Sexual violence and abuse against aid workers | 2015-2017
Aid in Danger Incident Trends

Sexual violence and abuse are beginning to be recognised as a major problem across the international aid industry. According to the 'Report the Abuse' survey, 86% of aid workers know a colleague who has experienced sexual violence associated with their work. Yet sexual violence in humanitarian settings is rarely reported as a security incident. Aid agencies are not reporting sexual violence numbers.

Insecurity Insight works with 26 partner agencies who share reported security incidents on a confidential basis. This overview document presents available information on cases of sexual violence and abuse[1] against aid workers,[2] as reported by affected individuals or through a confidential inter-agency sharing mechanism between January 2015 and December 2017.
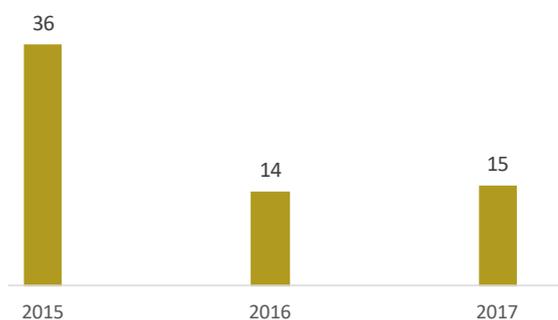
The available open-source and confidentially shared information is a start in information sharing. It is published here not because it paints an accurate picture of the problem. The low number of reported incidents in 2017 (65) highlights how few cases are reported through existing structures.

This publication is intended to encourage survivors and witnesses to come forward and to encourage debates within aid agencies about the best policies to prevent and respond to cases of sexual violence and abuse. For suggested reporting mechanisms, see **Resources**.
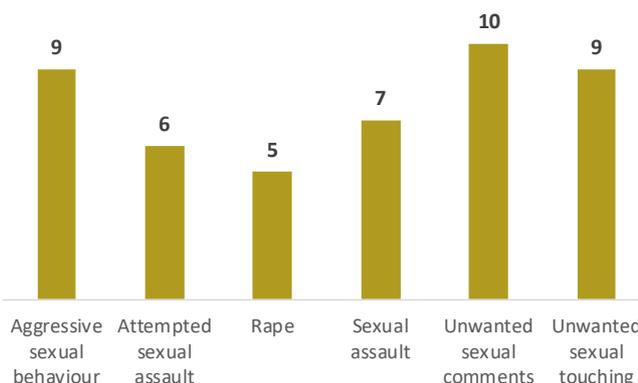
74 aid workers in 30 countries were reported survivors of sexual violence or abuse

Reported incidents	Country
12	South Sudan
5	Jordan
4	Afghanistan, Iraq/KRI
3	Colombia, Lebanon, Nigeria
2	DRC, Ethiopia, India, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Timor Leste, Turkey
1	Bangladesh, Belgium, CAR, Chad, Egypt, France, Greece, Haiti, Nepal, PNG, Senegal, Switzerland, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimabawe

Reported incidents (65)

Year	Incidents
2015	36
2016	14
2017	15

Known reported incident type (46)

Type	Count
Aggressive sexual behaviour	9
Attempted sexual assault	6
Rape	5
Sexual assault	7
Unwanted sexual comments	10
Unwanted sexual touching	9

Total available figures for January 2015-December 2017 are available on **HDX Insecurity Insight**.

Sexual violence and abuse

- 74 aid workers were reported survivors of sexual violence in 30 countries. All were female.

- A high number of reported sexually violent incidents occurred in South Sudan, where 12 reports affecting 13 aid workers were documented, followed by Jordan (5).

- Six incident reports detailed that the perpetrators were armed with firearms, knives or machetes.

Locations where reported sexual violence and abuse took place

- Information on the location was provided for 34 reported incidents.

- Nearly a quarter of reported incidents took place in the **street** (14).

- Seven reported incidents occurred at **staff members' residences** in the DRC, Iraq/KRI, Nicaragua, Nigeria, PNG, Zambia and Zimbabwe (1 each). In Nigeria and Zambia, the reported incidents took place during armed robberies.

- Six reported incidents occurred during **road travel** in Sierra Leone, Colombia, Haiti, India and Lebanon (2, 1, 1, 1, 1). In Sierra Leone, both reported incidents were perpetrated by **aid workers** and took place as staff members were travelling to and from project sites.

- Three reported incidents occurred at **NGO compounds** in South Sudan and CAR (2 and 1). In CAR, the reported incidents took place during an armed compound robbery.

- Sexually **explicit phone messages** were sent on three occasions to staff members in Timor Leste, Colombia and Nepal (1 each).

- One reported incident took place at a **project site** in Greece.

Reported information about perpetrators

- Information on perpetrators was provided in 34 reports.

- 56% of reported incidents were perpetrated by **local community members** (19/34).

- Six perpetrators identified in reported cases were **aid workers or NGO contractors** in Jordan, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and South Sudan (2, 2, 1, 1). In South Sudan, the perpetrator was a UN contractor.

- Seven incidents occurred during **criminally motivated** incidents in Bangladesh, CAR, DRC, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan and Zambia.

- **South Sudanese soldiers** invaded Terrain Hotel in Juba, South Sudan, raped five international staff members and sexually assaulted an unspecified number of others.

- An international staff member at DfID was sexually assaulted and killed by an **Uber driver** in Lebanon.

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Prosecution

- In 97% of reported incidents no measures to hold the perpetrators accountable were included in the report .

- Two reported incidents included information on perpetrators being held accountable for their actions.

- In Ethiopia, an aid worker was taken into police custody; the outcome is unclear from the available information.

- In South Sudan, soldiers accused of raping aid workers at the Terrain Hotel appeared before a military court in May 2017.

Duty of care and sexual violence in the humanitarian community

The scale of sexual violence and abuse in the sector as a whole is still unclear, but as the voices of survivors increase and grow, the need for humanitarian actors to take concrete action similarly increases. At the heart of this issue is staff behaviour and breaches of organisational codes of conduct.

The reporting of incidents is important to monitor the potential scale of the problem, as well as to understand the nature of patterns of violence and abuse. It is also important for survivors to know that their experiences are not forgotten or ignored.

Resources

Duty of Care and Sexual Violence in the Humanitarian Community

Duty of Care: Protection of Humanitarian Aid Workers from Sexual Violence

SIIM Handbook: Tool 7 - Good practice in gender-sensitive incident reporting and complaints mechanisms for reporting SEA.

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[1] The Aid in Danger project uses the definition of sexual violence given in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action: "Sexual violence includes, at least, rape/attempted rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Sexual violence is 'any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic a person's sexuality, using coercion, threats of harm or physical force, by any person regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.' Sexual violence takes many forms, including rape, sexual slavery and/or trafficking, forced pregnancy, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and/or abuse, and forced abortion."

[2] In our coding for this data, a humanitarian aid worker is defined as a person employed by or attached to a humanitarian, multi-mandated, UN or government aid agency.