



STOP RAPE NOW

U.N. ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT



UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) unites the work of 12 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence in conflict. It is a concerted effort by the UN to improve coordination and accountability, amplify programming and advocacy, and support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors.

WHY DID THE UN ESTABLISH UN ACTION?

Sexual violence in conflict is a serious, present-day atrocity affecting millions of people, primarily women and girls. It is frequently a conscious strategy employed on a large scale by armed groups to humiliate opponents, terrify individuals and destroy societies. Women and girls may also be subjected to sexual exploitation by those mandated to protect them. Sexual violence during conflict remains vastly under-addressed due to weak national mechanisms for protection and judicial redress and inadequate health and social support services. Many still view sexual violence as an inevitable, if regrettable, consequence of conflict and displacement – an attitude which encourages impunity for perpetrators and silences survivors. Rape during conflict is a war crime and a serious violation of human rights and humanitarian law, which has received widespread condemnation.

Although a range of governmental, non-governmental and international initiatives to address sexual violence are being implemented, the scale and complexity of the problem, coupled with poor coordination, has meant huge gaps in the response.

The creation of UN Action responds to calls from women's rights organizations, NGOs and rape survivors for the UN to do much more to address sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence within a humanitarian and human rights legal framework. It reinforces efforts by UN entities to better coordinate and streamline their activities, working as "one UN" at country and global levels.

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF UN ACTION?

UN Action is committed to aligning the UN's work more effectively behind national efforts to address sexual violence, and to deepen partnerships with the many NGOs and civil society organisations that have been actively working to end sexual violence in conflict for many years. It operates through existing UN coordination mechanisms including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). It strengthens the work of the humanitarian Protection Cluster, and supports efforts to put an end to sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel.

UN Action aims to strengthen efforts to protect women and girls from sexual violence during and after conflict – recognising that the problem is much more than a security or humanitarian issue. UN Action supports women's engagement in conflict prevention and enhances women's influence over peace negotiations and post conflict recovery processes. This helps ensure that sexual violence is on the agenda of the police, security forces, justice and government sectors after conflict. UN Action seeks to strengthen services provided to survivors, including medical care, legal support and economic security required to rebuild their lives. UN Action also connects with governance and reform processes that improve women's access to decision-making and strengthen their voices in public affairs, with the long term view of tackling gender-specific power imbalances.

WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF FOCUS OF UN ACTION?

UN Action has three main pillars:

- 1. Country Level Action:** support to UN action at country level, including efforts to build capacity and train advisers in GBV programming and coordination, as well as targeted support for joint UN programming in selected countries,
- 2. Advocating for Action:** action to raise public awareness and generate political will to address sexual violence as part of a broader campaign to Stop Rape Now,
- 3. Learning by Doing:** creation of a knowledge hub on sexual violence in conflict and effective responses.

WHAT GUIDES UN ACTION?

- Rape is not an inevitable consequence of war. It must be prevented.
- Gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is a violation of fundamental human dignity and rights.
- Attempts to end and respond to sexual violence must address gender-based inequalities and protect and promote women's rights, as well as empower women.
- Women are often leaders in the drive to end sexual violence and to secure peace. Their voices must guide advocacy and programming efforts.
- The constructive involvement of men and boys is vital to help prevent and respond to sexual violence in conflict.
- "Good practice" and existing programmes addressing sexual violence must be reinforced and strengthened.
- Sexual violence in conflict and impunity for perpetrators crimes are amongst history's great silences.
- We all have a duty to act.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Overall oversight for the work of UN Action is provided by a Steering Group consisting of Principals from the 12 UN system entities, supported by a small Secretariat. For more information about UN Action please contact: Gillian Holmes (gillian.holmes@undp.org) and Erin Kenny (ekenny@unfpa.org)