made up of civil society actors and grassroots leaders, including neighborhood leaders in urban areas and village leaders in rural areas, to ensure the sustainability of our work.

We do not work alone. CBCNs maintain close links with international NGOs, local organizations and UN agencies through the Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) sub-clusters. This collaboration is essential to maximize the impact of our efforts and ensure that victims receive appropriate support.

With more than 230 members in various locations in North Kivu, we work to raise community awareness, facilitate the reporting of abuse, and provide support to victims.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

The recent visit of Under Secretary-General Christian Saunders, the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, provided us with an important platform. We were able to discuss the need to strengthen preventive measures and internal controls to prevent individuals with a history of abuse from being integrated into the United Nations. We also discussed the mechanisms for reporting and protecting victims, which need to be improved. There must be accessible, confidential and independent complaint channels where victims can speak out without fear of retaliation and they must be protected from pressure and threats. Combating impunity is another key priority. We insist that all UN personnel implicated in abuses be brought to justice and appropriately sanctioned. Assistance to victims must be significantly strengthened. Free access to medical and psychological care must be guaranteed, as well as tailored support for victims of abuse.



A CALL FOR SUSTAINABLE ACTION

Victim protection cannot be a temporary responsibility. We call for a well-prepared transition that ensures the sustainability of prevention and victim assistance mechanisms.

The CBCNs are ready to continue their commitment, but we need support. We need resources to carry out our mission.

Victims must not be abandoned.

The fight against exploitation and abuse cannot stop. Together, let us strengthen our actions and engage all stakeholders for a future where young girls like Aline can grow up safe, free from sexual exploitation, abuse and trauma.

Our voice matters!

■ PUTTING VICTIMS FIRST

“Making efforts to ensure that victims receive assistance and justice is very important to me.”

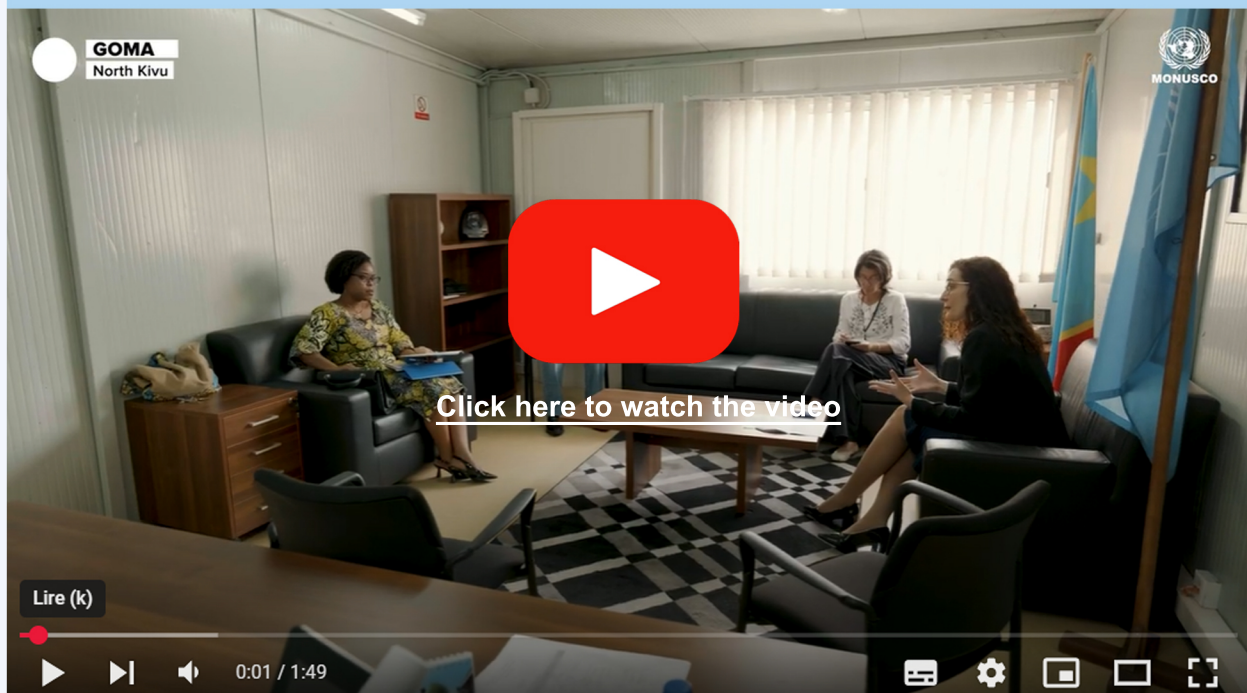
Najla Nassif Palma

Assistant Secretary-General - UN Victims' Rights Advocate

The voices of affected communities, as highlighted by the CBCNs, remind us that the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse cannot stop at prevention, it must also ensure meaningful, long-term support for victims. To further strengthen victim-centered efforts, Assistant-General Najla Nassif Palma, UN Victims' Rights Advocate, visited the DRC from 15 to 20 December 2024.

Her mission focused on engaging directly with victims, community actors such as the CBCNs, and institutional partners to strengthen victims' assistance.

Watch the video below to learn more about her mission to the DRC.



**Witness or Victim ?
Contact us!
Conduct & Discipline Team**



Hotlines (Toll-Free) or WhatsApp:
+243 818 907 744/+243 997 058 000
Email: monusco-cdt-inbox@un.org

IN THE FIELD

With
Emmanuella Langsi
Conduct & Discipline Officer-Kinshasa



“As personnel, I believe we must also strive to treat everyone with dignity and respect, fostering a culture of prevention that promotes a safe and respectful environment”

Can you introduce yourself and tell us about your role? What motivated you to work in this field?

I am from Cameroon and currently a Conduct and Discipline Officer and Team Leader of the Kinshasa Field CDT since July 2024. My primary role is to advise all categories of MONUSCO personnel on conduct and discipline matters, with emphasis on zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, conduct prevention activities to forestall the occurrence of misconduct and sexual exploitation and abuse, enforcement, and remedial action. As a lawyer, I have always been inspired by the Organization's strong commitment to fairness, integrity, justice, and accountability. These values resonated deeply with me, which inspired me to take on the role of Conduct and Discipline Officer.

What are the main challenges or difficulties you face in your work?

Some of the significant challenges I face in my work include underreporting by victims, often due to fear of retaliation or cultural reasons. Additionally, some victims have unrealistic expectations of the Organization's support, leading to frustration and withdrawal when these expectations are not met.

In your opinion, how can everyone effectively contribute to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse?

As UN personnel, I firmly believe that preventing sexual exploitation and abuse is a shared responsibility that requires both individual and collective efforts. First, we all have a vital role in being a positive influence and setting exemplary standards in our interactions with everyone.

For me, this means actively disseminating information and raising awareness about sexual exploitation and abuse, its consequences, and the available reporting mechanisms in place. Individually, we also have the responsibility to report any suspicious behavior, as remaining silent only enables the perpetrators and harms the victims, so it is crucial to speak up.

As personnel, I believe we must also strive to treat everyone with dignity and respect, fostering a culture of prevention that promotes a safe and respectful environment. By treating the local population with dignity, we create a safe and trusted environment where individuals feel comfortable approaching us without any fear of judgment.

Can you share a memorable experience where you felt your work had a real impact on a victim or a community?

Absolutely. One significant experience that stands out to me was during my time volunteering with a local organization that supports survivors of sexual violence. We developed a program aimed at providing both emotional support and empowerment programs for victims.

IN THE FIELD

With
Emmanuella Langsi
Conduct & Discipline Officer-Kinshasa

I encountered a victim who had been sexually assaulted, and through the Organization's aid programs, she received counseling, legal aid, and economic empowerment placement. Over several months, I watched her transform from a place of vulnerability and uncertainty into a confident individual ready to take charge of her life.

The most impactful moment came when she shared her story at one of our community awareness events. She spoke about her journey and how the support she received from the organization was pivotal in her healing process. Watching her regain her strength and independence and knowing that our efforts played a role in that, reinforced my passion for advocacy and community service. It was a profound reminder of how compassionate support can truly change lives.

As a woman, do you feel that your approach or reception is different when conducting awareness sessions or working with victims?

Without being gender-biased, as a woman, I have observed that when I lead awareness-raising sessions, participants feel more at ease sharing their experiences. This is particularly true when dealing with victims of sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse, who feel more comfortable discussing sensitive issues with someone of the same gender. Regardless of who leads sessions or deals with victims, I firmly believe that creating a safe, inclusive, and non-judgmental space is essential, as it helps individuals feel heard, respected, and supported.





On the 24th and 25th of January 2025, the Field Conduct and Discipline Team (FCDT) in Beni held awareness sessions in Mayi-Moya and Eringeti, villages 37 km and 39 km north of Beni, to engage 200 community leaders from associations, churches, and schools in sexual exploitation and abuse prevention efforts. These interactive sessions emphasized the community's role in combating sexual exploitation and abuse and strengthened awareness of reporting mechanisms.



As part of the Mission's preventive measures to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, the Kinshasa Field Conduct and Discipline Team conducted a highly interactive awareness-raising session on sexual exploitation and abuse prevention. The session, held in the Commune of Barumbu, Kinshasa, brought together thirty (30) participants, including entrepreneurs and social workers from the local women-led group Association des Femmes Battantes, Épanouies et Dynamiques (AFEBED). Participants were sensitized on the concept of sexual exploitation and abuse, its consequences, reporting mechanisms, and victim support services.

COMMITTED TO ACTION

With

Joyce Cristine Fernandes De Pina

Head of Radio Okapi



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"Besides the definition in the rules and regulations, we must consider that abuse is anything we do that puts someone else in an uncomfortable position. Period!"

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Can you tell us about your background and your role as the Head of Radio Okapi?

I joined the UN as Head of the mission's radio station at UNMIT in Timor-Leste, after working at EURONEWS in France. My career then took me to New York, where I worked as a news presenter for UN News and later as a communications specialist at UNDP.

However, my desire to be in the field led me to request a transfer to Mali and later to the DRC, where I now lead Radio Okapi. My role is demanding and diverse: I oversee a team of over 130 staff members, manage logistics, contracts, and partnerships with organizations such as UNICEF, the Gates Foundation, and the French Embassy, while ensuring the quality of news and programs broadcasted. It is an intense job, but this is a passion I have – to connect people to systems, and I am happy for being given the opportunity to have this experience.

As the Head of Radio Okapi, how do you ensure that your team understands and adheres to the principles of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse?

We have several trainings scheduled, regularly, and I speak about these issues, either collectively or individually. I am extremely engaged with prevention principles which I believe are the best way forward and reduce the burden of having to deal with problems; and at a personal level I discuss with colleagues and share information on the matter, besides the professional tools available.

We have a training tailored to radio staff going on, for example. Given the high number of people in my unit, working in shifts, we need trainings that cater to the schedules of the Radio Okapi staff and workload.

How do you handle situations where inappropriate behavior or actions contrary to MONUSCO's principles are reported within your team? Have you ever encountered such a case, and if so, how did you address it?

Yes, I have. Several times. Not just in MONUSCO, but in other places. I take action immediately and, if need be, I report it. I had cases of harassment at sexual or moral levels, or abuse of power. I am not shy to address them straight away.

The workplace MUST be a safe place for staff to come, be creative, to feel good. It is not tolerable that someone comes to work fearful or afraid. Afraid of a colleague or of the boss! This is intolerable and inducive to so much pain and emotional damage. It is demoralizing and ultimately can lead to mental health problems.

COMMITTED TO ACTION

With
Joyce Cristine Fernandes De Pina
Head of Radio Okapi

Have you implemented specific mechanisms within Radio Okapi to encourage open expression and the reporting of inappropriate behavior?

Yes, I have. My office door is always open, and I am available to receive colleagues individually, all the time. I had cases of colleagues afraid to speak about abuse of power they felt they were victim of, or improper language from a supervisor, or requests that are not related to professional tasks, and they were uncomfortable doing them. To tackle and combat these situations, I regularly share the rules and regulations or mention them in meetings to remind and encourage colleagues to come forward and speak. The point is not to vex people or accuse them of wrongdoing - but to make people understand and be conscious that behaviors can harm, hurt and demoralize a team, and because it is not right, it is against the values we all swore to abide by.

What message would you like to share with MONUSCO personnel, journalists, and Radio Okapi listeners about the importance of preventing and reporting abuse?

Besides the definition in the rules and regulations, we must consider that abuse is anything we do that puts someone else in an uncomfortable position. Period. A lot of people do not know clearly how certain things they do are bothering or hurting or making others feel bad; others don't see how their language can be considered abusive. Either they did not learn, they saw others doing it and think it is right, or they never stopped to think about it. Let's make sure we are as committed to ethical behavior as we are to our own interests.



IFEBRUARY 14TH

Valentine's Day

The importance of Consent

We close this April edition of the **CDT Connect** newsletter by highlighting an important date: **Valentine's Day**, which is celebrated every year on February 14 and is recognized in many countries as the day of love.

But beyond the flowers, chocolates, and tokens of affection, this day is also an opportunity to shed light on a fundamental principle in any relationship and a key element in the prevention of sexual harassment: **Consent**.

Consent: A non-negotiable principle

In both personal and professional relationships, respect for others begins with recognizing their right to say yes or no without pressure or coercion. Too often, acts of affection or expectations imposed under the guise of seduction can cross the line of respect and become forms of abuse.

Consent is much more than agreement in many ways:

- It must be given freely, in full awareness, and can be withdrawn at any time
- It cannot be coerced, assumed, or obtained through manipulation
- Silence or lack of refusal does not mean consent



NO means NO!

MAYBE means NO!

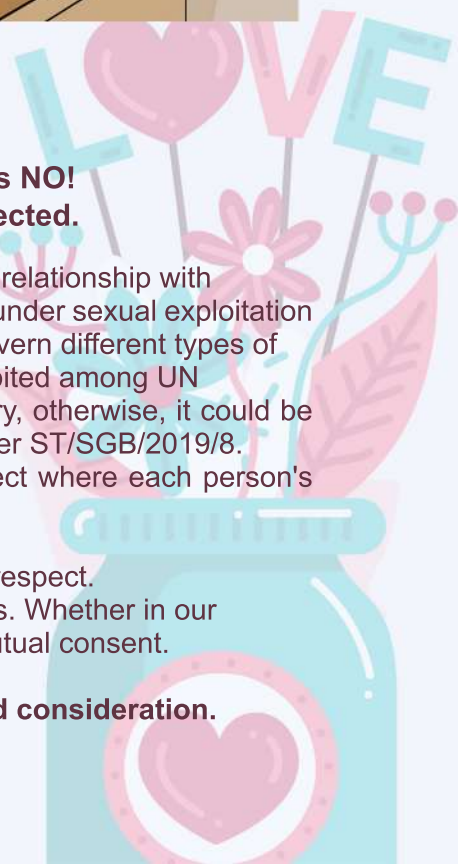
I am not sure, I don't know, I don't feel ready, means NO!

Asking for time to think is a right and must be respected.

We remind everyone that the UN Standards of Conduct prohibit any sexual relationship with beneficiaries of assistance as it exploits a position of vulnerability. This falls under sexual exploitation and abuse, as provided by ST/SGB/2003/13 and other related rules that govern different types of contracts of personnel with the UN. While a sexual relationship is not prohibited among UN personnel, commonly referred to as blue and blue, CONSENT is mandatory, otherwise, it could be assessed and become sexual harassment, which is prohibited conduct under ST/SGB/2019/8. Preventing sexual harassment requires fostering a culture of mutual respect where each person's choice is heard and honored.

Valentine's Day reminds us that true relationships are built on equality and respect. But beyond this special day, this principle should guide our daily interactions. Whether in our personal lives or at work, every relationship must be based on clear and mutual consent.

Respecting someone's choices is the greatest proof of care and consideration.





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Emmanuel Onyekachi Ugwu
Officer in Charge-Conduct and Discipline Team

Lago Lorougnon Arnaud Falle
Graphist

Didier Binyungu
Edizon Musavuli
Illustrators

Ghyslaine Maliro Kasereka
Aubin Mukoni
Video and editing

Pascale Serra-Nga Gnii Voueto
CDT Communications Officer

In collaboration with
Jasmin Lavoie
Communications Officer
Office of the Chief of Staff

Contributors:
Deirdre Faye Da Silva
Thais Dias
Raghdan Almallah
Ukpe Sam Ukpe
Emmanuella Mbongeh Langsi
Aminata Diakhate
Deborah Barugahara
Farrukh Bashir
Virgil Simon Mbuligwe

Questions or suggestions?
Contact us!
monusco-CDT-communications@un.org