

UN Action Newsletter

EDITION #8

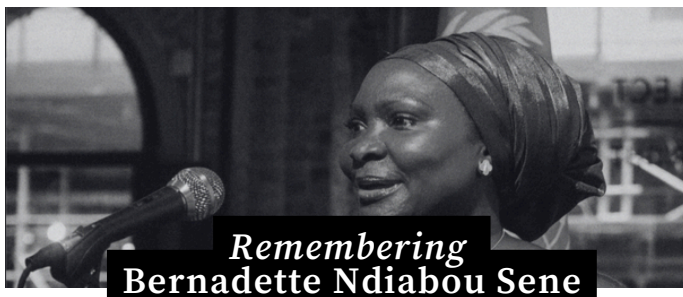
December 2024



As 2024 comes to a close, UN Action extends our deepest gratitude to our partners and allies who supported us this year. With special thanks to our donors:



As the only UN system-wide coordination mechanism to respond to conflict-related sexual violence, UN Action leverages the expertise of our 26 member entities and works through our three pillars of Knowledge Building, Advocacy for Action, and Operational Support to address “war’s oldest crime”, which has been called “history’s greatest silence”.



This year, we lost Ms. Bernadette Sene, who passed away on 20 April 2024. Bernadette served as the UN Action Coordinator from 2019 - 2024. She 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 the human rights and protection of those most impacted by conflict. She will be dearly missed.

In this Issue

2024 Snapshot

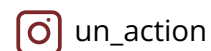
Featuring the Commemoration of the 15th Anniversary of the CRSV Mandate

Our Operational Impact

Featuring UN Action projects and partners in Ukraine & South Sudan

Our Knowledge Hub

Featuring What's Next in 2025



Snapshot: Highlights from 2024



4 political advocacy missions



2 project monitoring missions



Projects in Ukraine, South Sudan, Sudan



Strategic inter-agency dialogues on Chad, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and the Middle East



3 learning exchanges and a Network-wide retreat



Welcomed our 26th member entity



Photo: Loey Felipe



Photo: Ms Yiling Li

October 2024

COMMEMORATION OF THE 15-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MANDATE ON CRSV

"The survivors I have spoken to are like hummingbirds...always moving, always fighting. Even when the whole world seems against them, they find the strength to persist. We must be the wind at their backs, not the storm they battle."
(Service Provider, Myanmar)

In October 2024, the United Nations commemorated the 15-year anniversary of the CRSV mandate. At the heart of the commemorative event, hosted by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC), was the Survivors' Hearing, a powerful platform where we heard from survivors and frontline activists. Survivors from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine, Israel, Sudan, South Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Iraq, Syria, and Myanmar courageously spoke¹ about their experiences and made concrete recommendations² about how the international community can prevent what happened to them from ever happening again. Sixteen Member States and Regional Groups reiterated their support for the mandate, namely the SRSG-SVC, the UN Action Network, and the Team of Experts. Watch the new documentary featured here: "Fighting the Silence: 15 Years of the Mandate to End Sexual Violence in Conflict".³

Our Operational Impact

In Ukraine

In 2024, UN Action continued to coordinate the efforts of six member entities—UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP, UNODC, IOM, and WHO—delivering as one through a **joint catalytic programme** to support survivors of CRSV in Ukraine. Survivors have received multi-sectoral support through access to medical care, educational and employment opportunities, and financial aid, with online psychotherapy provided to those displaced by conflict.

In July, UN Action led a **monitoring mission**. Our team visited project sites in Kyiv, Dnipro, and Zaporizhzhia. We spoke with service providers, including hospital staff, therapists, and civil society organisations to hear about their needs as they work near the frontlines to support survivors of CRSV and community members affected by the Russian invasion. Our first opportunity to **roll-out the “Framework for the Prevention of CRSV”** was in Ukraine. We organised a Prevention Symposium in Kyiv, which fostered peer-to-peer learning among 67 stakeholders. Survivors led discussions that resulted in concrete recommendations and targeted solutions unique to the Ukraine context to help prevent further, secondary harm to survivors of CRSV.



A Member Entity’s Perspective of UN Action’s Engagement in Ukraine

Olga Chuyeva, Programme Analyst for CRSV Prevention and Response with UNFPA, speaks on the importance of adopting a survivor-centred approach: “The meaningful participation of survivors, listening to their stories, making their voices heard, validating their experiences, this is what can lead to durable working solutions”. Olga shares that the approach of having a GBV case manager draft individual plans for survivors “prevents people from stigmatization, from discrimination, and from re-traumatisation”.

Emphasising the importance of fostering a supportive environment for CRSV survivors, Olga hopes that this will encourage other survivors to come forward to seek services, justice, and reparations.



A Survivor & Activist’s Perspective

Liudmyla Huseynova, from Novoazovsk of Donetsk region, is an activist, human rights defender, founder of the survivors’ organisation “Let’s Go, Sisters,” a member of SEMA Ukraine, and a survivor of CRSV. In 2019, she was detained and tortured in Russian captivity for more than three years before being released in a prisoner exchange. Huseynova has joined numerous Ukrainian women activists and survivors advocating for the release of detained Ukrainian civilians in Russian-occupied territories.

On October 23, 2024, during the Survivors’ Hearing of the Commemoration of the 15-Year Anniversary of the Mandate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Lyudmila recognised the critical efforts of UN Action to assist survivors, and highlighted the importance of a survivor-centred approach. She said, “[Survivors] voices and experiences have become an integral part of decision-making processes, enabling more effective responses to their needs and to co-create more inclusive and responsive support and justice systems that respect their rights and dignity”.



Amid the crisis in Sudan, a joint statement⁴ by the UN Action Chair and OCHA in March 2024 secured political and financial support for survivors of CRSV. UN Action is supporting a project in Darfur addressing critical protection risks, enhancing access to essential services, including emergency medical relief and safe shelter, and fostering social solidarity and cohesion among displaced communities, including survivors of CRSV. The establishment and operationalisation of Women and Girls' Safe Spaces, as well as the Multi-Purpose Community Centers in Darfur, has fostered income generating and vocational training activities, which had been identified as a priority by women and girls in Sudan.

 **In South Sudan**

In South Sudan, UN Action's project implemented by ITC, UNMISS and UNFPA **bolstered socio-economic resilience** and reintegration through the provision of psychosocial support to 195 survivors, the distribution of 50 dignity kits to women and girls in need, and by facilitating access to economic empowerment opportunities for 200 survivors, including small-scale businesses and communal farming of marketable produce. Partners further conducted outreach and awareness-raising initiatives on CRSV, engaging 30 traditional leaders and community members, to date, to shift harmful norms and enhance awareness of and access to services.

UN Action conducted a **monitoring mission** to Juba and Yambio in September 2024 to strengthen political support and engagement, paving the way for future phases of the project. We held ten stakeholder meetings with UN organisations, civil society partners, and government authorities supporting the implementation of the project. A high-level Survivors Dialogue was also held in Juba and Yambio, which provided a critical platform for survivors of CRSV to express their perspectives and views on support provided by the project partners to inform the next phase and way forward.



Photo: ITC

*A Conversation with Nishkhan (Mai) Usayapant
UN Action Focal Point for the International Trade Centre (ITC)*



Speaking on the **economic empowerment** component of the UN Action project, Mai shared the project's aim to connect CRSV survivors to immediate, market-driven, and sustainable income opportunities. These activities extend beyond income generation to foster a sense of belonging and empowerment through the social connections formed within business groups, helping participants to reclaim a sense of agency and authority over their lives.

"Part of the soap production and sale involves the creation of the product branding. It may seem small but having the ability to determine their own self- and group-identity is a powerful way survivors are regaining their sense of autonomy."



The project's cross-agency approach allows UN Action to meet the complex, multi-faceted need of survivors: "each agency contributes the relevant networks and experiences on different and connected areas". Specifically, Mai reflected on the vital role of UNFPA in connecting ITC with survivors, and providing them with the necessary mental health and psychosocial support during their recovery journey prior to ITC's intervention with market trainings.



Our Knowledge Hub

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN CRSV RESPONSE

UN Action hosted a virtual brownbag led by WHO to strengthen system-wide responses to CRSV through robust Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). We also developed a one-pager⁵ that collects lessons learned across our entities, to help practitioners and policy-makers better understand what MHPSS entails when helping survivors of CRSV. [This builds on our previous research on strengthening the medico-legal response to CRSV \(2015\).](#)⁶

Next in 2025: Global Showcase

UN Action is organising a **global showcase** for our partners and donors in early 2025 to engage in meaningful dialogue about how to enhance our collective impact.

STRENGTHENING THE MONITORING, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS ON CRSV

As part of its efforts to strengthen the Monitoring, Analysis, and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on CRSV globally, UN Action is updating the Provisional Guidance Note on Security Council resolution 1960.⁷ We held a series of in-depth consultations with key partners on how the MARA system can be improved, especially in the context of mission transitions and drawdowns. A menu of strategic options has been compiled to support a concept note for the MARA 2.0.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF MISSION TRANSITIONS AND DRAWDOWNS ON CRSV

Mission transitions and drawdowns remain a significant challenge to the operational continuity of the CRSV mandate in-country. UN Action continues to serve as a platform for partners to exchange information, share best practices and lessons learned, and explore strategies to sustain political commitments and preserve operational gains in addressing CRSV. During WPS week, the UN Action Coordinator participated⁸ in a side event on sustaining CRSV gains during peacekeeping transitions co-hosted with Norway and DPO.

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CRSV

Although technology-facilitated gender-based violence is a relatively new area of focus for the UN, it has rapidly become a significant concern within CRSV contexts, intensifying in scope and impact as technology continues to advance. UN Action developed this new webpage⁹ offering resources and information to help facilitate an understanding of what this nexus means for the global CRSV response.



Featuring our New Partner

The European Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) is UN Action's newest partner in 2024. We are grateful to ECHO for supporting UN Action's unique, global knowledge hub on CRSV.

PREVENTION

UN Action began the rollout of the Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence¹⁰ (Prevention Framework) in situations of concern. A Prevention Symposium was held in Ukraine in July 2024, with plans to further implement it in the Central African Republic, the DRC, and South Sudan in 2025. Prevention has always been a central pillar of UN Action's work, as seen through our Early-Warning Indicators Matrix¹¹ and our joint, catalytic programmes.

We are grateful to our donors: the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations for supporting our potentially transformative workstream.