

<b>Institution:</b> University of Reading		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22, Anthropology and Development Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Changing Global and UK Domestic Policy to Safeguard Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Peacekeepers, UN agencies and NGOs		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2016–18		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Rosa Freedman	Professor of Law, Conflict and Global Development	2016–present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2017–20		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of adults and children perpetrated by UN peacekeeping personnel and humanitarian aid workers has been a longstanding issue that undermines the positive work of those missions. Professor Rosa Freedman's work, in collaboration with the British NGO Keeping Children Safe (KCS), has led to the development and use of a toolkit for assessing risk and ensuring stronger safeguarding and protection of adults and children by international organisations contributing to peacekeeping or providing aid. The toolkit has been used by leading organisations in many countries, and has changed global and UK domestic practice and policies on safeguarding against sexual exploitation and abuse. These organisations include the UN and its agencies, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Department for International Development (DFID), global regional organisations, national armed forces and Non Government Organisations (NGOs) operating globally. This change means that more effective safeguarding is in place to protect vulnerable populations from SEA.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Professor Freedman joined the University of Reading in September 2016 as Professor of Law, Conflict and Global Development, having previously been researching UN accountability in the context of the Haiti cholera crisis of 2010. Her work on the immunity of UN staff across different jurisdictions led to an invitation to speak at a workshop in 2016 organised by the NGO Keeping Children Safe, which was the start of an ongoing collaboration on this area. Their work on international child safeguarding standards led to her research on UN peacekeeper sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), which entailed examining organisational governance and infrastructure and providing evidence-based solutions. By examining the laws surrounding the immunity of international peacekeepers whilst on mission, and uncovering national and international laws and standards as applied to these situations, Freedman built a framework of questions and actions required by the multilevel stakeholders involved in in-country missions, which was the first stage in creating a safeguarding toolkit. Using contacts from her work in Haiti and at the UN, Freedman and Keeping Children Safe began to build networks throughout the UN incorporating human rights lawyers, humanitarians, diplomats and UN staff and military personnel. This gave them access to UN discussions around peacekeeping missions, as well as access to missions themselves, enabling Freedman and KCS to carry out research and gather observations of on-the-ground action. Throughout the project Freedman has secured external funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the British Academy (BA), and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), as well as more recently from the UK FCO, UNICEF and DFID.</p> <p>The initial research in collaboration Keeping Children Safe (funded by a BA Grant) was conducted in Liberia, which has had a continuous UN Peacekeeper presence since 2001 and</p>		

was keen to address SEA. Further research involved trips to locations including the UN mission in Haiti, peacekeeping training centres in Ghana and Sweden, and large troop-contributing countries such as Brazil, Canada, Ethiopia, and Uruguay (AHRC and BA grants). The team examined the legacy of peacekeeping operations in-country, and the separate policies protecting peacekeepers from prosecution and safeguarding children, whilst gathering field data and working with local stakeholders to understand the root causes of SEA.

During these trips, the team conducted observational research and interviews with key stakeholders, including senior UN personnel, NGOs and local civil society organisations undertaking safeguarding work. This led to a large-scale doctrinal, desk and field investigation combining academic and practical methods across disciplines on the following issues and questions:

- Programmes and their impact on children – what risks are present?
- Policies and procedures needed to prevent harm – how are concerns responded to?
- Safe recruitment
- Safeguarding induction and training – what does an organisation expect from them and what should be done if concerns are raised?
- Organisation codes of conduct – what is and what is not acceptable behaviour?
- Who in the organisation manages concerns and investigations?
- What are the reporting and responding processes?

The findings now provide an evidence base for effective ways of safeguarding children and adults in peacekeeping contexts [Section 3, refs 1,2,3]. Freedman's 2018 article in the *European Journal of International Law* [ref 1] is the first law article to explain the history of the different forms of immunity enjoyed by peacekeeping personnel, as well as the reasons behind them and the consequences they have. Taking a human-rights-based approach, it analyses how the current system and rules restrict people's access to the courts and violate their right to see punitive action taken. Professor Freedman and Keeping Children Safe have gone on to devise a new innovative approach to child safeguarding, which has developed into a framework implementable by UN peacekeeper agencies, governments contributing troops to peacekeeping missions, international donors and high-level UN officials [ref 2]. This toolkit, which emerged from the findings and framework, enables prevention, protection and safeguarding, specifically in relation to children and adults in peacekeeping contexts. It is designed to be adapted to local contexts, and involves five steps, characterised as (1) assessment of current policies and practices; (2) robust mapping of relevant local and international laws and practices on child safeguarding; (3) development of context-specific policies, measures and procedures through organisational and legal mapping; (4) training; and (5) follow-up. Evidence and analysis aimed at policymakers and civil society have been created in the form of project reports from field work [refs 4,5,6], as well as videos and talks for international audiences [see Section 4 below].

This body of research underpinned a further project conducted by Freedman and KCS, and commissioned by DFID in 2019, which developed new safeguarding standards for DFID's due diligence process for its global aid programme.

### 3. References to the research

1. Freedman, Rosa (2018) 'UNaccountable: A new approach to peacekeepers and sexual abuse'. *European Journal of International Law*, 29 (3). pp. 961–985. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chy039>
2. Blakemore, S., Freedman, R. and Lemay-Hébert, N. (2019) 'Child safeguarding in a peacekeeping context: Lessons from Liberia'. *Development in Practice*, 29 (6). pp. 735–747. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09614524.2019.1614148>
3. Freedman, R. and Lemay-Hebert, N. (2019) 'Between a rock and a hard place – immunities of the United Nations and human rights' in Ruys, T., Angelet, N. and Ferro, L.

(eds) *The Cambridge Handbook of Immunities and International Law*, Cambridge University Press. pp. 579-594. doi: [10.1017/9781108283632.029](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108283632.029)

4. Freedman, R., Blakemore, S. and Barker, C. (2017) *Safeguarding Children from UN Peacekeeper Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Liberia*. Report. University of Reading
5. Freedman, R., Blakemore, S., Dressler, A. and Lemay-Hébert, N. (2018) *Safeguarding Children from UN Peacekeeper Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Uruguay*. Report. University of Reading
6. Freedman, R., Blakemore, S., Dressler, A. and Lemay-Hébert, N. (2018) *Safeguarding Children from UN Peacekeeper Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Haiti*. Report. University of Reading

### **Research quality**

This research was funded through a number of highly competitive, peer-reviewed funding applications from across UK Research and Innovation and international funding streams from the UN. It was published in well-established peer-reviewed academic journals and monograph series, given its robust and coherent analytical critique of existing international policies and practices regarding UN safeguarding. As a result, the approach and findings are innovative, providing for the first time a framework to assess whether or not organisations effectively safeguard children and adults from SEA. The research findings and policy recommendations have been incorporated into the safeguarding regimes and protocols of the international relief efforts of global humanitarian and human rights monitoring organisations, the UN and the UK government.

### **4. Details of the impact**

'Every day, across all countries and levels of society, millions of girls and boys face the alarmingly common childhood experience of sexual abuse and exploitation' (UN Deputy Secretary-General, 2018). In order to hasten the ending of such atrocities, Freedman's original work on UN peacekeepers in Brazil and in Liberia [ref 4], has underpinned changes in safeguarding policy in the military peacekeeping context globally (Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, Uruguay and the USA). However, the reach and significance of the research goes even further. Since the Oxfam crisis in 2018, when findings of SEA by staff were exposed, Freedman has been an internationally recognised expert providing safeguarding advice and research-informed training across UN agencies, national military forces, and government and NGO operations. This has resulted in the implementation of new policies across the world, meaning that organisations have processes in place to safeguard vulnerable citizens against SEA.

#### ***New safeguarding policies implemented across international military forces***

For the international military forces, Freedman's research and safeguarding toolkit have shaped international policy on safeguarding against SEA in both UN peacekeeping activities and other military operations. There are currently over 99,000 UN personnel serving in 14 global peace missions across four continents, with uniformed personnel coming from 112 contributing nations; by its very nature, peacekeeping work is therefore happening in the most physically and politically difficult environments in the world, where the most vulnerable populations can be found. Adoption of the toolkit and policies has therefore ensured protection and enabled safeguarding from SEA by UN peacekeepers. Furthermore, it has provided a route to punitive action where SEA allegations are proven.

The toolkit has been adopted by (inter)national military forces and key international training centres for peacekeeping troops. This successful adoption has been contingent on Freedman's work with each of these institutions to foster a mutual understanding of the challenges faced on the ground regarding impunity and other issues; this included analysing legal frameworks, mapping and assessing risk, developing safeguarding policies and processes for reporting, and managing allegations of abuse. The work has ensured that the toolkit is adapted for each context by the co-development of policy for safeguarding via academic-practitioner collaboration and the sharing of best practice. The resultant toolkits have been adopted by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre [source 2],

situated in Ghana, a country recognised for five decades for its influence on peacekeeping in Africa, and the Folke Bernadotte Academy [source 2], which provides training for European contributing countries.

Furthermore, Freedman's research and extensive engagement, through co-designed workshops, with senior Uruguayan military forces, policymakers (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and NGOs resulted in Uruguay becoming the first military in the world to adopt a child safeguarding policy. It also led to the establishment of the newly formed (May 2019) Uruguayan Peacekeeping Training Centre of Excellence on Safeguarding, which is funded by UNICEF and trains 107 troops each year [source 2]. In addition to its influence across Latin America as a whole, the Uruguayan military is now an exemplar for child safeguarding for all countries contributing UN troops deployed internationally, with trained investigators positioned in every battalion where Uruguayan troops are serving [source 1].

In response to the deployment of UK Ministry of Defence service personnel to support the civil authorities in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic across Latin America, Freedman and KCS provided a nine-part webinar training series for over 400 serving personnel [source 2].

### ***New safeguarding policies adopted across the UN and all of its agencies***

Freedman's research has underpinned standardised UN child safeguarding policies [source 3]; these are now being implemented across all UN agencies (including the World Health Organization, UNICEF and the UN Refugee Agency). This followed extensive engagement by Freedman and KCS on the implementation of the toolkit with the United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (the UN Stabilization Mission), along with the UN Police, UN agencies such as UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF, and a variety of international NGOs (Save the Children, Plan International, Oxfam).

[Text removed for publication]. Furthermore, in September 2019, Freedman was invited to attend the UN Roundtable on SEA in Peace Operations, where she provided insight into accountability. Through these roles, Freedman has highlighted the need for standardised and evidence-based solutions to SEA across UN facets, and secure senior-level buy-in on the use of the child safeguarding toolkit.

The research and analysis from this project have therefore been adopted and used in policymaking at the highest levels of the UN. Through the adoption and implementation of the toolkit, the new policies comprise a formalised process of protection and reporting, with consequences when failures occur. The UN's changed approach to tackling sexual exploitation and abuse, focuses on putting victims first, ending impunity, engaging civil society and external partners, and improving strategic communications, both in order to educate and to increase transparency.

### ***Developed new SEA safeguarding standards for DIFD's Due Diligence process for its aid programme***

In 2019 Freedman was appointed as a specialist adviser on safeguarding to the UK government's International Development Select Committee and part of an expert reference advisory group tasked with enhancing DFID policies aimed at fulfilling its commitment to delivering aid in a way which does no harm, protects the most vulnerable, deters wrongdoing and holds perpetrators to account [source 5]. This followed Freedman's invited talk at the Safeguarding Summit in March 2018, and DFID's Secretary of State's announcement that DFID would introduce new, enhanced and specific safeguarding standards for UK Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

In 2019 Freedman and KCS were commissioned by DFID's newly created Safeguarding Unit to conduct safeguarding-specific central assurance assessments on 31 CSOs, which account for over GBP2,000,000,000 of DIFD/UK Aid funding, and deliver programmes in more than 30 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East [source 2]. "Freedman's research informed the development and implementation of [this] initiative" [source 2]. It therefore underpinned the development of due diligence systems for DIFD, and its partners, to use in assessing safeguarding [source 2 and 4]. It also informed the delivery of training for DFID country offices, programme manager and auditors, as well as the support provided for the 31 CSOs to improve

their safeguarding measures [source 2].

In summary, in creating a novel framework co-designed with end users, Freedman's research has underpinned the reform and development of policy and practice to address the global problem of sexual abuse and exploitation by the aid and peacekeeping sectors. This reform is long overdue, since previous episodic responses from the sectors were inadequate. The framework has been adopted by a global reach of the most influential organisations, including all NGOs funded by DFID, international military forces, the UN and all of its agencies. As a result, the scale of the impact is equalled by the significance. 'The cumulative impact of this initiative has been to dramatically improve safeguarding measures in a significant number of global organisations impacting the lives of some of the most at-risk people in the world...this means that fewer people will suffer exploitation and abuse, that survivors will have someone to turn to if abuse occurs, that it will be easier to bring perpetrators to justice, and that organisations that fail to act to protect the people they serve, can now be more easily held to account' [source 2].

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- S1.** Letter from UK Ambassador to Uruguay
- S2.** Letter from Keeping Children Safe
- S3.** [Text removed for publication]
- S4.** DFID Enhanced Due Diligence Safeguarding for External Partners
- S5.** Appointment as Specialist Advisor to House of Commons International Development Select Committee (October 2019 report)
- S6.** Invitation from the All Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights