

UN ACTION

Against Sexual Violence in Conflict



Welcome to UN Action's second newsletter, showcasing some of our current initiatives, members and partners in the global response to CRSV. UN Action is a Network of 21 UN entities united with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict. In 2021, we launched new initiatives to support the realisation of Security Council resolution 2467 (2019). We hosted a Donor Roundtable and held a strategic retreat with all UN Action member entities to update our ambitious workstreams for 2022 - with our expanding and innovative network we look forward to another successful year supporting survivors of CRSV!

Dubai Expo in Spotlight

Our Chair, SRSB-SVC Pramila Patten, and our Coordinator, Ms. Bernadette Sene, attended the [Dubai Expo](#) in November 2021 to raise awareness of UN Action and to **identify potential partnerships and opportunities to collaboration with various sectors from around the world** - from technology and innovation to education and civil society. This World Expo, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, brought together governments, civil society organisations, and private sector companies to 'inspire collective and meaningful action to address the world's most critical challenges and opportunities' under the theme of "**Opportunity, Mobility, and Sustainability**". SRSB Patten delivered keynote remarks at the "[A Woman Even Here](#)" event hosted by UNFPA in the Dubai Cares Pavilion. She stressed the importance of no longer only considering survivors as 'vulnerable individuals who require protection' but, instead, as agents of change. She highlighted how her Office, including UN Action, has been responding to escalating crises and the various vulnerabilities of CRSV survivors through initiatives including the development of a special report on women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of sexual violence, as well as a unique digital anthology titled '[In their Own Words](#)' with more than 150 testimonies from survivors and service-providers. She urged governments and the private sector alike to consider mobilising political and financial support to UN Action to allow it to meet the needs of survivors of CRSV.

Joining Dr Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director of UNFPA Arab States, and Ms. Suzan Aref, Director of the Iraq Women Empowerment Organization (WEO), Ms. Sene also participated in a panel discussion focused on how the international community can have an impact on the lives of survivors of CRSV and meet their needs through the implementation of [Security Council resolution 2467](#) (2019). Ms. Sene emphasised how this breakthrough resolution highlighted the importance of addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict and preventing it from happening in the first place.

SRSB Patten and Ms Sene will be **returning to the Middle East** in early 2022 to continue fostering critical partnerships with governments and private sector companies in the region to galvanise support for the UN Action Network and the [CRSV Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) (CRSV-MPTF), which supports programming in all countries where CRSV exists.

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Donor Highlight: Norway



The first donor to UN Action, Norway has been an incredible advocate of both the Network and the CRSV mandate. Amongst many other important initiatives, Norway championed the UN Action-supported publication titled the [Handbook for UN Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to CRSV](#), which was developed by key UN Action entities including DPO, DPPA, OHCHR and OSRSG-SVC. It serves as a practical guide to support the implementation of the mandate by field missions, including peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Norway also hosted the important [Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises](#) in May 2019, which brought together members of 167 national and 76 international civil society organisations and representatives from 100 nations, attended by our SRSG and Coordinator. UN Action greatly thanks Norway for meeting its pledge made at the Oslo Conference to dedicate 100 million kroner to the prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence, including CRSV. Norway recently renewed its support to the UN Action Network through a three-year funding commitment, and at our Donor Roundtable, held in September 2021, Norway's Director on Humanitarian Affairs, Ms. Gunn Jorid Roset, called for global support to UN Action as the only coordination platform for the UN in the operationalisation of the CRSV agenda.

We would like to congratulate Norway for its seat on the Security Council (2021-2022) and wholeheartedly thank our longest-standing donor for its support. **Tusen hjertelig takk!**



UN Women | Ryan Brown

UN Action Member Profile: UN WOMEN

UN Women has been a member of UN Action since 2007, when UN Women was still operating as UNIFEM. UN Women is currently a member of six Core Groups: Survivor-Centred Approach; Strategic Framework; Advocacy; Joint Gaps Assessment; Nexus of CRSV and Terrorism/Violent Extremism; and Prevention of CRSV. It is also a long-serving member of the Resource Management Committee and in January 2022, has taken up the Chair. As the only UN entity with both a development and Security Council mandate, UN Women has led advocacy efforts within the Network and through its [engagement with the Security Council](#), individual Member States, women's civil society organisations and other stakeholders on tackling gender inequality and impunity as root causes of CRSV.

As the Secretariat of the [Women, Peace and Security & Humanitarian Action Compact](#), UN Women has promoted collective action on conflict and CRSV prevention, enhancement of protection systems and access to survivor-centred transitional justice. In 2020, UN Women and UNDP initiated a joint global programme on gender justice, with financial support from the Government of the Netherlands. Together, UN Women and UNDP are supporting access to justice for the most vulnerable women and girls in crisis and conflict-affected and fragile countries, including survivors of CRSV. The programme includes assistance to transitional justice processes, advancing an approach that seeks [to transform gender inequality as a root cause of conflict and violence](#). In [partnership with Justice Rapid Response](#), UN Women has deployed over 100 investigators and advisors to support national and international investigations and accountability mechanisms over the last decade. Moreover, with UN Action's support and in partnership with UNODC, in 2019, UN Women implemented a [project in Myanmar](#) that addressed the gendered impacts of conflict related to human trafficking through the empowerment and protection of conflict-affected women and girls in Kachin State. UN Women has implemented CRSV prevention and response projects in countries such as Mali, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Uganda, and Colombia. In the latter, UN Women has given voice and visibility to survivors of CRSV, through multiple interventions both during the peace negotiations in Havana from 2013 to 2016, in the efforts to the adoption and implementation of the Victims and Land Restitution Law in 2011, and during the [implementation of the 2016 peace agreement](#), particularly through [technical support to the Special Peace Jurisdiction](#) on CRSV-related cases and through the [Prodefensoras project](#). Acknowledging that CRSV does not happen in a vacuum, UN Women is developing its corporate strategy on the prevention and response of violence against women along the Humanitarian-Peace-Development Nexus focusing on addressing root causes of violence.

Amongst UN Women's main priorities within UN Action for the next year are to support the finalisation and implementation of the Prevention Framework with a strong emphasis on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership, including through advocacy for increased direct support to local women's rights organisations.

SWPA in Focus: Ms. Beatrix Attinger Colijn



As a self-proclaimed ‘field junkie,’ Beatrix Attinger Colijn has been a Senior Women’s Protection Adviser (SWPA) in the Central African Republic (CAR) since 2015. Having previously worked for the ICRC, OCHA and the OSCE, she understands the importance of coordination in the field with diverse stakeholders, whether that be with humanitarian actors or police officers, to mainstream aspects of the CRSV mandate throughout their work.

In a recent interview, Ms. Attinger Colijn explained some of the complexities regarding the justice and accountability aspects of addressing CRSV in CAR. Up until 2016, cases of rape, even those committed in the context of CRSV, were charged as an “indecent offence” and required only lower-level courts to try these cases. Despite the presence of the Mixed Rapid Intervention Unit on Repression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children (UMIRR), whose mission is to prevent and respond to CRSV in CAR, the tradition remains to downgrade rape to a simple offence. Consequently, the cases rarely escalate to a trial and perpetrators are not held accountable, leaving survivors and their families without justice. She is also concerned by the limited number of women survivors coming forward to report their cases, compared to young girl survivors, indicating that sensitisation efforts in CAR have not yet yielded the expected results.



A big challenge Ms. Attinger Colijn faces in her daily work in CAR is the lack of mobile medical services to reach survivors living outside of Bangui. She expressed the urgency in survivors accessing psychosocial programs which would allow them to regain their confidence and reintegrate into their families and communities. One such way that has proven successful is to provide CRSV survivors with educational opportunities including basic literacy and accounting skills to be able to engage in basic income generating activities.

When discussing how the UN Action Network can further support the work of the SWPA in CAR, including in recent exchanges within the Network’s monthly meetings, Ms. Attinger Colijn believes that the UN Action entities can be more active in the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (the MARA). Reflecting on a lesson-learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Attinger Colijn observed that moving to a virtual workspace has reinforced for her the importance of personal interactions, which in turn facilitates better information sharing on emerging CRSV trend and patterns between those in the field and in headquarters.

‘Survivor-centred means that you don’t decide for them; that you listen to them and that you clearly tell them what can happen and that you take a long time for the first part of an interview for obtaining consent... In a nutshell, survivor-centred approach is putting yourself on the same level as the survivors.’



For Ms. Attinger Colijn, a survivor-centred approach is crucial when addressing CRSV in CAR, especially when communicating with survivors directly. Recognising that survivors may not want to talk to the police or local authorities is only part of a survivor-centred approach, it also requires ‘putting yourself on the same level as the survivor’ throughout the entire process. Recalling a father who had walked 12km to the main road to wait for a passing MINUSCA team to report that his daughter was raped, Ms. Attinger Colijn acknowledges that survivors and their families sometimes just want someone to listen to their situation.

UN Action Donor Roundtable 16.09.2021

UN Action organised a virtual Donor Roundtable gathering 23 Member States from North America, Africa, Europe, the Middle East and Asia and UN Entities on 16th September 2021. SRSG Patten opened the event, highlighting that **'despite the operational reach and capacity of [UN Action's] members entities, [UN Action's] ability to support survivors is only limited by the funding available'**. She specifically underlined UN Action's need for sustained and predictable funding. Ms. Grainne O'Hara, Director of the Division of International Protection of UNHCR, shared reflections from her time as a UN Action Focal Point and echoed SRSG Patten's urgent appeal for more regular and increased funding for CRSV and noted that the systematic underfunding of CRSV is felt on the ground by entities like UNHCR. UN Action Coordinator, Ms. Sene, emphasised that due to dire funding shortages, UN Action was only able to develop and implement two one-year projects through the CRSV-MPTF.

However, to demonstrate how UN Action's catalytic joint projects providing life-saving and life-changing support to survivors and their communities, Mr. Noel Kututwa, Senior Women's Protection Advisor in Erbil, Iraq, and Ms. Lucky Omaar, officer implementing a UN Action project in Somalia, presented reflections on the impact of UN Action projects funded in their respective countries of work. Both Mr. Kututwa and Ms. Omaar **highlighted the critical role that the UN Action Network can play in meeting survivors' needs through providing holistic care and services**. They have also pointed out several challenges to overcome for a more efficient support to survivors such as the exclusion of certain minorities from service provision, the lack of awareness on the plight of children born of rape or staff turnover which prevents coherent and continued action.

The Governments of Norway, Sweden, and Japan further demonstrated their support of UN Action by sharing their perspectives on the role of the UN Action Network. Sweden highlighted the need for focused prevention efforts, including in addressing root causes; Norway called upon other Member States and governments to come together in ensuring commitments to the Women, Peace, and Security agenda are respected and; Japan reiterated its commitment to supporting the Office of the SRSG-SVC and UN Action. During the final, open dialogue session, Member States including Kenya, Denmark, Saudi Arabia and UN Entities alike were unanimous in expressing their commitment to ending CRSV through comprehensive and coordinated efforts, holistic and survivor-centred care, enhanced accountability and impunity. The discussion was closed by Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UNODC, who emphasised the critical role that UN Action plays in joint coordination.

In her concluding remarks, SRSG Patten reminded all in attendance that "we can make a difference in the lives of people threatened by sexual violence in conflict. We are here in their service, in our common goal of seeing a better world", finally calling upon Member States to meet the need of the moment and strengthen their political and financial support to the CRSV mandate, particularly through the CRSV-MPTF. The momentum created by the Roundtable holds considerable hope for more catalytic projects and critical support in the prevention and response of CRSV.

Core Group Feature: Prevention of CRSV

UN Action advances its knowledge building and advocacy initiatives through seven working groups ('Core Groups') focused on driving thematic technical aspects of the CRSV mandate forward.

Our Chair, SRSG-SVC Patten, envisioned the development of a framework for the prevention of CRSV in the implementation of the three strategic priorities for the mandate articulated in [Security Council resolution 2467](#): i) Converting cultures of impunity into cultures of prevention through justice and accountability; ii) Fostering national ownership and leadership for a sustainable, survivor-centred response; and iii) Addressing the root causes of CRSV, including through structural inequality as its main driver.

The Prevention Core Group, formed in May 2021, was tasked with transforming this vision to a practical reality through the combined technical expertise of 15 UN Action entities. The Framework will lay out concrete guidance to governments, the UN, and civil society to utilise during all stages of conflict, focusing on what prevention of CRSV looks like in practical terms. Currently under development, the Framework will address the root causes and risk factors of CRSV, as well as examine direct and indirect strategies to prevent CRSV. The Group is chaired by UNHCR and includes UNODA, OSRSG-VAC, UN Women, OSRSG-CAAC, UNOCT, UNODC, DPPA, WHO, UNFPA, OSGEY, UNAIDS, DPO, OSRSG-SVC, and the TOE.



85

Participants



23

Countries
Represented

18

UN Agencies



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