

UN ACTION

NEWSLETTER



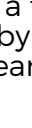



Welcome to the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) Network's seventh newsletter, showcasing some of our current initiatives, highlights from 2023 and goals for 2024 in the global response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). UN Action is a Network of 25 UN entities united with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict. Guided by the Network's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Framework, the first half of 2024 was filled with initiatives to further a survivor-centred approach, ensure prevention of CRSV, and enhance justice and accountability for survivors.

[Learn More](#)

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NEWS

UN Action's Strategic Retreat

On 28 and 29 February 2024, UN Action hosted its Strategic Retreat with Focal Points from the 25 UN entities that constitute the UN Action Network. This two-day, in-person workshop provided the Network with the opportunity to discuss successes, challenges, good practices and lessons learned; share reflections and help formulate upcoming activities for the UN Action Network; and renew ownership and collective commitment to the Network by Focal Points. The key outcome was the creation of a two-year workplan, outlining the key strategic priorities identified by Focal Points, which will take the Network to the end of its 5-year Strategic Framework in 2025.

2024 - 2025 Network Workplan

In March of this year, UN Action finalised its 2024 - 2025 Workplan which outlines the Network's new and upcoming priorities in the prevention and response to CRSV. Key activities include integrating CRSV-related tools across key themes such as digital space, mental health, economic empowerment, food insecurity, climate change, transitions/drawdowns; developing an internal crisis response plan; conducting joint field assessments; and hosting webinars with the field to exchange information and updated guidance, knowledge products, and tools.

Joint Statement on CRSV in Sudan

On 25 April 2024, a joint statement between Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence (SRSG-SVC), Pramila Patten and the Assistant Secretary-General of OCHA, Joyce Msuya, highlighted the deteriorating situation of CRSV in Sudan, noting a rise in incidents of rape, forced marriages, sexual slavery, and trafficking of women and girls, particularly in Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan, which has led to the displacement of millions to neighbouring countries, thereby increasing vulnerabilities to CRSV. The UN leaders called for increased political and financial support to strengthen the response to CRSV in Sudan, urging contributions to the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan for Sudan and the SRSG-Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF). [Read Here>>](#)

Virtual Exhibition

Launched during this year's International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, UN Action has launched its virtual exhibition to mark the 15-year anniversary of the CRSV agenda! This exhibit, which was previously on display at UNHQ from June to August 2023, amplifies the voices and stories of survivors of CRSV on their journeys towards recovery and healing, while providing an overview of CRSV. [Access Here>>](#)

UN Action Mission to Ukraine

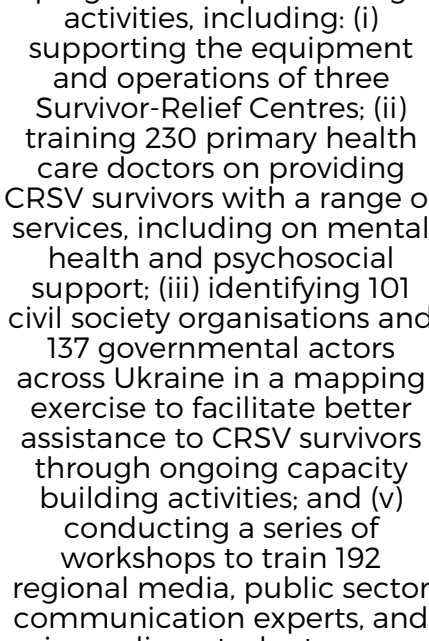
In July 2024, UN Action will undertake a technical mission to Ukraine to enhance coordination between the UN, national authorities, and survivors' organisations in implementing the CRSV agenda. The Secretariat will meet with the UN and civil society partners of UN Action's project in Ukraine, in addition to conducting project site visits and giving a workshop on the prevention of CRSV to a range of stakeholders. It will also officially present its project to the Government of Ukraine and hold a donor briefing session in Kyiv.

UN Action's Donation Button

UN Action is pleased to announce that its donation button is now live! In addition to Member States' contributions, our fund, the CRSV-MPTF, is now able to receive donations from the public, private sector organisations and foundations to directly support survivors of sexual violence in conflict and prevention efforts. [Donate Here>>](#)

SRSG Patten Fundraising Missions

Since January 2024, the UN Action Secretariat has supported SRSG Patten on multiple fundraising missions to provide updates on the CRSV mandate and UN Action's key achievements and to secure additional monetary contributions for the CRSV-MPTF. For example, accompanied by UN Action Deputy Coordinator, SRSG Patten travelled to Ottawa in May 2024 to meet with representatives of the Canadian Government and the University of Ottawa. More recently, the SRSG travelled to Helsinki to brief key ministries and civil society partners on the work of the OSRSG-SVC and to solicit support for the CRSV mandate, before heading to Oslo to deliver a keynote speech at PRIO and met with representatives of the Norwegian Government.

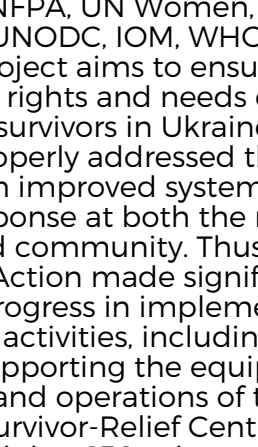


Bernadette Sené

UN Action would like to commemorate Ms. Bernadette Sené, the Coordinator of the UN Action Network.

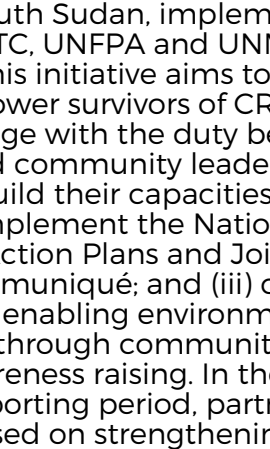
Bernadette committed over 20 years of her career to protecting the most vulnerable, including in roles negotiating for the protection and release of children associated with armed groups in the DRC, Burundi, and Haiti; and supporting survivors of sexual violence as the Senior Women's Protection Advisor in Mali. Bernadette was an extremely dedicated and passionate UN staff member who worked tirelessly to promote human rights and protection of those most impacted by conflict. She will be missed dearly.

UN ACTION'S ONGOING PROJECTS' UPDATE



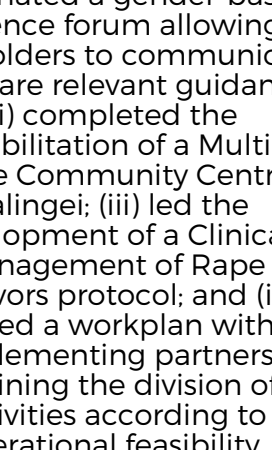
UKRAINE

Since August 2023, UN Action's project in Ukraine started implementation by UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP, UNODC, IOM, WHO. The project aims to ensure that the rights and needs of CRSV survivors in Ukraine are properly addressed through an improved system-wide response at both the national and community. Thus far, UN Action made significant progress in implementing activities, including: (i) supporting the equipment and operations of three Survivor-Relief Centres; (ii) training 230 primary health care doctors on providing CRSV services, including with mental health and psychosocial support; (iii) identifying 101 civil society organisations and 137 governmental actors across Ukraine in a mapping exercise to facilitate better assistance to CRSV survivors through ongoing capacity building activities; and (v) conducting a series of workshops to train 192 regional media, public sector communication experts, and journalism students on a survivor-centred and trauma-informed media reporting on CRSV. The two-year project will continue implementation throughout 2024 and into 2025.



SOUTH SUDAN

Since December 2023, UN Action funded aneconomics empowerment programme in Yambio, Juba, Bor and Bentiu in South Sudan, implemented by ITC, UNFPA and UNMISS. This initiative aims to: (i) empower survivors of CRSV; (ii) engage with the duty bearers and community leaders to build their capacities to implement the National Action Plans and Joint Communique; and (iii) create an enabling environment through community awareness raising. In the first reporting period, partners focused on strengthening the agency of women, girl, men and boy survivors of CRSV and at-risk groups through medical, psychosocial, legal and economic empowerment. Despite challenging operational conditions, implementors made significant progress in executing activities aimed at increasing the uptake of multi-sectoral services and referral mechanisms, including for health, legal, psychosocial support, and increasing income and employment opportunities for CRSV survivors and at-risk groups.



SUDAN

Since April 2024, a UN Action-funded project in Sudan has been implemented by UNFPA and UNHCR. Although still in its initial stages, the partners have: (i) established and coordinated a gender-based violence forum allowing stakeholders to communicate and share relevant guidance; (ii) completed the rehabilitation of a Multi-Purpose Community Centre in Zalingei; (iii) led the development of a Clinical Management of Rape Survivors protocol; and (iv) prepared a workplan with its implementing partners, outlining the division of activities according to operational feasibility, considering international staffs' limited access to the Darfur region. Project partners are also planning initiatives to address the needs of male survivors of CRSV.

EVENTS

UN Security Council Open Debate on CRSV

23 and 26 April 2024

The Security Council convened for its annual Open Debate on CRSV to discuss the Secretary General's 2023 Annual Report on CRSV and ways to address the impact of increasing militarisation and proliferation of small arms and weapons on CRSV. The meeting was held under the presidency of Malta at the Ministerial-level, and included SRSG-SVC Patten, UN Women Goodwill Ambassador Danaï Gurira, and President and Founder of the Darfur Women Action Group Ms Niemat Ahmadi, as briefers. Briefers and Member States expressed concern over the heightened levels of CRSV in conflicts worldwide, including in Sudan, Ukraine, Haiti and South Sudan, and called for gender responsive arms control and disarmament; the inclusion of women in peace processes; and the integration of survivor-centred approaches to CRSV prevention and response. A total of 69 Member States gave statements to the Council, including joint ones.

Advancing Gender-Transformative and Gender-Responsive Approaches in Protection and Gender-Trafficking, CRSV and Financial Exclusion

22 May 2024

UN Action member OSRSG-CAAC organised an event on the margins of the Protection of Civilians Week, in collaboration with two of the Network's partners, All Survivor's Project and the Government of Canada, amongst others. This event aimed to raise awareness and action on the need for gender responsive and gender transformative approaches in protection interventions for populations with intersecting vulnerabilities to modern slavery, human trafficking, CRSV and financial exclusion. Briefers provided four key recommendations: i) build upon existing grassroot economic initiatives to address financial exclusion; ii) empower women's participation in decision-making processes; iii) recognise and address the vulnerabilities of men and boys to trafficking and CRSV; and iv) adopt survivor-centred and gender transformative approaches to protection interventions.

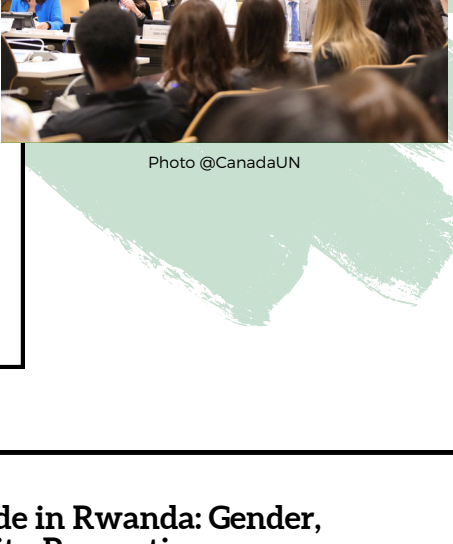


Photo @CanadaUN

30 Years After the Genocide in Rwanda: Gender, Accountability and Atrocity Prevention

7 June 2024

The Peace Research Institute Oslo and the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies hosted an event to mark 30 years since the Rwandan Genocide where SRSG Patten delivered the keynote remarks. She emphasized that by enhancing structural and operational prevention of atrocity crimes within the context of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, prevention is the best protection. SRSG Patten argued that equality gains will not be sustainable in the absence of equality, empowerment, accountability, and the Rule of Law.

[Read More](#)

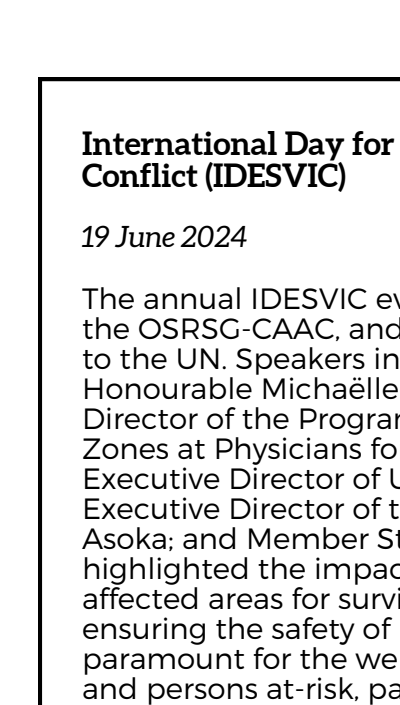


Photo @PRT/Cameroon

International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (IDESVIC)

19 June 2024

The annual IDESVIC event was co-hosted by the OSRSG-SVC, the OSRSG-CAAC, and the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the UN. Speakers included Global Champion, the right Honourable Michaëlle Jean; a survivor from South Sudan; the Director of the Programme on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones at Physicians for Human Rights, Ms. Payal Shah; Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Natalia Kanem; the Executive Director of the Working Group on WPS, Ms. Kaavya Asoka; and Member States and Regional Groups. Briefers highlighted the impacts of attacks on healthcare in conflict-affected areas for survivors of CRSV, emphasising that ensuring the safety, healthcare facilities in conflict zones is paramount for the well-being of survivors of sexual violence and persons at-risk, particularly during their quests for justice and redress.

[Watch Full Recording](#)

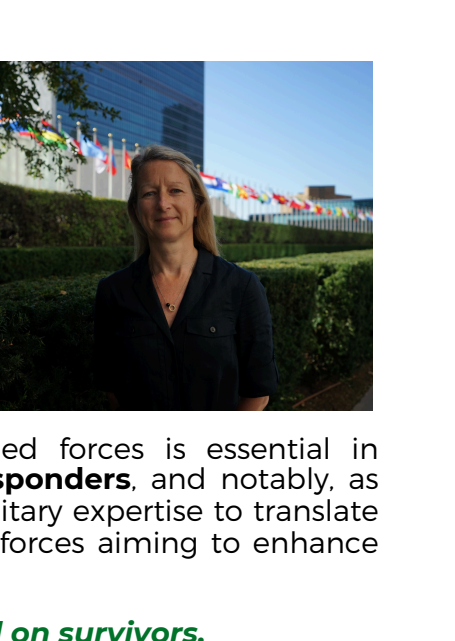
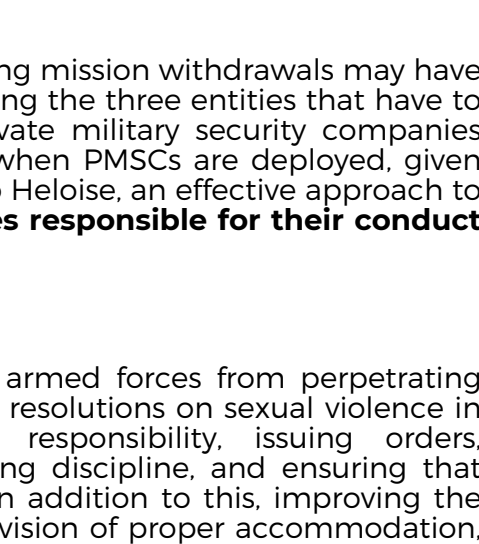


Photo @Atayeshe

INTERVIEW



Lieutenant Colonel Heloise Goodley is a British Army Officer, currently heading the Security Sector Hub in the OSRSG-SVC. She has extensive military experience stemming from operational tours in Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in support of NATO's mission in Libya, which brings a wealth of knowledge to her role. Complementing her military background, she is the author of *'An Officer and a Gentlewoman'* and has completed a PhD from King's College London exploring how soldiers' identities are formed and the social processes through which they are negotiated.

Héloïse is motivated by the conviction that engaging with armed forces is essential in addressing CRSV, given their roles as **perpetrators, protectors, responders**, and notably, as potential **survivors themselves**. Héloïse has been leveraging her military expertise to translate the CRSV mandate into a practical framework designed for armed forces aiming to enhance their capabilities in preventing and responding to CRSV effectively.

The survivor-centred approach has very much focused on survivors, and less so on perpetrators.

When asked how to incentivise armed groups to address CRSV, Héloïse highlighted the necessity for military forces to understand the relevance of CRSV, both as a security issue and as a crime that can affect them directly. She pointed out that disregarding the impact of CRSV on men – either directly, or indirectly – perpetuates the belief that men are protectors but not victims. This is a misconception that can drive men to join armed groups in order to seek retribution, thus continuing cycles of violence and conflict.

Upcoming Challenges (mission withdrawals)

Héloïse observed that security vacuums left by UN peacekeeping mission withdrawals may have significant implications on CRSV in situations of concern. Among the three entities that have to step in – state forces, regional security organisations, or private military security companies (PMSCs) – she underscored the heightened risk of impunity when PMSCs are deployed, given the opaque accountability of these organisations. According to Héloïse, an effective approach ensuring the accountability of PMSCs would be **holding states responsible for their conduct when operating within their borders**.

SSR and CRSV

Addressing armed forces as perpetrators

There are several measures which can be taken to prevent armed forces from perpetrating CRSV, as set out in the seven United Nations Security Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict. Such measures include: upholding command responsibility, issuing orders, implementing a code of conduct, vetting processes, enforcing discipline, and ensuring that security sector personnel receive awareness-raising training. In addition to this, improving the living conditions of soldiers is also important, through the provision of proper accommodation, pay, equipment, and R&R (rest and recuperation). Neglecting these needs creates grievances, which in turn exacerbate the risks of CRSV.

Addressing armed forced as duty bearers

Héloïse explained that in situations of armed conflict, security forces or groups are generally placed under a chain-of-command who are responsible for their conduct; a principle known as command responsibility. Accordingly, superior commanders are individually responsible if they fail to take proper measures to prevent their subordinates from committing violations of International Humanitarian Law, including acts of sexual violence. An effective strategy for preventing CRSV is therefore to hold commanders accountable either through sanctions or by "naming & shaming", which the United Nations does in the Secretary General's annual report on sexual violence in conflict.

Engaging with armed forces as responders

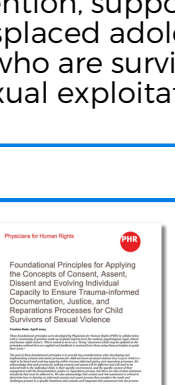
Military forces play a critical role as first responders when encountering survivors of CRSV in conflict zones. To ensure a survivor-centred approach, Héloïse noted the importance of equipping armed forces with the principles of "Do No Harm," particularly regarding consent and confidentiality, and formalising communication between armed forces and response agencies to ensure timely assistance for survivors. Furthermore, Héloïse shared the need to foster collaboration between armed forces and civil society organisations. While the military typically functions separately from these organisations, her experience in the Central African Republic revealed the invaluable insights gained from consulting with CSOs in designing action plans and policies that prioritise the needs of survivors.

DONORS



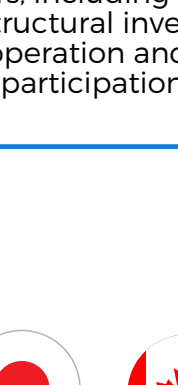
2023 annual Report of the Secretary-General on CRSV

The Secretary General's annual report on CRSV provides a global overview of incidents, patterns and trends of CRSV across 21 situations in 2023, as well as a comprehensive set of recommendations to better prevent and respond to CRSV. The report further provides a list of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of sexual violence.



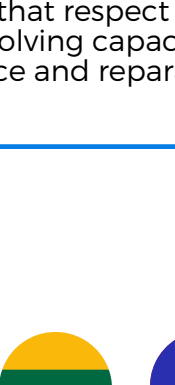
2023 Annual Summaries of Activities and Good Practices by UN Peacekeeping Operations in Preventing and Responding to CRSV

The annual report presents activities and good practices carried out in 2023 by UN peacekeeping missions to prevent and respond to CRSV, particularly focusing on missions in CAR, Mali, the DRC and South Sudan.



2023 Annual Report of the SRSG-MPTF

The 2023 Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust-Fund (CRSV-MPTF) Report provides information on key achievements implemented by the UN Action Network and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.



Supporting Displaced Adolescent Boys and Male Youth in All their Diversity Who are Survivors or at Risk of Sexual Exploitation

This toolkit seeks to enhance the capacity of frontline workers in humanitarian setting to increase prevention, support and access to services for displaced adolescent boys and male youths who are survivors or at risk of sexual exploitation.

Civil Society Perspectives: Advancing Accountability for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence linked to Terrorism

This study delves into the challenges, practices, and opportunities in relation to the global effort to promote criminal justice responses to sexual and gender-based violence linked to terrorism. It provides a set of emerging good practices identified among stakeholders, including international cooperation, structural investigations, inter-agency cooperation and civil society participation.

Foundational Principles for Applying the Concepts of Consent, Assent, Dissent and Evolving Individual Capacity to Ensure Trauma-Informed Documentation, Justice, and Reparations Processes for Child Survivors of Sexual Violence

The Physicians for Human Rights' Report outlines foundational principles on consent and assent processes for child survivors of sexual violence that respect children's right to be heard and evolving capacity within trauma-informed justice and reparation processes.