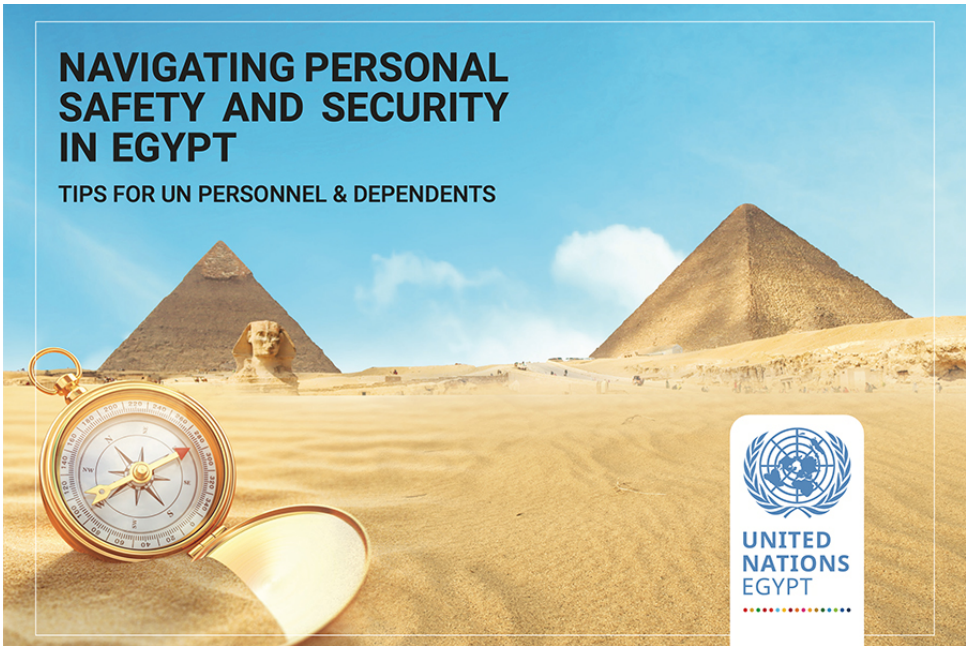


# NAVIGATING PERSONAL SAFETY AND SECURITY IN EGYPT

TIPS FOR UN PERSONNEL & DEPENDENTS



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## Providing training on navigating personal safety and security in Egypt

Riina Allinen is a former UN Volunteer Gender Security Training Associate and Operations Assistant at the UN Development Programme (UNDP). In this article, Riina shares how she contributed to publishing a booklet on gender security and gender focal point training within the UN system. Her assignment was fully funded by the Government of Finland, and closely related to Finnish development policy and the National Action Plan for implementing the women's peace and security agenda.

I joined UNDP's Regional Bureau for the Arab States in Egypt as a UN Youth Volunteer Gender Security Training Associate in April 2020. In 2021, I extended my assignment as a UN Volunteer specialist.

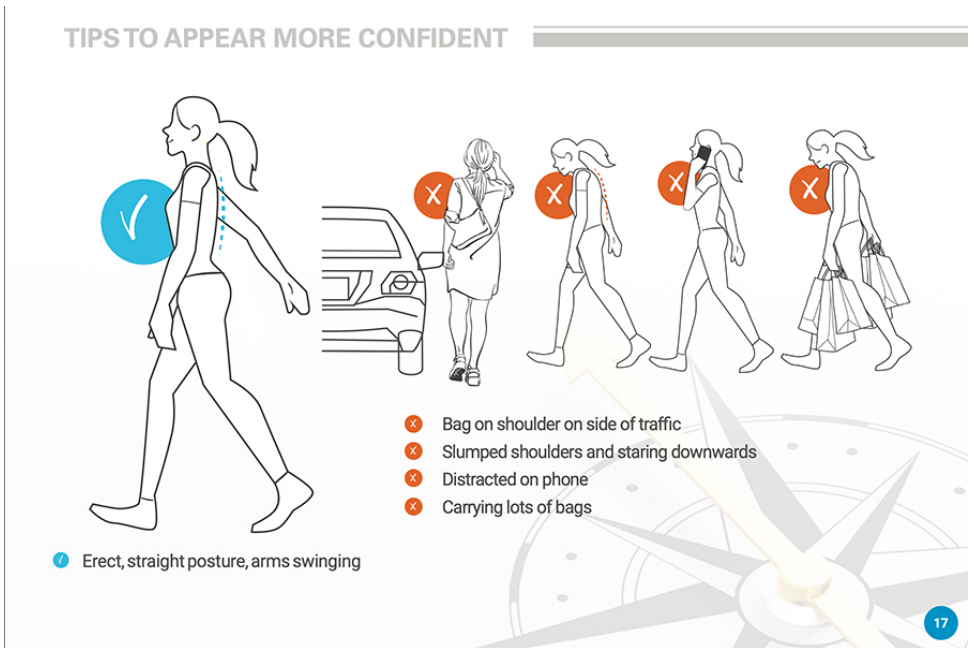
In my assignment as a gender security training associate, I aided the regional security

advisor in her attempts to mainstream gender into security policies. I supported her with the delivery of gender focal point training and the development of training materials for Women's Security Awareness Training. I also contributed to the publication of a booklet on "Navigating Personal Safety and Security in Egypt – Tips for UN Personnel and Dependents," a tangible and practical exercise to increase the level of awareness of security threats in Egypt.

**Can you tell us more about the booklet? Any challenges?**

The booklet aims to raise awareness of harassment and attempt to equip UN personnel and dependents working in Egypt to deal with it more effectively.

Instead of writing a long paragraph on academic literature, we wanted to illustrate what research results meant in practice and intended to raise awareness through some practical and tangible examples. This involved our work with a designer who was able to bring to life what we meant by; for instance, we kept the graphics colorful on purpose to get people's attention.



Another point that we focused on was not to make this a *women's* security booklet because gender, as we know, is broadly understood and fluid. We decided to leave the whole gender

specification out of the booklet, while acknowledging that women represent a larger group of people who are vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse, but not excluding others as per the approach of the booklet.

Lastly, contributing to a booklet that is so Egypt-specific without me being Egyptian or me even trying to pretend that I know the context was a challenge. In order to overcome this, we had over a dozen of inputs from subject matter experts from within or outside the UN system. These subject matter experts were mostly locals and could give us some insights into the realities of everyday life in Egypt.

In January 2021, we finally had an official email advertising the publication of the booklet. The moment of having it published and being able to share it with colleagues was the most memorable moment for me.

### ***What were your other roles as a Gender Security Training Associate?***

In collaboration with the UN Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS), which is in charge of coordinating the gender focal point network in the UN Egypt system, I was fortunate to facilitate a gender focal point training and gathered all the gender focal points of Egypt. This was personally meaningful for me, as I had previously worked as a gender focal point before joining the UNV programme. It was great to feel my professional progression with this topic.

I also supported the UNV capacity development team at headquarters in Bonn in their efforts to deliver workshops on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment since June 2021, offering virtual workshops around the topic. These workshops have invited currently/ previously serving UN Volunteers with gender expertise to talk twice a month. I was inspired by the opportunities to share some of my experiences before becoming a UN Volunteer and during my assignment and was keen to share knowledge in the thematic area of preventing sexual risk contact.

### ***What does the word 'security' mean to you?***

Security is a shared responsibility. It is all about us looking out for each other. None of these violations would happen if everyone took responsibility. That's the bottom line that we emphasize when we raise awareness on the importance of this shared responsibility.

“ Gender Security Training is not a tick-in-the-box activity. We need to start shifting the narrative around blaming victims. We need to look at the core reasons why these violations happen in the first place. And we need to believe in this shift, which could take more than decades. We are becoming more polarized than ever, and, more than

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“ever, we need to work together. --Riina Allinen, former UN Volunteer  
Gender Security Training Associate and Operations Assistant with  
UNDP, Egypt

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