

Edition Theme: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Conflict

## 1. Introduction

This month, the UNiTE campaign's action circular will focus on the issue of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in the context of conflicts. Gender-based violence (GBV), and particularly VAWG as a form of GBV, is amongst the most pervasive human rights violations in the world and has a devastating impact on the lives of individual women and girls, their families, and communities but it also hampers societies' resilience to crises and disasters, long-term recovery, educational and economic outcomes, and peace itself. It is in times of conflict and war such as the ones we are now witnessing in several corners of the world that different forms of VAWG are exacerbated, not only conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), but also sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), intimate partner violence (IPV), child marriage and trafficking in persons<sup>1</sup>.



*People fleeing the military-offensive in Ukraine on 1 March 2022. © UN Women/Aurel Obreja*

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## BACKGROUND

### Orange Day

The United Nations Secretary General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women has proclaimed the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month as "Orange Day," a day to raise awareness and to take action to end violence against women and girls.

As a bright and optimistic colour, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls, for the UNiTE Campaign.

Orange Day calls upon activists, governments, and UN partners to mobilize people and highlight issues relevant to preventing and ending violence against women and girls, not only once a year, on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), but every month.

You can find further information on the [UNiTE](#) campaign [here](#).

## 2. Impact of Conflict on Violence Against Women and Girls

VAWG is rooted in patriarchal gender norms, structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics between men and women, all of which are exacerbated during a conflict or crisis. In these contexts, VAWG is further intensified due to a breakdown of gender roles and societal norms, an erosion of the rule of law and security resulting in a climate of impunity combined with increased economic and psychosocial pressures. The “[Shadow Pandemic](#)” of VAWG during COVID-19 illustrated the surge of violence that occurs during crises. UN Women’s Rapid Gender Assessment which found that 1 in 4 women felt less safe in their homes as domestic disputes became more frequent; 6 out of 10 women felt sexual harassment had worsened and 7 out of 10 felt that physical or verbal abuse from their partner has become more common<sup>2</sup>. There is growing evidence that conflict, and its consequences such as mass displacement, loss of education and income as well as social protection increases the vulnerability of women and girls to numerous forms of violence<sup>3</sup>.



*People flee the military offensive in Ukraine, seeking refuge in Moldova or transiting the country on their way to Romania and other EU countries. © UN Women/Aurel Obreja*

### **Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA)**

CRSV can be weaponized to demoralise communities, force displacement and threaten social cohesion and identity<sup>4</sup>. We are witnessing

these disturbing patterns being played out in many countries in the world. Definitions of CRSV include rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict<sup>5</sup>.



**Conflict affects  
women, girls,  
boys and men  
differently.**



The [UN report of the Secretary-General on CRSV](#) shows that in 2021 alone, women and girls accounted for 97% of the 3,293 reported cases of CRSV<sup>6</sup> from across 18 countries designated as conflict-settings, post-conflict situations and situations of concern. While the data from this report conveys the severity and brutality of verified incidents, it does not reflect the global scale or prevalence of CRSV.

Furthermore, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by actors providing aid and assistance is also exacerbated during conflict and is also considered a form of CRSV and there are growing reports of SEA being committed by security forces in conflict settings.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Impact of Conflict on Violence Against Women and Girls

### *Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)*

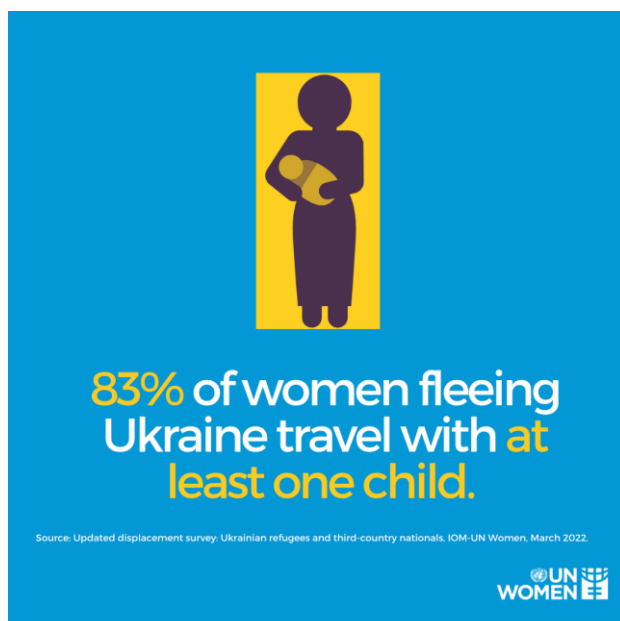
IPV is one of the most prevalent forms of VAWG, even in conflict settings. Research conducted in South Sudan found that indirect experiences of conflict are linked to increases in IPV, with 65% of women and girls from some of the conflict affected sites having experienced sexual and/or physical violence in their lifetime.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, research from several countries shows that both women's and men's experience of trauma in war is associated with a greater risk of women experiencing IPV perpetrated by men.<sup>9</sup>

For instance, in Afghanistan, a study showed that the trauma experienced by Afghan women as a result of decades of conflict was a key driver of IPV.<sup>10</sup>

It is important to recognise that the impact of conflict is felt long after the conflict is over. A study conducted by the World Bank on conflict, displacement and GBV among displaced women in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) showed that increased exposure to sexual violence and displacement increases the likelihood of experiencing IPV in a lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

### *Human trafficking and Child Marriage*

Trafficking in persons, especially of women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation also increases during conflict<sup>12</sup> often driven by economic pressures amplified by conflict. For example, reports suggest that within a month of the Ukrainian crisis searches for pornography related to Ukrainian women increased by 600% and the demand for Ukrainian escorts has increased by 300%.<sup>13</sup>



Child marriage or early marriage also increases during conflict and crises.<sup>14</sup> In 2017, 12 out of the 20 countries with the highest child marriage prevalence rates were in the midst of the most severe humanitarian crises.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, studies found a 20% increase in child marriage in Yemen<sup>16</sup> and South Sudan<sup>17</sup> as a result of the conflict. The forced marriage of girls to armed fighters was also reported in the Syrian and Iraqi conflicts, often as a result of coercion but also as a negative coping mechanism as families deal with increased economic hardship.<sup>18</sup>

### *Impact of conflict on specific groups of women and girls*

The risks of VAWG impact disproportionately women and girls who belong to marginalised groups such as indigenous, ethnic and religious minorities, older women, young women and girls, unaccompanied children, those belonging to the LGBTQI+ community and those living with illness or disability are often most affected by conflict and face the greatest barriers in accessing services.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. Impact of Conflict on Violence Against Women and Girls

**“Globally women and girls with disabilities are two or three times more likely to experience GBV, abuse and exploitation – especially during conflict.”**

– Caroline Atim, Director of South Sudan Women with Disabilities <sup>20</sup>

In addition, women human rights defenders, journalists and women leaders are also targeted for speaking out about human rights violations committed by warring parties and acts of war committed against women and children. This is a worrying trend that is being seen globally according to UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. <sup>21</sup>

### *Impact on Essential Services during conflict*

During conflict, access to services is often impacted as it becomes more dangerous to move around. Priorities shift to deal with the crisis and the rule of law is weaker leading to increased impunity for perpetrators. <sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the type of services that needs to be provided in conflict settings often evolve and may require different expertise, for example, responding to CRSV. <sup>23</sup> The stigma and risks of formally reporting cases of VAWG may be exacerbated during conflict, especially if confidentiality is not prioritised, as seen in South Sudan <sup>24</sup> and Ukraine. <sup>25</sup>

In Ukraine, CSOs have reported increases in domestic violence, trafficking in persons and sexual harassment in public spaces following the onset of the conflict <sup>26</sup> leading to an increase in demand for essential services. Funding for local organisations, especially women's rights organisations (WROs), needs to be prioritised <sup>27</sup> and recognised as lifesaving, especially supporting specialised service providers that meet the health, psychosocial and economic needs of survivors. <sup>28</sup>

### Addressing VAWG in Ukraine: Interview with Iryna Pavlyk, GBV specialist from UN Women Country Office, Ukraine

**What are the biggest challenges and risks to address VAWG in current Ukrainian crisis?**

*The risks of violence against women and girls are rising with the military conflict in Ukraine still ongoing alongside huge population movements, with the majority being women and children.*

*Access to services is severely limited with many shelters being converted to accommodate the displaced population, while the court system does not prioritize domestic violence and gender-based violence cases. In particular, the diverting of the national police to a military operation, leaves a gap when it comes to responding to domestic violence, as police officers were the first point of contact for survivors. According to the [Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine conducted by UN Women and Care International](#) the police are no longer recording cases of domestic violence and sometimes do not respond to calls.*

*Women are increasingly concerned about their physical safety and avoid going out in the street after dark due to large numbers of military men in the streets, lack of streetlights, and there are reports of sexual violence and rape in the streets.*

*Contd...*



**YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

## 2. Impact of Conflict on Violence Against Women and Girls

What do you think the UN system could strengthen in its response to VAWG?

*There is an immediate need for all stakeholders to build capacity on preventing and responding to GBV in emergencies, in particular to CRSV. The available services are scarce and need to strengthen victim-centred approaches, particularly when it comes to confidentiality and data protection. Survivors should be able to access all the assistance they need in one place including medical help, legal aid, psychological and social support and humanitarian assistance to move to safer areas, which is not always possible due to high security risks, lack of fuel, broken roads, mined areas, blown up bridges etc.*

*DV referral pathways need to be set up and include women activists, survivors and women's rights organisations. GBV prevention and response should have protection at its core, recognising the different needs of women, including women with disabilities, women and marginalized and excluded groups. Many women are left behind, in particular HIV positive women, Roma women, women who identify as LBTQI+ among others.*

What are your calls to action to the international community and other stakeholders?

*Advocacy is needed to ensure:*

- *the humanitarian response is also gender-responsive, leaving no behind, and based on a human rights and survivor centred approach.*
- *Ukraine's ratification of the Istanbul Convention for effective prevention and response to GBV, sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women in public places*
- *Ukraine's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to enable effective documenting and investigating of war crimes including CRSV.*



*A scene from the Palanca-Maiaki-Udobnoe border crossing point, between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine on 15 March 2022. © UN Women/Aurel Obreja*

### 3. Response from the International Community

The international community has made efforts to address the impact of conflict on VAWG including through a series of UN Security Council resolutions beginning with **SCR 1325** (2001)<sup>29</sup> that make up the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, building on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Ground-breaking **SCR 1820** (2008), recognized CRSV as a threat to security and an impediment to the restoration of peace. **SCR 1960** (2010) built on this with specific monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements ([MARA](#)), which aims for timely, accurate, reliable and objective information gathering on CRSV.<sup>30</sup> **SCR 2331** (2016) also addresses the nexus between sexual violence and conflict driven human trafficking and forced marriage.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, **SCR 2467** (2019) recognizes the need for a survivor centred approach and acknowledges that sexual violence in conflict occurs on a continuum of violence against women and girls, as a result of structural gender inequality and discrimination, affirming the necessity of the participation and empowerment of women as the only viable route to sustainable peace and security.<sup>32</sup>

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR, 1994) also declared rape to be a war crime and a crime against humanity and in 1998. The ICTR became the first international court to find an accused person guilty of rape as a crime of genocide (used to perpetrate genocide).<sup>33</sup> The Statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY, 1993) included rape as a crime against humanity, alongside other crimes and in 2001 became the first international court to find an accused person guilty of rape as a crime against humanity.<sup>34</sup> The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in force since July 2002, includes rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or “any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity” as a crime against humanity when it is committed in a widespread or systematic way.<sup>35</sup>

In addition, one of the key outcomes of the Generation Equality Forum was the [Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action](#) which focuses on financing and monitoring existing policies and commitments to move the Women, Peace and Security Agenda forward.

Despite these growing efforts, VAWG in conflict and crises continue to be pervasive. In a context of increasingly protracted **violent conflicts and humanitarian crises**, affecting more people than ever before, coupled with massive displacement exacerbated by climate change and related disasters, VAWG in conflict and crises settings requires urgent attention.



**JUSTICE FOR  
SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE**

## 4. Advocacy and Call To Action

VAWG is exacerbated in conflicts, but it is a universal problem which occurs across all contexts including in contexts of peace and does not end even when the conflict has ended.

Whilst there is a suite of UN Security Council Resolutions and international law that has begun to address the issue of violence against women and girls in conflict, urgent action needs to be taken to address VAWG comprehensively across the humanitarian, development, peace & security nexus.

**All UNiTE Campaign partners** including UN and international organizations, governments, civil society and women's rights organizations, private sector, youth groups, universities, sports associations, schools etc. are encouraged to:

- ✓ **Orange** their workplace, schools, communities and online spaces to raise awareness about the impact of conflicts and crises on VAWG between 25<sup>th</sup> May and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2022.
- ✓ **Advocate for the ratification of the Rome Statute** of the International Criminal Court to enable effective documenting and investigating of war crimes including CRSV.
- ✓ **Call for the full and effective advancement of the Women, Peace and Security agenda**, including Security Council Resolutions focusing on CRSV and the development of **National Action Plans addressing conflict related VAWG** in line with SC Resolution 1325.
- ✓ **Call for comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources** to prevent and respond to VAWG across the humanitarian, development, peace & security nexus, prioritizing prevention through tackling the root causes, transforming social norms, strengthening women's economic empowerment, livelihoods and social protection.
- ✓ **Advocate for increased investments in comprehensive essential services for VAWG and survivor-centred approaches to the prevention and response** to conflict related VAWG including through strengthening of justice and accountability mechanisms, and readiness including through emergency livelihoods assistance to survivors of violence including through unconditional cash transfers and national social protection systems.
- ✓ **Urge the international community and national decision makers to increase funding to national autonomous women's rights organizations including grassroots women's groups** to play a lead role in the EVAWG and Peace & Security Agenda and enhance the participation of women and girls in their diversity in peacemaking processes.



- ✓ **Call for all stakeholders to have a coordinated and inclusive approach to addressing VAWG in conflict** including the involvement of local women's rights organisations, activists and leaders to be integrated into the crisis response and included in decision-making bodies and appeals for funding.
- ✓ **Call for accountability for VAWG and other women's rights violations in an inclusive and survivor-centered manner with a focus on reparations and non-repetition** (conflict/crisis countries); and provide the necessary funding to ensure that all national and international investigations and accountability mechanisms have dedicated gender expertise and child rights expertise to document/investigate/prosecute VAWG in line with international standards and to integrate a gender analysis of violations.

## 4. Advocacy and Call To Action continued

### In Conversation with Ms. Bernadette Sene, UN Action Coordinator

Ms. Bernadette Sene has been the Coordinator of UN Action since early 2019. With more than 18 years of experience working in peacekeeping and humanitarian settings, most recently as a Senior Women's Protection Adviser (Mali) and in Child Protection across several different contexts. Since Ms. Sene joined UN Action, the Network has grown to 21 member entities, developed its Strategic Framework, engaged in knowledge building and catalytic joint initiatives, and is currently revitalising a CRSV public awareness-raising campaign. This short interview was conducted virtually while Ms. Sene was accompanying the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten on mission to respond to the war in Ukraine.



UN Action Coordinator Bernadette Sene (left) with SGSR-SVC Ms. Pramila Patten (centre) during a mission to Ukraine in 2022 © UN Action

#### a. *What are your main priorities for combatting CRSV?*

The prevention of CRSV is a main priority when combatting CRSV. Our work should not start when there is a conflict; our work must start in times of peace, across all countries regardless of their history or culture. For example, it is important that we work with the Security Sector to ensure that they are well-trained in identifying and responding to the early warning signs of CRSV. The Security Sector is tasked to protect civilians and they must be equipped with the right knowledge and tools to do so. Prevention also includes addressing the pile-up of small arms, which creates environments conducive to violence, explicit legal reforms that support survivors and those most vulnerable and working to help former combatants re-integrate into their communities to stop the cycle of violence from being perpetrated. Addressing the root causes of CRSV, such as ensuring economic empowerment for those most vulnerable, particularly women and girls, to reduce their vulnerabilities and addressing poverty, lies at the forefront of prevention initiatives.

## 4. Advocacy and Call To Action continued

In Conversation with Ms. Bernadette Sene, UN Action Coordinator

### **b. *What is the most effective way to end CRSV?***

To end CRSV, we must address impunity; if justice and accountability are not included in a survivors' recovery process, within a country's recovery process from a violent outbreak of conflict, CRSV will continue to occur. We know that when people commit CRSV, they do so knowing that the majority of survivors do not report the crimes committed against them due to fear of reprisal, stigma, and rejection. We must shift the shame and blame that remains on the victims onto the perpetrators *and* protect and support survivors.

However, the first thing that comes to mind to end CRSV completely is to make sure that there is no more violent conflict. Conflict is what allows CRSV to occur, where the bodies of people are used as battlefields.

### **c. *What can the international community do to support the CRSV prevention and response agenda?***

The international community has been doing a great job at expressing and providing political support, which is why we now have a solid framework to combat CRSV, including the six Security Council resolutions, which are well framed. It is now a matter of effective implementation. The international community must provide the financial support to match their expressions of political will to ensure this implementation.

We, at UN Action, are calling for the international community to support a survivor-centred approach to the prevention and response to CRSV. We need to tailor our initiatives to address the gaps in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, justice and accountability – if these gaps are filled on time, CRSV might not even occur in the first place. We need to support survivors throughout their healing journey, from recovery to reintegration into society, through providing medical, psychological, livelihoods responses, including their pursuit of justice and reparations. However, this multi-sectoral, comprehensive approach needs funds, which is where the international community must step up. UN Action is well equipped to implement these activities, and we know we have the Security Council and Member States standing by us; we only need the resources to empower us to act.

**“The prevention of CRSV is a main priority when combatting CRSV. Our work should not start when there is a conflict; our work must start in times of peace.”**

**- Ms. Bernadette Sene, UN Action Coordinator**



## 5. MAIN PRINCIPLES OF UNiTE CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY

- ✓ **Honour and acknowledge women's movements** and their leadership in the 16 Days of Activism and in preventing and ending violence against women and girls in general.
- ✓ **'Leave No One Behind':** Apply a human rights-based approach and focus attention on the most underserved and disadvantaged groups of women and girls experiencing intersecting forms of harm in efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls.
- ✓ **Survivor-centred:** Take a respectful and 'do no harm' approach to the telling and/or retelling of survivor stories, only with their informed consent and under conditions in which they feel empowered to exercise their agency. This and the empowerment principles are vital for the engagement of survivor advocates/activists on their own terms. All UNiTE partners must ensure that survivor advocates' rights, safety, dignity and confidentiality are prioritized and upheld. For more information, please refer to [Ensuring survivor-centered and empowering approaches](#).
- ✓ **Multi-sectoral:** Everyone in society has an important role to play in ending violence against women and girls and we all must work together across sectors to address the various aspects of violence against women and girls.
- ✓ **Transformative:** Fostering critical examination of gender roles, regimes and practices, while seeking to create or strengthen equitable gender norms and dynamics for fundamental, lasting changes for women and girls.
- ✓ **Elevate the voices of young feminists:** While the world has been reviewing progress made over the past 25 years since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), it is time to create platforms to elevate voices of the next generation of feminists who are shaping their future now.

## 6. Suggested Social Media Messages



 Facebook  LinkedIn

We need a ☒ survivor-centred and ☒ trauma-informed approach for preventing and responding to #genderbasedviolence in the context of conflicts. #OrangeDay @SayNO.UNiTE

✗ No gender equality without addressing conflict-related violence against women and girls. #OrangeDay @SayNO.UNiTE

☒ Support women human rights defenders, leaders and peacebuilders to end #GenderBasedViolence in conflict and crises. #OrangeDay @SayNO.UNiTE

☒ Prevent #GenderBasedViolence in conflict through tackling the root causes and transforming social norms. #OrangeDay @SayNO.UNiTE

 Twitter

Conflict exacerbates all forms of violence against women and girls.

We must act urgently to end #genderbasedviolence in the context of conflicts. #OrangeDay

Read the update from [@SayNO\\_UNiTE](#) [@UN\\_Women](#)

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action>

We need a survivor-centred approach to prevent and respond to #GenderBasedViolence in the context of conflicts. #OrangeDay

Read the update from [@SayNO\\_UNiTE](#) [@UN\\_Women](#)

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action>

## 7. Events

During the upcoming UN's Protection of Civilians week in May 2022, UN Action, UN Women, OCHA, OHCHR, CARE International, and the Permanent Missions to the UN of Spain, France, and the United States will jointly host a virtual side-event, *'Protection through Prevention: Best Practices to meet the needs of Survivors of CRSV'* on 27 May 2022. The event will highlight how a preventative approach to CRSV could also strengthen the fulfillment of obligations under the protection of civilians' mandate in conflict-affected settings. To attend the event, RSVP [here](#).

## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS

### UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network: Prevention as Priority

Created in 2007, the [UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network](#) (UN Action) unites 21 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict. The Network brings together the collective experience and institutional capacity of the UN system and is the only UN system-wide initiative that leads advocacy, knowledge-building, resource mobilisation and joint programming to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). In accordance with [Security Council resolution 2467 \(2019\)](#), a key priority outlined in UN Action's Strategic Framework (2020 – 2025) is the prevention of CRSV, including addressing its root causes. As a result, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Chair of UN Action Pramila Patten, tasked the UN Action to lead the development of a framework for the prevention of CRSV intended to guide key stakeholders in strengthening multi-level, multi-disciplinary efforts to prevent CRSV. The Framework will be launched around the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence on 19 June 2022. The USGSRV Pramila Patten recently [signed a framework of cooperation on prevention and response to CRSV in Ukraine](#).

In 2020 – 2021, the [CRSV- Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) (CRSV-MPTF), funded a Somalia based project,<sup>36</sup> to mitigate conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and prevent violent extremism, implemented by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM). The project offered comprehensive support to over 200 women formerly associated with violent extremist groups, many of whom are CRSV survivors. Women were provided basic education, business development and livelihood skills training to promote social reintegration and personal resilience while addressing some root causes of CRSV, such as societal exclusion and economic inequality. The prevention of CRSV is not only a matter of protecting individuals, but also an integral part of broader efforts to prevent conflict and sustain international peace. Read more about UN Action's work [here](#).



## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS CONTINUED

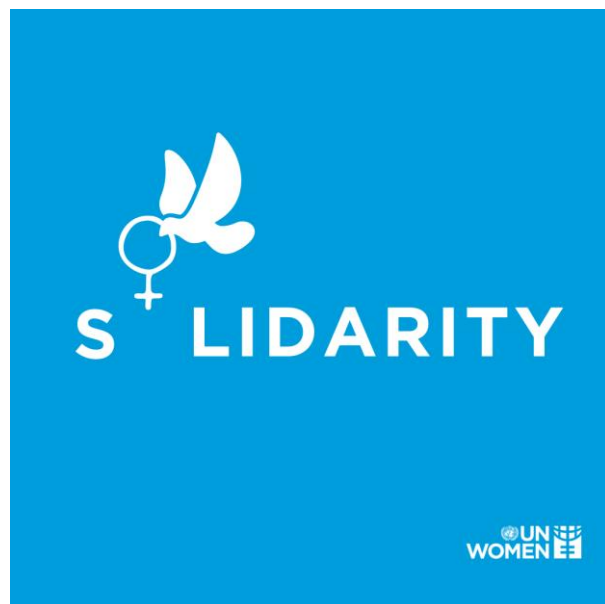
### UN Women as a member of the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict

UN Women has been a member of UN Action since 2007, 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 organizations and other stakeholders to tackle gender inequality and impunity as root causes of CRSV.

[Since 2020](#) , with the support of the government of Netherlands, UN Women and UNDP have been 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.

UN Women also partnered with the Ombudsman's Office and the Embassy of Norway on the ProDefensoras initiative focuses on prevention and the protection of women leaders and human rights defenders in Colombia who face continuous risks and violence. The initiative focuses on providing women leaders and defenders, their organizations, and communities in Colombia a safe and protective environment to defend human rights and contribute to sustainable development and peace.

Amongst UN Women's main priorities within UN Action for the next year are to support the completion of the Prevention Framework with a strong emphasis on the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment, including



through advocacy for increased direct support to local women's rights organisations. UN Women is developing its corporate strategy for addressing violence against women and girls across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus to support UN Women's vision for the elimination of VAWG throughout the continuum of armed conflict and humanitarian contexts. The HDP nexus encompass efforts to coherently address people's vulnerability before, during and after crises or conflicts, and to bridging the silos of segmented interventions in protracted crisis and humanitarian situations.

### Supporting civil society organizations to end violence against women in Ukraine and Palestine

In **Ukraine**, UN Trust Fund to End violence against women grantee **NGO Club Eney** continues its lifeline work during the current conflict, for the most marginalized women and girls, particularly women living with HIV, women who use drugs, self-identified women sex workers, and homeless

## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS CONTINUED

women, many of whom are survivors or at risk of violence. [Hear from the organization's Chair, Vielta Parkhomenko](#), about how this crisis impacts the lives of women and girls, the current reality for the organization and their response for women and girls in Ukraine. As part of its efforts in amplifying the voices of women and girls in crisis contexts, the UN Trust Fund liaises with its past grantees including the **Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF)** which has been transforming its operations to meet the needs of local feminist networks and coalitions to reach women and girls.

In the **State of Palestine**, women living in East Jerusalem and Area C<sup>45</sup> are largely excluded from government services for survivors of violence, and few NGOs have the capacity to ensure women's safety, a problem exacerbated by, among others, decades of Israeli occupation. The UN Trust Fund supports the **Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC)** to improve women's and girls' access to justice and protection services, by developing a self-sustaining community-based protection system. Despite communities' resistance from some locations, PCC works with local women leaders to advocate for the projects in these locations. Read more [here](#).

**Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact: An inter-generational inclusive movement for action on women, peace and security**

As one of the key outcomes of the Generation Equality Forum, the [Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action \(WPS-HA Compact\)](#). The Compact seeks to drive a global movement for **implementation of existing commitments on Women, Peace and Security and gender equality in Humanitarian Action**. The Compact is a true multi-stakeholder initiative comprised of Member States, UN

entities, Regional Organizations, the Private Sector, and Civil Society Organizations, including academic institutions with UN Women as Secretariat. The 153 Compact signatories are investing in close to 900 combined Compact Framework actions on **financing, women's participation in peace processes, women's economic security, and protection and promotion of women's human rights**. The **annual meeting of Compact Signatories** will be held during the week of the October anniversary of UNSCR 1325.

**Preventing conflict and building sustainable peace around the world by engaging women leaders, defenders and peacebuilders**

The [Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs \(DPPA\)](#) integrates efforts to address violence against women within technical support, capacity building and monitoring of conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding. In missions to conflict affected areas such as Colombia, Sudan, Yemen women leaders, human rights defenders and peacebuilders are engaged. In coordination with other UN entities, missions have condemned attacks against women and girls in public statements and messaging (as done in Sudan and Libya); visiting women human rights defenders at risk to mitigate stigmatization (Colombia); consulting women's organizations around preventing violence against women in politics (Great Lakes); supporting the work of networks of human rights defenders (Central Africa); United Nations Support Mission In Libya (UNSMIL) support for draft legislation on violence against women; and monitoring violence against women including as part of social media hate speech (Tunisia, Iraq). When these issues are included in peace agreements

## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS CONTINUED

— such as the 2016 Colombia Peace Agreement's provision on security guarantees for social leaders, human rights defenders, communities and former combatants, missions also can ensure actions under security guarantees have a gender approach and verify attacks on women leaders and human rights defenders, with respective institutional responses (UN Verification Mission in Colombia).

As part of the UN Working Group on Hate Speech, DPPA has been contributing to the Office of the Prevention of Genocide's development of the **UN guidance note on gender-based hate speech, which will be launched in 2022**. The Guidance Note would provide an overview of what gender-based hate speech is, the normative framework addressing it, and makes recommendations to support country-level programming to prevent, address and counter gender-based hate speech. It highlights how gender-based hate speech is a common precursor to atrocity crimes; forms part of violence against women in political and public life; and is used to disseminate violent extremist ideologies.



Scenes from a UN verification Mission in Colombia. © Ana Beatriz González y Giovanni Ferma/ UN Verification Mission Colombia

### Ensuring access to justice and essential services for survivors of CRSV through multi-stakeholder coordinated programmes

UNFPA, UNICEF, and UNHCR are implementing a project funded by the **Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Prevention Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV-MPTF) in Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq** to strengthen gender-based violence response services to meet the needs of women and girls including CRSV survivors, helping caseworkers strengthen access and quality of health response for survivors, and rolling out innovative technology (GBVIMS / GBVIMS+) to help GBV caseworkers conduct case management services (remote and in person) more effectively. UNFPA, in its Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) mandated role as lead of the GBV Area of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster, ensures coordinated services for all types of GBV and helps to avoid duplication of services.

UNFPA advocates for funded and functional GBV response, including referral pathways, accessible information, and access to the full range of GBV prevention and response services for survivors of CRSV. Recognizing that CRSV is a form of sexual violence recognized in Security Council Resolutions that call for justice and accountability, UNFPA promotes a survivor-centered approach within this work, ensuring service provision and access to lifesaving GBV services for survivors. UNFPA builds the capacity of partners to better understand what constitutes CRSV and what the accountability and justice mechanisms available are, in coordination with broader GBV and protection efforts.

## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS CONTINUED

### Health sector interventions on GBV in the context of conflict

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes that adequate health services to address GBV are essential to ensure life-saving care for women, girls and other at-risk groups and foundational to supporting health system recovery and resilience from natural disaster, conflict, and disease outbreak.

WHO is updating standard-setting guidelines and testing implementation tools to strengthen the health sector response to GBV in humanitarian settings. WHO in 2019 issued updated protocols for Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence (CMRIPV), in collaboration with UNFPA and UNHCR. The GBV in emergencies initiative at WHO has now expanded to Columbia, Peru, Ecuador and in Ukraine and Moldova to addresses migrant and refugee women's vulnerability to sexual and other forms of GBV. WHO is also working with health partners to adapt [RESPECT WOMEN, a framework for Preventing Violence Against Women](#) in emergencies.

### Spotlight Initiative

[Spotlight Initiative \(SI\)](#) works to end violence against women and girls globally through 34 programmes, including within countries that are experiencing conflict or are in post-conflict recovery phases. To respond effectively to crises, Spotlight teams have undertaken programme criticality assessments where needed to determine whether activities are feasible and under which conditions while following United Nations security measures. Teams have also consulted with national stakeholders, European Union Delegations and European Union Brussels, United Nations agency HQs, and the SI Secretariat to identify how to advance implementation when and where possible and are mentioned below.

In **Uganda**, SI supported the launch of the **Africa Women Leaders Network (AWLN) Uganda Chapter**, which aims to enhance the leadership of women in the region and has been critical to **localizing UN Security Council Resolution 1325** on Women, Peace and Security. SI also works in refugee contexts, and through the rollout and scale up of the SASA! programme, supported an increase in reporting on intimate partner violence and child marriage.



*An image from the Spotlight Initiative programme in Uganda©  
Spotlight Initiative*

### Capacity building and partnerships for strengthened advocacy and monitoring

Capacity building efforts - supported by the Spotlight Initiative's (SI) partnership with the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)** - contributed to amplifying women's organizations and women's rights activists' influence and agency to work to end sexual and gender-based violence in contexts of conflict. In **Liberia**, for example, "Gbowee Peace Foundation" strengthened the capacity of 150 Peace Brigades, involving 5,380 young women, to better advocate for conflict prevention, a robust response to violence in their respective communities, and the rights of women and girls more broadly.

## 8. INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES TO ADDRESS VAWG IN THE CONTEXT OF CONFLICTS CONTINUED

In **Afghanistan**, given the complex and quickly evolving operating environment, the Spotlight team together with local civil society adapted implementation modalities and interventions which allowed the team to continue to conduct advocacy with the de facto authorities, emphasizing the importance of continuing gender-based violence services.



*Afghan women leaders at the UN Headquarters in October 2021 © UN Women/ Amanda Voisard*

### Improved access to services including by supporting networks of civil society organizations

In **Haiti**, where violence has prevented access to certain communities by humanitarian and development actors, SI has supported networks built by civil society partners that collect and share information, and facilitate assistance for survivors, including remote support services (through WhatsApp and other technological platforms) for survivors.

In **Kyrgyzstan**, SI quickly responded to the fallout of a border conflict in May 2020 that displaced 50,000 women and children. Through the Initiative's partnership with the Ministry of Justice, free legal aid was expanded to support those in the affected province, and psychosocial support was provided.



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