

PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE



2020 Summary
of Activities and
Good Practices

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The Action for Peacekeeping's (A4P) Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Operations reiterated commitments to support tailored, context-specific peacekeeping approaches to protecting civilians, emphasizing the protection of women and children, and to hold all peacekeepers — particularly leadership — accountable for ensuring effective performance.

In response to these commitments, the first UN Policy and Handbook to support field missions in implementing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) mandates were developed and disseminated in 2020. The process was led by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) jointly with the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (OSRSG-SVC). These guidance materials place preventing and responding to CRSV as a political priority for field missions and assign specific roles and responsibilities to mission leadership and respective mission components for implementing this mandate. This includes supporting mainstreaming of CRSV into mission strategies, planning and operations, and promoting a whole-of-mission approach to preventing and responding to CRSV.

Purpose of this report: This report covers activities and progress made in 2020 by peacekeeping operations in the implementation of their mandates to prevent and respond to CRSV, with the aim of identifying and sharing good practices.

Foreword

In the landmark UN Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) and subsequent resolutions that are part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the Security Council recognized that conflict-related sexual violence is a threat to peace and security that requires comprehensive responses from the international community. Through these resolutions, the Security Council sent a clear message that sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and as a tool of terror will not be tolerated. Several peacekeeping missions were specifically mandated to help prevent and protect civilians from conflict-related sexual violence, including current missions in Mali, Central African Republic, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This report is a testimony to our unwavering commitment, and that of our partners in putting an end to conflict-related sexual violence, even in the face of a global pandemic.

In 2020, the implementation of conflict-related sexual violence mandates was complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For crimes that were already widely underreported, the pandemic increased reporting barriers for survivors and diminished access to lifesaving care services, justice and reparations. This report is a testimony to our unwavering commitment, and that of our partners in putting an end to conflict-related sexual violence, even in the face of a global pandemic. It illustrates the significant progress by peacekeeping missions in preventing and responding to this scourge in 2020, including by building partnerships with those affected by conflict, including women and survivors of sexual violence.

Preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence is an essential part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda as well as the UN's Protection of Civilians mandate. I assure you that this mandate will remain a key priority for the Department of Peace Operations as we take forward A4P+.



Jean-Pierre Lacroix
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Peace Operations

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Jean-Pierre Lacroix".

5 Things to Know about CRSV-Related Work in UN Peacekeeping

1 CRSV is a peace and security issue and a serious human rights violation

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is sexual violence directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. It takes the form of rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, and other crimes of comparable gravity. While women and girls are disproportionately affected, men and boys are also victims/survivors.

- CRSV breaks down communities and societies, triggers violence and prevents the restoration of peace.
- CRSV is frequently used as a brutal tactic of war and terror by parties to the conflict and other perpetrators profiting from the breakdown of law and order.
- CRSV is often motivated by political, military or economic objectives.
- Perpetrators include state security and police forces, armed groups and community-based militias.

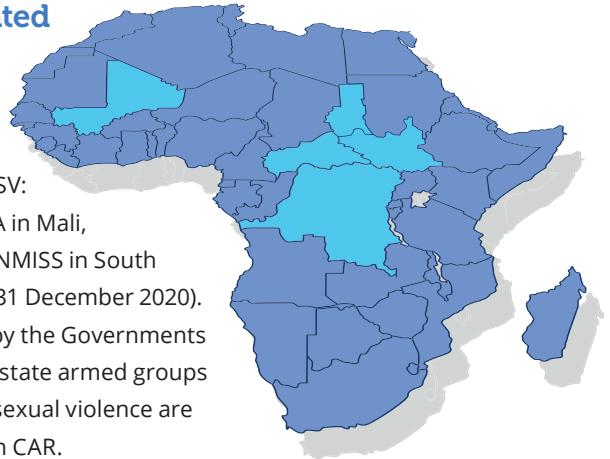


Watch Tatiana’s journey from survivor to activist in the Democratic Republic of the Congo



2 Peacekeeping operations are mandated by the Security Council to prevent and respond to CRSV

In 2020, five peacekeeping operations had specific Security Council mandates to prevent and respond to CRSV: MINUSCA in the Central African Republic (CAR), MINUSMA in Mali, MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), UNMISS in South Sudan and UNAMID in Darfur, Sudan (mandate ended on 31 December 2020). Formal commitments to address CRSV have been made by the Governments of each of these countries. In Mali and South Sudan, non-state armed groups have also issued unilateral communiqués. Provisions on sexual violence are addressed in peace agreements and ceasefires, such as in CAR.



“Victim” or “Survivor”?

To identify a person who experienced sexual violence as “victim” or “survivor” primarily depends on the preference/self-identification of the concerned individual. For example, the term “victim” is broad and regularly used when indicating that a person has been subjected to a violation of international law or a crime. The term “survivor” is more commonly used in connection with the healing process of an individual who experienced sexual violence as it implies agency and resiliency. There is no UN wide agreement on the use of one term or the other. Both terms can be used simultaneously and interchangeably.

3 Peacekeeping operations carry out crucial work to prevent and respond to CRSV, under 5 priority objectives set out in the UN CRSV Policy

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the policy

- 1) **Prevention and protection** for those facing the risk of CRSV, including identification of risks, early warning, advocacy and dialogue with parties to the conflict, and preventive measures including use of force.
- 2) **Empowerment of victims/survivors**, through participation in political processes and referral for support services.
- 3) **Awareness and condemnation**, including the provision of an evidence base for action through the operationalization of the CRSV monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements (MARA).
- 4) **Building national capacity**, including justice, law enforcement and military authorities and supporting the implementation of national commitments on CRSV.
- 5) **Ending impunity**, including through advocacy for credible investigations and prosecutions, promoting effective remedies for victims/survivors, and supporting legislative and policy reform.

4 Leadership is Key

It takes leadership commitment for CRSV to be effectively prioritized across the missions. The Head of Mission/Special Representatives of the Secretary General (SRSG), Force Commander, Police Commissioner, Military and Police Sector Commanders, and Heads of Offices all have specific responsibilities to prevent and respond to CRSV. Leadership must notably ensure CRSV is integrated into analysis, planning and operations at every stage of a mission's life cycle.

In the DRC, the integrated, whole-of-mission approach provided the foundation for significant achievements by MONUSCO including the development and implementation of the *Shabunda Action Plan* [CLICK HERE](#) in response to mass rapes in South Kivu Province, and the collaborative response to supporting national authorities in undertaking the investigation, prosecution and trial of notorious militiaman Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka. [CLICK HERE](#) This approach was possible as a result of strong and committed mission leadership fully assuming their responsibilities for the implementation of the CRSV mandate. MONUSCO leadership recognized CRSV as a political priority, mobilized partners and resources, and promoted a comprehensive approach, as was reflected in mission plans and operations. In the absence of such leadership, mission efforts to address CRSV will be less coherent and cohesive.



MONUSCO's former SRSG Zerrougui (top) "gets cross"* and, together with former Force Commander, Lt. General Costa Neves, stands against CRSV.

* [CLICK HERE](#) to see UN Action's #StopRapeNow campaign



MINUSMA's former SRSG Annadif publicly condemned CRSV for the International Day on Elimination of CRSV, 19 June 2020.

5 Every component and section plays a role in ending CRSV

Implementation of the CRSV mandate is a whole-of-mission responsibility, with every section contributing with their respective capabilities, resources and expertise. Missions must incorporate CRSV issues across mission strategies, decision-making processes, planning, and operational responses.



The Force Chief of Staff and the Senior Women’s Protection Adviser of UNMISS explain how the military component contributes to preventing CRSV in South Sudan



[CLICK HERE to watch](#)

Women’s Protection Advisers have been mandated by the Security Council as subject-matter experts to support missions’ leadership and components to implement CRSV mandates.

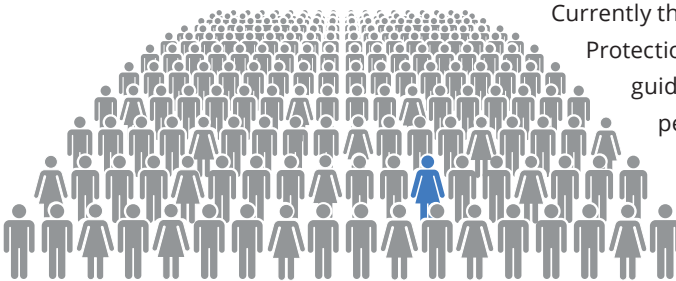
Women’s Protection Advisers:

- Provide advice, guidance and training on CRSV
- Ensure the mainstreaming of survivor-centred approaches
- Promote coordination within the mission and with partners
- Monitor and report CRSV trends and patterns
- Advocate with host authorities and parties to conflict



[CLICK HERE](#)

to read Elena’s Story, Women’s Protection Adviser in Kasai Province, DRC



Currently there are only **17** Professional-level Women’s Protection Advisers deployed to advise and provide guidance to the nearly **53,000** peacekeeping personnel in the four peacekeeping operations with specific Security Council mandates on CRSV— Professional-level Women’s Protection Advisers represent **0.03%** of all civilian and uniformed personnel.

Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA)

The MARA serves as the evidence base for all prevention and response to CRSV, both at the country and the Security Council-level.

Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on CRSV were established at the request of the UN Security Council through Security Council Resolution 1960 (2010). The purpose of the MARA is to ensure the systematic gathering of timely, accurate, reliable, and objective information on CRSV against women, men, girls and boys in all situations of concern and to produce comprehensive analysis of trends and patterns of sexual violence incidents, profiles of victims/survivors, and alleged perpetrators. Information and analysis collected through the MARA is intended to be used to promote appropriate and timely actions to prevent and respond to CRSV; develop strategic advocacy and engagement strategies; enhance consolidated efforts on prevention and programmatic responses for survivors; and inform Security Council actions.



UNICEF/Ron Haviv

In 2020, the MARA were operational in MINUSMA, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, UNMISS, UNAMID and were central to peacekeeping efforts to address CRSV, including through:

- enhanced information sharing across civilian, police, and military mission components, the broader UN family and NGOs;
- development of comprehensive analysis on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- facilitation of the timely referral of survivors to essential services;
- support to the development of action plans for implementation of national CRSV commitments;
- informing targeted advocacy and sensitization efforts.

Analysis from the MARA Working Groups provided substantive content for the **Secretary General’s Annual Report on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence** with respect to the DRC, CAR, Mali, Sudan and South Sudan, including the “listing” of parties credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for CRSV. Mandated by the Security Council, listing serves as an advocacy tool with parties to conflict to elicit commitments to end CRSV. Information from MARA also serves as the basis for imposing sanctions and other targeted measures imposed by the Security Council.



[CLICK HERE](#) to read the 2020 Report and global trends of CRSV



Challenges around data: can we really know the scale of CRSV? Sexual violence is highly under-reported due to stigmatization and risks of reprisals against survivors and communities, among other factors. It is therefore particularly difficult to use data and quantitative analysis to establish the scale and trends of CRSV.

Adaptation and innovative solutions to overcome the pandemic's impact

The impact of the pandemic

In 2020, peacekeeping operations faced a drastic change in the operational environment with devastating consequences for survivors of sexual violence. The operationalization of many areas of the CRSV mandate became challenging in light of restrictions on movement, travel and assembly, mandatory quarantines and temporary remote working arrangements.

The pandemic and prevention measures imposed by Host States had a direct negative impact on the protection of survivors of sexual violence, notably by creating additional barriers for reporting and for accessing lifesaving and multisectoral care.

COVID-19 has also had a significant and detrimental impact on all aspects of the rule of law response and accountability for CRSV.

Host authorities' understandable prioritization of responding to the pandemic subsequently meant a significant reduction in attention to efforts for implementing national commitments on CRSV.



- In Darfur**, survivors reported being afraid to go to service providers or health centres for fear of contracting COVID-19 and being further stigmatised within their community.
- In Eastern DRC**, in-province travel restrictions made it even more difficult for survivors from rural areas to access medical care.
- In CAR**, some perpetrators of sexual violence were released from detention facilities following measures taken by national authorities to reduce overcrowding in prison to minimize the spread of COVID-19.
- As the work of the judiciary in Mali was impeded, informal courts, which normally only manage civil cases, increasingly ruled over sexual violence cases. This resulted in harmful consequences on survivors, due to rulings such as forced marriage of the survivors with the perpetrator.



CLICK HERE to listen to the briefing by MINUSMA's Senior Women's Adviser on the impact of the COVID-19 on the CRSV mandate implementation.

Peacekeeping Missions adapted quickly and found innovative ways to continue activities to prevent and respond to CRSV.

Thanks to methodologies for **remote monitoring of human rights violations and collaboration across components and sections**, missions continued to document trends and patterns of CRSV despite reduced mobility and engagement with the population. In Darfur, in spite of the downsizing of UNAMID, CRSV focal points in the UN Police (UNPOL) supported the collection of information on sexual violence cases in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) and **delivered sensitization messages on CRSV during the distribution of hygiene and dignity kits**.

The MARA Working Groups served as collaborative platforms to **document the impact of the pandemic and find solutions to ensure accessibility of services** for survivors of sexual violence. To reduce reporting barriers for survivors, telephone hotlines were established in the DRC and South Sudan. For instance, in the DRC, the hotline enables **information collection, the remote provision of psychosocial and legal support and referrals** to appropriate legal and medical services.



UN Photo/MINUSMA

MINUSMA partnered with a local women's rights organization to implement a project in Bamako and Mopti that helped to **prevent risks of gender-based and sexual violence related to the pandemic through sensitization sessions** and provided dozens of survivors with **access to a safe shelter and care services**.

Missions **adapted to new online and virtual tools** to carry out mandated activities and **respected social-distancing measures**, including by holding internal and external meetings virtually. UNMISS used virtual means to hold consultations, and in-person trainings and workshops were maintained in line with social distancing standards. In Mali and CAR, the **online delivery of induction trainings on CRSV for new personnel** began only a few weeks after the start of the pandemic.

In Darfur, a three-day **online sensitization and awareness-raising campaign on SGBV/CRSV** for internally displaced persons was conducted through WhatsApp. The **establishment of extensive telephone connections for women's protection networks in IDP camps** enabled the delivery of sensitization on CRSV despite the pandemic context.

MISSION SUMMARIES

United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)



In a context of prevailing insecurity in South Sudan, despite the reduction in political violence, high levels of CRSV were recorded in 2020. Most cases of CRSV were perpetrated by state actors, non-state armed groups, civil defence groups and other armed elements. As conflict dynamics shifted towards increased localized violence, intercommunal conflicts displayed an increasingly militarized character and marked an increase in the use of sexual violence as a tactic to harm rival communities.

Timely identification of hotspots of sexual violence enabled the UNMISS military component to plan and undertake targeted patrols to identified areas of concern and deter sexual violence.

UNMISS Women’s Protection Advisers sustained their focus on engagement with, and training of, non-state armed groups such as the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO). Following this, dozens of women and girls captured and held by the group in Western Equatoria since 2018 regained their freedom and accessed care services. Dialogue with the National Salvation Front/Army led to the group issuing a Unilateral Communiqué prohibiting CRSV and committing to preventive actions.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about this good practice

UNMISS also carried out several sensitization initiatives to raise awareness on CRSV, in partnership with civil society, the South Sudan People’s Defence Forces (SSPDF), the South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) and the UN family. Once again, the Mission supported the South Sudan Council of Churches to issue a public statement urging parties to conflict to end CRSV. [Read statement](#) [HERE](#)



UN Photo/UNMISS



UN Photo/Billy

The Mission facilitated further progress in the implementation of the 2019 SSPDF, SPLA-IO, and SSNPS Action Plans on CRSV. As part of its support to security sector reform, training was provided to military and police personnel across the country on command orders prohibiting the commission of CRSV. UNMISS also supported the SSPDF in the development of a comprehensive curriculum on CRSV for the training of new recruits. [CLICK HERE](#)

Accountability for sexual violence gained momentum in 2020 with an unprecedented number of investigations of CRSV initiated through both military and civilian justice authorities, resulting in the prosecution and conviction of 26 uniformed personnel. UNPOL conducted colocations with the national police to specifically mentor on investigation techniques in cases of sexual violence. Increased accountability for CRSV was also the result of mounting pressure and advocacy exerted by civil society organizations, human rights defenders, community leaders and UNMISS.

UNMISS and OHCHR published a joint public report on access to health for sexual violence survivors that increased attention to the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health. UNMISS and the Government subsequently launched a joint nationwide campaign against stigmatization of sexual violence survivors, which remains one of the key barriers to accessing healthcare. [CLICK HERE](#)

MISSION SUMMARIES

African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID)



Despite positive political developments in Sudan towards peace, and significant legislative advancements relating to women’s rights in 2020, CRSV continued to be perpetrated in Darfur by both state and non-state actors. In most cases, perpetrators took advantage of the volatile security situations in and around IDP camps to commit sexual offences against women, girls, and sometimes boys.

In March, a Framework of Cooperation was signed between the Government and the UN on combatting CRSV/SGBV in Sudan following sustained engagement by UNAMID and the SRSG Sexual Violence in Conflict.

UNAMID supported capacity building of women protection networks in IDP camps through which Darfuri women actively influenced and participated in the protection of their community. These women-led networks enhance support to survivors and improve early warning information sharing with UNAMID to strengthen rapid response. UNAMID also supported the establishment of a survivors’ network with the objective of providing a safe platform for engagement with remedial and response mechanisms.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about this good practice

The Human Rights Division conducted regular sensitization sessions for IDPs throughout the year aimed at enhancing protection, prevention, response and accountability for CRSV and SGBV in collaboration with host authorities. To overcome meeting restrictions related to COVID-19, women’s protection networks were used to facilitate sensitization sessions on CRSV via WhatsApp. UNPOL, working with Human Rights colleagues, delivered capacity-building workshops on human rights, including CRSV, for the Sudan Police Force.



UN Photo/UNAMID

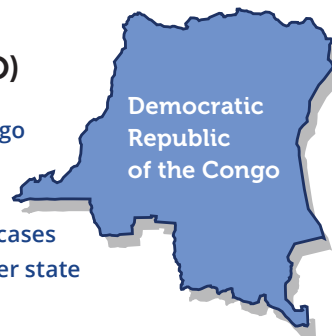
Shifting to a remote service delivery modality in light of pandemic restrictions, UNAMID assisted the launch of gender-based violence helplines in collaboration with the Government Unit for Combating Violence Against Women. The helplines were launched on the national level as well as in five Darfur states and were included in all gender-based violence referral pathways.

Using art to combat the stigmatization of survivors and raise awareness on sexual violence, UNAMID also supported an artistic expression project to depict communities’ perceptions of sexual violence.

MISSION SUMMARIES

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

In 2020, CRSV remained widespread in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) against a background of continued armed conflict in the eastern provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, and in Tanganyika. MONUSCO documented over a thousand cases of CRSV in 2020. The large majority of cases were attributed to non-state armed groups while the army, police and other state actors represented approximately a third of cases.



UN military peacekeepers and police support human rights officers in carrying out their daily duties



CLICK HERE to watch MONUSCO working to end CRSV

MONUSCO components continued to integrate CRSV into their activities, in line with a mission-wide approach to CRSV mandate implementation. The Force Commander is briefed weekly on CRSV trends and the Military Gender Action Plan contributes to the mainstreaming of CRSV. Female and Mixed Engagement Platoons were deployed across eastern provinces to reinforce the identification and reporting of CRSV early warning indicators, build trust with communities and raise awareness on CRSV.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about this good practice

With a view to reinforcing early warning and response mechanisms on CRSV, the Civil Affairs Section increasingly integrated CRSV concerns into sensitization sessions and outreach with local protection actors, including women leaders. [CLICK HERE](#) Activities to strengthen protection of civilians coordination mechanisms in field offices systematically integrated CRSV concerns into threat analysis and response planning.

This comprehensive approach to protection was adopted in the conduct of several protection missions in South Kivu. For instance, following CRSV allegations in Byangama, a Joint Protection Team was deployed in July in coordination with the Panzi Foundation, UN agencies and provincial authorities. During these missions, CRSV survivors accessed medical and psychosocial support and local health centres received medical equipment.

The MONUSCO South Kivu Office is now planning the roll out of Phase II of the Shabunda Comprehensive Action Plan, to sustain the gains made in reducing in CRSV in Shabunda. Phase I of the Shabunda Action Plan was a first of its kind mission-wide effort by MONUSCO, UN Agencies, national authorities to respond to massive sexual violence by armed groups in Shabunda territory, South Kivu in 2019. [CLICK HERE](#)

In September, representatives of Government ministries, the UN Country Team and the international community finalized a roadmap to implement the 2019 Addendum of the existing Joint Communiqué on Sexual Violence in Conflict, now pending formal endorsement.



UN Photo/MONUSCO

MONUSCO also supported the implementation of National Action Plans for the Congolese National Police (PNC) and Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) to eliminate sexual violence through training and technical assistance. A specialized UNPOL Team was deployed to support the national police in North and South Kivu in investigations and for capacity building on sexual and gender-based violence. As formal commitments to take action to prevent CRSV, commanders of the national police and armed forces, across the country, signed *Actes d'engagement* (declarations).

Important progress was made in the fight against impunity for crimes of sexual violence. In November, former armed group commanders Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and Serafin Lionso were sentenced to life for war crimes, including sexual slavery and rape. [CLICK HERE](#) In early 2020, the military court of Ituri-with MONUSCO's technical, financial, and logistical support — convicted three Patriotic Resistance Front of Ituri combatants for war crimes, including rape. MONUSCO continued to support mobile courts and enabled Congolese military justice to prosecute and convict state and non-state perpetrators of sexual violence.

MISSION SUMMARIES

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

Sexual violence continued to be perpetrated by armed groups across the country despite the signing of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in 2019 in the Central African Republic (CAR). In several Prefectures, sexual violence trends increased due to the presence of self-defences groups and armed herders during the transhumance season. Cases committed by the national armed forces were also reported.



MINUSCA continued to engage with the Government on the implementation of the Joint Communiqué on CRSV signed with the UN in May 2019. Discussions over the potential appointment of a Presidential Adviser on CRSV are expected to continue after the conclusion of legislative elections in 2021.

Sensitization activities on sexual violence, including in the context of the pandemic, were organized for religious and community leaders, local and administrative authorities, youth and women's organizations, and local protection actors throughout the year. The Human Rights Division organized several sensitization sessions specifically for members of armed groups on international human rights obligations. In the context of the presidential and legislative elections of December 2020, MINUSCA led a targeted country-wide sensitization campaign for the prevention of violence against women candidates and voters.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information about this good practice

MINUSCA continued to support the National Protection Network for Victims and Witnesses of Sexual Violence, a group of civil society members trained on protection issues and assistance to survivors. [CLICK HERE](#) This project, supported by the Mission and partners, also includes two shelters in Bangui opened since 2019 that provide temporary support for survivors in need of safety and protection.

In light of the heightened risk of human rights violations, including sexual violence, committed by armed herders and armed groups during the transhumance period, Women's Protection Advisers analysed links between sexual violence and transhumance, and recommended preventive measures by MINUSCA, local transhumance committees, and, in some locations, women's associations, to prevent violence against women and girls in affected prefectures. [CLICK HERE](#)



UN Photo/MINUSCA



Curious about the
Joint Rapid Response
and Prevention Unit
for Sexual Violence
against Women and
Children?



CLICK HERE
to watch
and learn more

The Mission built the capacity of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), Internal Security Forces (ISF) and special police and judicial officers, with a focus on addressing impunity for CRSV. More than 500 participants at the Gendarmerie School in Bangui were trained on sexual and gender-based violence and CRSV by the UNPOL Special Police Team on sexual and gender-based violence.

MINUSCA, in partnership with the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and UNDP, continued to provide technical support and training to the *Joint Rapid Response and Prevention Unit for Sexual Violence against Women and Children* (UMIRR) to build the capacity of its national investigators and ensure the effective transfer of sexual violence cases to the prosecutor's office. The Mission also worked closely with the Special Prosecutor and Investigating Judges of the Special Criminal Court to implement the investigation and prosecutorial strategy, advocating for the prioritization of CRSV cases.

MINUSCA contributed to the drafting of the Law creating the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission. Established in December, the Commission will investigate grave violations, such as sexual violence crimes, committed during the country's previous armed conflicts and will collaborate with the Special Criminal Court.

MISSION SUMMARIES

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)

In 2020, the number of reported cases of sexual violence by parties to conflict drastically increased across Mali due to the deteriorating conflict situation involving community-based armed groups, militias, extremist groups and the increasing presence of national and regional military forces. The incidents reported occurred mostly in Northern and Central Mali regions in a context of humanitarian crisis. The military coup has set back the progress made in implementing national commitments to end CRSV.



Following the military coup and government change in Mali, MINUSMA engaged with transitional authorities to sustain national gains made on fighting CRSV. MINUSMA advocacy saw success with the finalization of an action plan to implement the Joint Communiqué on CRSV signed with the UN in 2019 following several sessions organized by the Mission with the Government and civil society organizations.

The Force component reinforced patrolling following CRSV allegations in Mopti, Gao and Timbuktu regions and security operations were conducted in collaboration with the Malian Defense and Security forces (FAMAs) in Mopti. UNPOL regularly conducted sensitization sessions on the promotion of human right and protection from sexual violence during patrols and when co-locating with the Malian police.

MINUSMA also focused considerable attention on awareness-raising and condemnation of CRSV in partnership with women-led and youth organizations, religious organizations and authorities as part of ongoing efforts to involve civil society in preventing and responding to CRSV. For example, following a debate convening a hundred religious leaders, the President of the Islamic High Council signed a declaration with several commitments to address CRSV, including the issuance of a fatwa (ordinance) to denounce these crimes. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information about this good practice

MINUSMA leadership actively contributed to these visibility efforts leveraging public communications. For the International Day on the Elimination Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the SRSRSG joined voices with heads of UN agencies, government representatives and diplomatic missions to publicly condemn CRSV on social media. During the 16 Days of Activism Campaign against Gender-Based Violence, the Deputy SRSRSG-Political Affairs took part in a live radio debate on the Mission's efforts to eradicate CRSV.



MINUSMA Photo/Dicko

The Mission continued to collaborate with the National Commission for Security Sector Reform, the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration and the Integration Commission to mainstream gender perspectives and address sexual violence. MINUSMA supported numerous projects aimed at empowering and building the capacity of women and girls to become leaders in security sector reform decision-making.



UN Photo/MINUSMA

With the aim of building the capacity of the national police in dealing with sexual violence crimes and assisting survivors, a training module was developed for the police officers working with the national “Gender-Based Violence Green Line”, which receives emergency calls and alerts on sexual violence across Mali. MINUSMA also delivered a two-month training course on the handling of sexual violence cases for members of the Gender-Based Violence Forum of the National Police, composed of over 50 national police gender focal points deployed throughout the territory.

With the goal of promoting accountability for CRSV perpetrated during the Islamist occupation and Tuareg rebellion in North Mali in 2012-2013, MINUSMA and the UN Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict released an evaluation report of the judicial response to crimes of CRSV. The report focuses on five pending case files introduced before Malian courts corresponding to incidents against more than 200 victims of CRSV.

**See Orange the World campaign by
UN Women for the 16 Days of Activism
against Gender-based
Violence**

CLICK HERE



GOOD PRACTICES

Prevention and Protection

Advocacy on the release and reintegration of abducted women and girls held in armed group bases (UNMISS)

In South Sudan, the Senior Women's Protection Adviser, with support from the Office of the SRSG-Sexual Violence in Conflict, **engaged consistently with SPLA-IO leadership and field commanders for the release of over 500 women and girls abducted in Western Equatoria and held in the group's bases since 2018.**

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the OHCHR-UNMISS report

Following two command orders to field commanders issued by SPLA-IO leader Riek Machar, dozens of the abducted women and girls, many of whom are CRSV survivors, were released and/or were able to escape in 2020. As part of this engagement process, UNMISS worked with a local faith-based organization to ensure access to medical care, trauma-healing support and livelihood trainings for 80 women and girls in order to support their recovery and transition into civilian life. Building on this initiative, UNMISS/OHCHR supported an additional 40 former abductees in accessing livelihood opportunities, leadership programs and psychosocial support tailored to their needs. Dialogues were also held with their families, communities and local authorities on stigma prevention and prevention and response to sexual violence.

UNMISS adopted a survivor-centred approach throughout these efforts by ensuring respect to survivors' views and decisions and working to enhance availability of assistance services as well as effective rehabilitation programs to empower survivors to start gaining greater control over their lives.



UN Photo/MINUSCA

Mainstreaming gender-based violence and CRSV in election preparedness (MINUSCA)

In light of the increasing risks of human rights violations during the electoral process in CAR in December 2020, **MINUSCA took proactive measures to mitigate risks of sexual violence and monitor violence against women candidates.** The joint MINUSCA-Government of CAR plan for the securitization of the elections, developed by UNPOL and the Force, contained a strong gender aspect with focus on women candidates and voters.

In the months before the elections, over 2,300 individuals from civil society, including local leaders, youth and women's associations, and members

of internal security forces, were sensitized on the prevention of elections-related sexual violence and violence against women voters and candidates thanks to workshops and awareness-raising activities organized by MINUSCA. During the elections, Human Rights Officers, Women's Protection Advisers and CRSV focal points, who were thoroughly briefed on early warning indicators of CRSV and gender-based violence (GBV), actively monitored the different sectors to identify potential instances of electoral violence.

To support the authorities, **the MINUSCA and UN Women, established a 24-hour emergency free telephone line (Green Line) which receives security and sexual violence alerts.** Alerts are forwarded to UNPOL and relevant mission sections for immediate follow-up actions. The line continues to receive thousands of calls per month from across the country and Women's Protection Advisers and UNPOL work to ensure speedy referrals of victims and proper investigation on reported incidents..



UN Photo/MINUSCA

Mission-wide approach to combatting CRSV with Shabunda Action Plan - Part II (MONUSCO)

MONUSCO has started to roll out Phase II of the Shabunda Action Plan. This Plan was a **first-of-its kind comprehensive effort by MONUSCO in response to widespread and systematic use of CRSV by armed groups** in Shabunda territory, South Kivu, DRC. It was planned and implemented in collaboration with UN agency and NGO partners as well as provincial authorities. The first phase of the Action Plan led to the conviction of armed group leader Kokodikoko and two of his combatants on counts of crimes against humanity, including sexual violence. It also contributed to a significant decrease in cases of CRSV by this armed group faction in the following months.

To ensure the impacts are sustainable, a second phase of the mission-wide plan was developed, encompassing a series of activities under the following pillars: Protection and prevention; Fight against impunity; Restoration of State authority; and Creation of a Protective Environment. In parallel to these efforts, the UN Joint Human Rights Office partnered with UNESCO and IOM for the implementation of a UN Peacebuilding Fund project to advance women's protection and participation in artisanal mining areas in Shabunda territory.



UN Photo/MONUSCO

Strengthening gender-sensitive early warning mechanisms (MONUSCO)

With a view to strengthen early warning and response mechanisms on CRSV, the MONUSCO Civil Affairs Section has **increasingly integrated CRSV concerns as part of sensitization and capacity building sessions to Local Protection Committees, Community Alert Network members and other local protection actors, including women's networks**. In parallel, Civil Affairs Section continues to reinforce women's participation in these community mechanisms.

The section also led several Joint Assessment Missions with a strong CRSV focus in Tanganyika and South Kivu in 2020, which resulted in further awareness and reporting on CRSV and stronger integration of CRSV concerns in the development of community protection plans.

Lastly, Women's Protection Advisers and Civil Affairs Officers developed a **guidance note** for mainstreaming CRSV in Civil Affairs activities, including through **enhanced information sharing of alerts and supporting referrals of survivors**. One objective is to leverage the role of field-based Community Liaison Assistants, whom play a critical role in addressing CRSV at the community level in the most isolated areas.

Preventing sexual violence related to transhumance (MINUSCA)

Since 2018, MINUSCA and the MARA Working Group have documented increased cases of sexual violence committed by armed herders and armed groups during the transhumance season in several prefectures in CAR. As the links between sexual violence, transhumance and conflict remain complex and under-documented, **Women's Protection Advisers developed an analytical note to further document these trends and recommend prevention and response actions by MINUSCA and partners.**



UN Photo/MINUSCA

In light of heightened CRSV risks during the transhumance period, **MINUSCA multiplied dissuasive patrols and deployed several field missions in strategic locations.** In collaboration with partners, the Mission supported the mediation committees whose role is to deal with the transhumance-related grievances between herders and farmers. The Mission developed **several community projects in the affected Prefectures to prevent and mitigate violence, with a specific focus on the protection and empowerment of women and girls.** An illustrative example is the Quick Impact Project implemented by the Force in Bria, Haute-Kotto Prefecture. It consisted in training women in the construction of 450 economic stoves to save energy and promote environmental responsibility, while reducing the risk of sexual violence, often happening while women are collecting firewood in isolated areas.



UN Photo/MONUSCO

Engagement Platoons mainstream CRSV within military operations (MONUSCO)

MONUSCO's military component has deployed Engagement Platoons, with an increasing number of female troops, across conflict-affected sectors in the DRC, dedicated to increasing community engagement. Deployed in CRSV hotspots, these platoons have proven valuable in **reinforcing prevention**

and monitoring mechanisms for CRSV, such as through engagement with women from local communities, joint patrolling and planning.

For instance, the Engagement Platoon deployed as a part of the Standing Combat Deployments (SCD) in Pinga, North Kivu provided training to all SCD members on how to address CRSV cases, including on case referrals, confidentiality and survivors' consent. When CRSV cases were reported to SCD members, peace-keepers offered Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) Kits, referred survivors to health services and passed on basic information to the closest Women's Protection Advisor and/or Joint Human Rights Office staff for follow-up investigations. In Bunia and Djugu, Ituri, the Female Engagement Team engaged with hundreds of women within and around camps for internally displaced people (IDP) to learn about their security concerns. These inputs informed the Battalion of where to increase patrols to prevent CRSV and resulted in the launch of routine standing patrols around hotspot areas for women to provide protection and support early warning mechanisms.

Empowerment of victims and survivors

Support to survivors' and women's protection networks (UNAMID and MINUSCA)

Throughout 2020, peacekeeping operations promoted empowerment of CRSV survivors by establishing strategic partnerships with local women's organizations and networks preventing and responding to CRSV. **UNAMID supported the establishment of a survivors' network in Darfur, Sudan.** Its objective is to provide survivors with a platform for engagement with remedial and response mechanisms to mitigate the impact of sexual violence and to contribute to reducing stigmatization associated with sexual violence. In displacement camps in Darfur, UNAMID actively engaged with women's protection networks who have contributed to improved reporting and response to sexual violence and the identification of CRSV early warning signs and hotspots. These women-led protection networks have also strengthened women's safety and empowerment by encouraging and supporting dialogue between displaced women, camp leadership and UNAMID.



UN Photo/MINUSCA

In the Central African Republic, **MINUSCA supported the launch of the National Protection Network for Victims and Witnesses of Sexual Violence in 2018 and has accompanied the Network in its growth and development.** Made up of representatives of local organizations working in collaboration with MINUSCA's field-based Human Rights Officers, the network supports survivors of sexual violence and assists them in accessing multisectoral services, namely medical, psychosocial and legal services. In 2020, MINUSCA supported Network members to conduct awareness-raising sessions on CRSV, COVID-19 and prevention measures across the country as part of efforts to break the silence on sexual violence within the community. The work of the network's volunteers was essential as the pandemic and the security situation impeded the mobility and work of international actors. The national character of the Network has greatly contributed to its members feeling a sense of ownership and independence.

Partnership with faith-based leaders for condemnation of CRSV (MINUSMA)

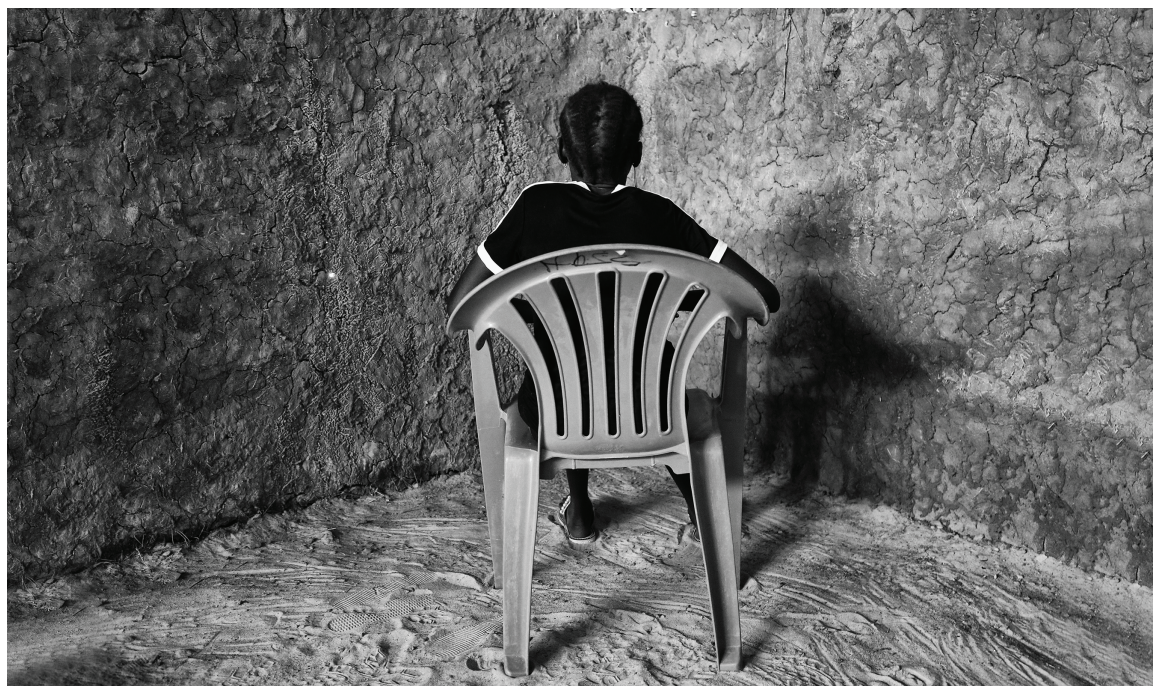
In line with an inclusive approach **leveraging partnerships with local civil society**, MINUSMA **partnered with faith-based leaders to raise society's awareness of CRSV, condemn its perpetration and advocate to end stigmatization of survivors in Mali**. Early 2020, the Mission hosted a one-day workshop with 113 Islamic leaders (Imams) to discuss the role of the Islamic High Council in addressing CRSV in Mali. The workshop included presentations by the Senior Women's Protection Adviser on CRSV and by the Islamic High Council on the Islamic vision on CRSV.

Following this, a declaration that addressed nine key commitments—including CRSV prevention and response, as well as sanctions against perpetrators—was signed by the President of the Islamic High Council. MINUSMA assisted the development of an action plan to operationalize these commitments. The Islamic High Council also engaged a process of drafting a Fatwa (ordinance) to publicly condemn CRSV and promote accountability. MINUSMA continues its engagement efforts with local faith-based leaders to further raise awareness and advocate for support in promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in Mali.

Reporting and national campaign on access to healthcare for survivors (UNMISS)

As part of advocacy efforts for increased access to multisectoral assistance for survivors of sexual violence, UNMISS and OHCHR published a public report 'Access To Health For survivors Of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in South Sudan.' [CLICK HERE](#) The report is unique as it **narrates the experiences and views of survivors regarding the impact of sexual violence on their physical and mental health, their social standing and on barriers to accessing healthcare**. Findings highlighted the fragility and under-resourcing of the South Sudanese healthcare system in providing adequate access to sexual and reproductive health. Survivors are often forced to undertake long journeys to reach health facilities and are unable to access treatment provided by a qualified doctor, nurse or midwife.

The positive response from national authorities on the report's findings was unprecedented and testified to the value of survivor-centred data collection and reporting. **A joint nation-wide campaign between UNMISS and the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare was launched to change social norms contributing to the stigmatization of sexual violence survivors**, a key impediment to their access to healthcare. Over 200 participants, including survivors, community and religious leaders, civil society and government officials, attended workshops, focus group discussions and radio programmes in locations across the country to share experiences and to provide concrete suggestions to address stigmatization.



UN Photo/UNMISS

Building national capacity

Support to the implementation of national commitments on CRSV (UNMISS)

Through sustained capacity building and awareness-raising, UNMISS continued to support the implementation of CRSV action plans signed in 2019 by the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF), South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition (SPLA-IO). By these action plans, conflict parties committed to implementing concrete and time-bound measures focused on prevention of sexual violence and accountability.



Click to WATCH the training of trainers organized by the SSPDF and UNMISS



With the upcoming unification of forces, in line with the Revitalized Peace Agreement, the Mission also supported SSPDF and SPLA-IO to advance gender-responsive security sector reform by developing a unified CRSV action plan with consistent standards on how to prevent and respond to CRSV. All elements of the unified national army, regardless of their former affiliation, will be subjected to obligations stemming from this new action plan.

Moreover, in support of the Joint Transitional Security Committee, a comprehensive training curriculum on CRSV was developed by the SSPDF with technical advice of UNMISS and the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. These modules will be used for the training of new recruits and forces deployed across the country. UNMISS also supported the SSPDF's Military Justice Directorate in training Judge Advocates on international and domestic legal standards for trials on sexual violence crimes.



UN Photo/UNMISS

Ending Impunity

An integrated approach to accountability: the Sheka case (MONUSCO)

In November 2020, Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and Seraphin Lionso, the leaders of *Nduma Defense of Congo* (NDC) and *Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda* (FDLR), were convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity following a trial in Goma, in the DRC. This was a decade after their troops orchestrated attacks that led to the mass rapes of hundreds of civilians, killings, abductions and recruitment of children in North Kivu province.

The civilian, police and military components of **MONUSCO and a collective of international and national partners came together in the “Task Force” and played a critical role at every stage of the judicial process in the pursuit of justice** for victims of human rights violations and survivors of CRSV, including supporting national authorities in the investigation and prosecution of these cases and the convening of the trial. Under the leadership of the Prosecution Support Cell, entities which contributed to the Task Force included MONUSCO components (Justice Support and Corrections, Child Protection, UNPOL, Force, Mission Support and the UN Joint Human Rights Office) and Lawyers without Borders, the American Bar Association, TRIAL International and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.



LOOKING AHEAD

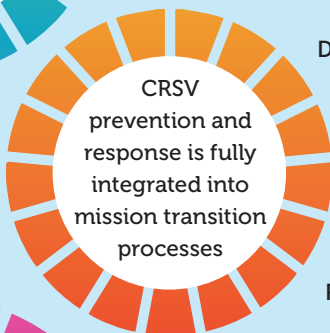
Efforts by the Department of Peace Operations (DPO) to further strengthen peacekeeping missions' delivery of the CRSV mandate will include the following:



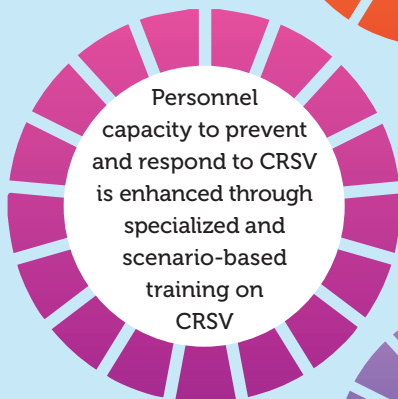
DPO, in all efforts to disseminate the new CRSV Policy and guidance, will continue to promote a whole-of-mission approach to the prevention and response to CRSV by peacekeeping missions. Mission efforts should be coordinated with the host country, relevant UN entities at field and headquarters levels, NGOs, and civil society organizations, and build on formal commitments on CRSV made by national authorities and non-state actors.



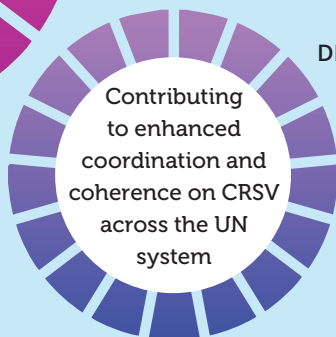
DPO will provide consistent specialized policy, guidance and technical support to peacekeeping missions on the implementation of the CRSV mandate, including by supporting mission-to-mission experience sharing, documenting good practices and lessons learnt, and promoting Headquarters-Mission coordination on CRSV.



DPO, in collaboration with UN partners, is initiating a process to review lessons from past transitions to support and inform ongoing mission drawdown and transition processes from a protection perspective, including CRSV. Additionally, specific transition-related guidance for Women's Protection Advisers, Child Protection Advisers and Protection of Civilian Advisers is being developed.



DPO, with Member State support, has commenced a three-year project to map, review and update existing CRSV, Child Protection and Protection of Civilians training materials for mission personnel, within the context of the recently released official protection guidance.



DPO will continue to be an active member of the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. In 2021, one of the key planned activities include the evaluation of the operationalization of the MARA and development of mission-specific early warning indicators of CRSV.



UN Photo/UNMISS

REFERENCE AND CONTACT

2020 Annual Summaries of Activities and Good Practices in Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence by United Nations Peacekeeping Missions

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