

ADDRESSING CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

PRIVATE SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT



CTG

STOP RAPE NOW

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

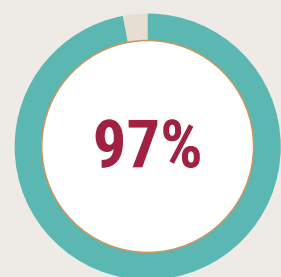
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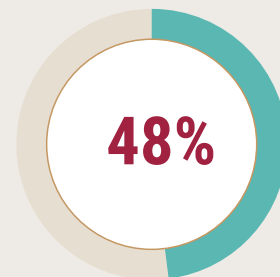
18 SITUATIONS OF CONCERN MONITORED BY THE UN



Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is the term used when sexual and/or gender-based violence is committed within the context of war.¹ The United Nations currently covers 18 situations of concern where CRSV is a threat, including current conflicts, post-conflicts, and those classified as “others”, for the 2021 reporting period.² The UN also monitors and responds to emerging situations of concern, such as Ukraine, and can mobilise quickly to address the immediate needs of those in crises.



97% of United Nations verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence were perpetrated against women and girls in 2021.³



48% of United Nations verified cases of case conflict-related sexual violence were perpetrated against children.⁴

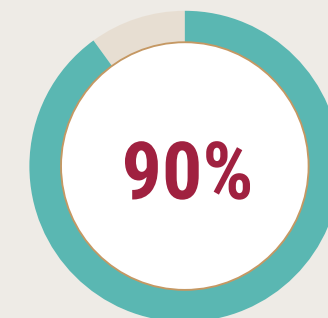
¹ “Conflict-related sexual violence”, refers to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. This link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, including those designated as terrorist groups by the United Nations; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority, or targeted on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; a climate of impunity, which is generally associated with State collapse; cross-border consequences, such as displacement or trafficking; and/or violations of the provisions of a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence and/or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict.

² United Nations. 2022. [Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence 2021](#).

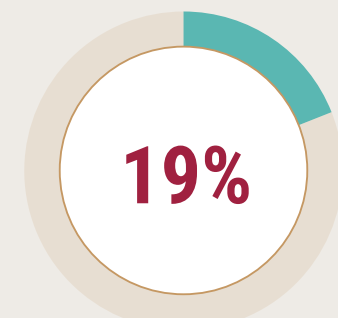
³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT



90% of jobs globally are provided by the private sector, making them best placed to directly support CRSV survivors’ economic empowerment.⁵



Diversity-driven innovation, generated through initiatives such as addressing CRSV or promoting gender equality more broadly, are said to contribute to an increase in business revenue by 19%.⁶

\$28
TRILLION

By addressing root causes of CRSV, such as by advancing gender equality and closing the gender gap, economies across the world would stand to add **\$28 trillion** to the global economy.⁷

\$2.5-\$5
TRILLION

Economic inequality is one of the most prevalent causes of CRSV, yet if women and men participated equally as entrepreneurs, global GDP could rise by up to 6% – boosting the global economy by **\$2.5-\$5 trillion**.⁸

\$9
TRILLION

Contrastingly, these same gendered inequalities in the economy are said to cost women in developing countries **\$9 trillion** a year.⁹

Sexual violence is a threat to every individual’s right to a life of dignity, and to humanity’s collective peace and security.

ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, *United Nations Secretary-General*,
New York, 19 March 2017

⁵ World Economic Forum. 2018. [‘How the private-sector can help fund the Sustainable Development Goals’](#).

⁶ Boston Consulting Group. 2018. [‘How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation’](#).

⁷ McKinsey & Company. 2015. [‘The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women’s Equality Can Add \\$12 Trillion to Global Growth’](#).

⁸ Boston Consulting Group. 2019. [‘Want to Boost the Global Economy by \\$5 Trillion? Support Women as Entrepreneurs’](#).

⁹ Oxfam International. 2020. [‘Why the Majority of the World’s Poor are Women’](#).

01

INTRODUCTION

While private sector action towards sustainable development has gained traction in recent years, there remains a compelling need and huge potential for engagement with efforts specifically supporting the prevention and response of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network ([UN Action](#)), constituting 21 UN entities across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, development spectrum, is the UN's only initiative to collectively address CRSV, leading local and international efforts to eradicate the heinous crime. CRSV remains one of the world's most prominent challenges, hindering development and the attainment of peace and prosperity.

In the midst of increased violence and the exacerbation of humanitarian crises worldwide, it is vital that the private sector be recognised and mobilised as an integral partner for peace and development. As the world's largest employer, the private sector can play a pivotal role in supporting efforts led by UN Action to address CRSV by tackling rooted gender inequalities and developing response strategies and initiatives. Such activities include alignment with corporate responsibility agendas, economic empowerment and skills training programmes, and involvement in awareness-raising campaigns.

ADDRESSING CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE: *Private Sector Opportunities for Engagement* explores the role and actions businesses can take while carrying out their operations to support the UN's goal to eradicate CRSV and specifically assist CRSV survivors and their communities. This Executive Summary outlines key elements of a more comprehensive white paper set to be published in the autumn that details real-life examples and case studies, how-to guides, and breakdowns on how specific sectors can contribute to the work and aims of UN Action.

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Persons featured in the photo are not necessarily survivors of CRSV.

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WHAT IS CRSV?

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is defined by UN Security Council resolution 1820 (2008) as sexual or gender-based violence 'when used or commissioned as a tactic of war in order to deliberately target civilians, or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilian populations', which may impede the restoration of international peace and security. Sexual violence as a 'tactic of war' refers to acts of sexual violence that are linked with military/political objectives and that serve (or intend to serve) a strategic aim related to the conflict. Among its most prevalent causes are pre-existing gender-based inequalities, patriarchal social structures, poverty and economic inequality. Under international law, CRSV is a war crime, crime against humanity, form of torture and can be an element of genocide.

What is CRSV*

- Rape as a weapon of war
- Sexual slavery
- Forced pregnancy and abortion
- Trafficking for the purposes of sexual violence and exploitation

What is not CRSV

- Domestic/spousal abuse
- Sexual harassment at work
- Intimate partner violence
- Femicide

*CRSV examples occur all within the context of conflict or post-conflict settings, whereas the other examples can also occur outside of the context of conflict or post-conflict settings.

The conditions under which CRSV exist are exacerbated by the crime itself, often continuing a cycle of poverty and instability and hindering socioeconomic progress. CRSV is therefore a barrier to global peace and security, preventing civilians, communities, and countries from properly addressing universal development challenges.



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WHY PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CRSV CAUSE MATTER

The significant role the private sector can play in supporting UN Action and CRSV efforts has not been fully realised. As the world's largest employer, the private sector has a direct impact on the economy and those it employs. In light of this, there is huge potential for the private sector to play a pivotal role in supporting CRSV prevention efforts led by UN Action, including by addressing root causes such as gender inequality. Adopting practices that promote human rights and cultures of inclusion and respect, can in turn help to reduce or eliminate behaviours and social practices that perpetuate CRSV in the wider community.






This white paper outlines how this opportunity for engagement offers unprecedented potential for impact and change:

1. BUSINESSES CAN PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS





Businesses should engage with the UN's CRSV agenda, in recognition that living a life free from violence and discrimination is a human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Contributing to CRSV efforts will help protect the rights of survivors and prevent future human rights violations in times of peace and conflict.

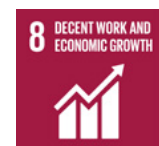
2. THERE IS AN UNDENIABLE BUSINESS CASE

Actions taken to address root causes of CRSV by promoting adherence to human rights, diversity and inclusion are more than just a moral imperative. They have huge potential to enhance business productivity and performance, providing lasting benefits to companies, their staff and wider local communities.

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Increased profitability and organisational performance |  Attract and retain the best talent |
|  Enhanced reputation and exposure |  Access new / untapped markets |
|  Drive innovation | |

3. BUSINESSES CAN INFLUENCE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES ON NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEVELS

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Improve national productivity and long-term sustained growth |  Enhance community strength and resilience |
|  Promote greater health and social development of families, communities and nations |  Contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) |



Case studies included in this section: L'Occitane, Invi

04

BUSINESS ACTION FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CRSV

This white paper outlines 7 recommended actions that businesses can take in practice to support CRSV prevention and response efforts. These actions take into consideration that different organisations have different levels of engagement with situations of conflict; that all organisations are at varying levels of maturity with respect to corporate responsibility; and that organisations have varying degrees of available resources. Therefore, the actions suggested per organisation and/or sector are not necessarily applicable to every business or business model. Furthermore, the recommended actions can be adopted in any order, as well as individually or in conjunction with each other. This executive summary provides concise insights on what each section covers; for more information, please refer to the main white paper.

PREVENTION ACTIONS

- ACTION 1:** Mainstream CRSV Principles
- ACTION 2:** Develop a Strong Corporate Responsibility Agenda
- ACTION 3:** Align Your Business with International Frameworks

RESPONSE ACTIONS

- ACTION 4:** Develop Inclusive Economic Empowerment Initiatives
- ACTION 5:** Raise Local, National and Global Awareness & Increase Understanding of CRSV
- ACTION 6:** Develop Strategies to Support CRSV Survivors
- ACTION 7:** Commit to Social Investment and Philanthropy

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PREVENTION ACTIONS

ACTION 1: MAINSTREAM CRSV PRINCIPLES

The UN has developed a series of guiding principles to support personnel working on CRSV¹⁰. The overarching goals of these principles are to ensure that the dignity and human rights of CRSV victims and survivors are upheld and that they are not exposed to further harm, stigma, marginalisation and discrimination.¹¹ However, these principles, in addition to other context-specific considerations, can also be adopted by the private sector to further efforts to contribute to the UN's goal of maintaining international peace and security, while upholding universal human rights.

- ✓ DO NO HARM
- ✓ ADOPT A SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH
- ✓ TAKE A GENDER-SENSITIVE APPROACH TO BUSINESS
- ✓ CONDUCT OPERATIONS IN A CONFLICT-SENSITIVE MANNER

Case studies in this section include Service95, and context specific examples for how journalism and media as well as natural resource and extraction industries can do no harm.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP A STRONG CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AGENDA

Corporate responsibility and being a good corporate citizen are increasingly becoming a moral and business imperative. In addition to mainstreaming principles to prevent and respond to CRSV, another crucial action that businesses can take to holistically support CRSV prevention efforts and tackle wider drivers of exclusion, poverty and violence is to develop a strong corporate responsibility agenda.

- ✓ UPHOLD DECENT WORK OPPORTUNITIES
- ✓ CREATE SAFE AND WELCOMING WORK ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL
 - Adopt a zero-tolerance approach
 - Reduce risks of violence and harassment
 - Strive for health, safety and wellbeing at work
 - Implement a whistleblowing mechanism
 - Introduce family-friendly policies

¹⁰ United Nations. 2020. [Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence](#).

¹¹ Ibid.



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survivors of CRSV.

ACTION 3: ALIGN YOUR BUSINESS WITH INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Another action businesses can take to support CRSV prevention is to align business activities with existing international frameworks. The frameworks addressed in this section are all founded on the promotion of human rights and upon adoption, help businesses engage with the prevention priorities of UN Action by addressing the root causes of CRSV. These frameworks can be used by organisations as a guide to enhance corporate responsibility agendas even further, taking their action beyond just mitigating risks and harm to society, to more actively advancing positive social impact. By publicly committing to these frameworks and reporting on progress, they also strengthen business accountability and transparency with their stakeholders and clients.

- ✓ UN GLOBAL COMPACT TEN PRINCIPLES
- ✓ UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
- ✓ WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES
- ✓ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGS)

RESPONSE ACTIONS

ACTION 4: DEVELOP INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

Socioeconomic isolation is a significant barrier that can prevent CRSV survivors from healing from their trauma and can hinder their successful reintegration into public life. The private sector can play a pivotal role in assisting CRSV response activities by taking specific action to economically empower CRSV survivors. Economic empowerment activities implemented in communities affected by CRSV can help mitigate discrimination and gender-based inequalities by ensuring women and girls, including those who are CRSV survivors, can actively participate in markets. Businesses are well placed to mobilise survivors to participate in existing markets, access work opportunities, voice agency in economic decision-making, and exercise control over their own resources. By providing CRSV survivors with skills, equipment, and entry points to markets, businesses can continue contributing to their local economies while creating sustainable, income-generating activities.

- ✓ STRENGTHEN INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO DECENT WORK
- ✓ INTRODUCE EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE
- ✓ ENHANCE WOMEN'S LEARNING, EDUCATION & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
- ✓ SUPPORT FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Case studies included in this section: Bèkske, Committed to Good, the Coca-Cola Company, Mary Kay



ACTION 5: RAISE LOCAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL AWARENESS & INCREASE UNDERSTANDING OF CRSV

There remains a clear lack of understanding of what CRSV is, its causes and consequences, and the steps that can be taken to prevent and eliminate its occurrence at the local, national and international level. Often, CRSV is viewed hierarchically with other forms of violence against women. Recognising sexual violence as its own distinct form of violence perpetuated towards any individual, regardless of gender or identity, in times of or surrounding conflict, is crucial in developing appropriately targeted responses. Therefore, advocacy activities by the private sector can play a pivotal role in raising awareness of CRSV at the local, national and global levels once CRSV has occurred.

- ✓ TRAIN YOUR STAFF
- ✓ FACILITATE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING
- ✓ USE YOUR COMPANY'S PUBLIC PLATFORM TO HOST AWARENESS & COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Case studies included in this section: Congo Clothing Company, Twinings, UNIQLO



ACTION 6: DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CRSV SURVIVORS

Fragile and conflict-affected countries often represent untapped markets and potential for businesses to expand their customer base. Communities recovering from conflict, especially those that have been impacted by high incidences of CRSV, can hugely benefit from increased access to healthcare and wellbeing support, as well as justice services and financial assistance. However, the lack of disposable income for many residing in conflict-affected countries poses an additional challenge in accessing essential services. In light of this, businesses seeking to capitalise from these market gaps would fare well in assisting these populations by providing or extending their own services and policies at a cost that can be met by communities impacted by CRSV. Or alternatively, some businesses may wish to offer their services free of charge as part of a wider corporate responsibility and social impact agenda.

- ✓ EXTEND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES
- ✓ OFFER LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND LOBBYING EFFORTS
- ✓ INITIATE FINANCIAL FREEDOM

Case studies included in this section: Safari Doctors, Clifford Chance, Baker McKenzie, Survivor Inclusion Initiative (Banks including Barclays, Royal Bank of Canada, and Bank of America)

ACTION 7: COMMIT TO SOCIAL INVESTMENT AND PHILANTHROPY

Efforts to address CRSV remain critically underfunded, despite CRSV being labelled as “war’s oldest crime”. As the only UN-wide system to lead joint programming and resource mobilisation around CRSV efforts, UN Action needs predictable financial support to its Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV-MPTF) and in-kind support to strengthen and increase its activities. Despite being historically funded by governments, UN Action is expanding its donor base to include the private sector in order to scale-up international and national CRSV efforts.

- ✓ CONTRIBUTE TO UN ACTION’S FUND
- ✓ PROVIDE IN-KIND DONATIONS



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ACTIONS TO DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY SUPPORT CRSV SURVIVORS

Private Sector Engagement by Industry



RETAIL

- Employ survivors
- Donate supplies
- Support survivor-operated businesses



FINANCIAL

- Open bank accounts for CRSV Survivors
- Teach financial literacy
- Lower loan threshold



TECH

- Upskill survivors through tech training
- Help prevent disinformation
- Develop online courses



MEDICAL

- Donate medical supplies
- Contribute mental health services
- Share expertise



TRAVEL

- Transport supplies
- Provide accommodation
- Donate travel kits



LEGAL

- Provide pro bono services
- Set up legal aid hotlines
- Lobby national governments



NATURAL RESOURCE AND EXTRACTION

- Vet contractors
- Incorporate gender equality into policies
- Assess local socio-political contexts



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Addressing CRSV: Private Sector Opportunities for Engagement is due to be released around the margins of the 77th General Assembly in late-September 2022.

UN Action and CTG are collaborating on this white paper to provide clear guidance to private sector enterprises on the role they can play to galvanise multisectoral engagement in efforts to eliminate CRSV. Both organisations hope that such efforts will tackle root causes, including gender inequality, and support CRSV survivors in the attainment of international peace and security.

If your organisation would like to hear more about how you can engage with UN Action to take action to prevent and eradicate CRSV, contact Lindsay Forslund at forslund@un.org.



Committed to Good (CTG) delivers several initiatives in conflict-affected countries to help promote women's economic empowerment. If your organisation is interested in partnering or collaborating on these programmes, reach out to CTG's Shared Value Manager, Mia Zickerman-White at mia@ctg.org.



The UN Action Network entities include CTED, DPPA, DPO, IOM, ITC, OCHA, OHCHR, OSAPG, OSGEY, OSRSG-CAAC, OSRSG-VAC, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCT, UNODA, UNODC, UN Women, and WHO.