

Welcome to the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) Network's fourth newsletter, showcasing some of our current initiatives, members and partners in the global response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). UN Action is a Network of 24 UN entities united with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict. Guided by the Network's 2020 - 2025 Strategic Framework, 2022 was filled with initiatives to further a survivor-centred approach, ensure prevention of CRSV, and enhance justice and accountability for survivors.

## KEY REPORT: UN ACTION'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2022

UN Action developed yet another ambitious two-year Workplan spanning from January 2022 to December 2023, of which it has *already* completed 74% as of this writing. The Network gained three new member entities this year: the International Trade Centre, the UN Department of Global Communications, and the UN Environment Programme, which each add critical areas of expertise to UN Action.

In 2022, UN Action also hosted two Steering Committee meetings, 17 technical-level coordination meetings, and a slew of innovative brownbag webinars on thematic priority areas such as the nexus of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and violent extremism/terrorism, economic empowerment of survivors of CRSV, and the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangement (the MARA) for CRSV data and information.

Based on the [Framework of Cooperation](#) signed on 3 May 2022 by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) on behalf of the UN with the Government of Ukraine, UN Action entities have been working on the ground to provide support to CRSV survivors and those at risk of CRSV to raise awareness, provide multisectoral assistance, and alleviate stigma. UN Action also held special briefings on Sudan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Haiti, and Guinea, in the monthly Focal Points meetings, to discuss how the Network could support country offices in responding to situations of CRSV there.

UN Action, serving as the knowledge hub on CRSV, also launched the [Framework for the Prevention of CRSV](#) and a [white paper on private sector engagement in the CRSV mandate](#) at a high-level event on the margins of the 77th UN General Assembly. This two-part event was attended by donors, Member States, UN Action Network member entities, and representatives from private sector organisations. The Network also established a [webpage](#) on the nexus of trafficking-in-persons and CRSV and finalised an assessment of the MARA mechanism, which will contribute to the design of the next generation of MARA.

Despite severe underfunding of the CRSV Multi-Partner Trust Fund ([CRSV-MPTF](#)), we continued funding to a project in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon which addressed response services to survivors of CRSV. We also funded a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo that provides services on health and livelihood support to survivors of CRSV, many of whom are impacted by the mining industry. With more resources, UN Action will be able to leverage its growing network to implement joint catalytic projects. This is especially important as UN Action launched a partnership with the French non-governmental organisation (NGO) Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (BSF), which is equipped with expertise and tools using technological solutions for peace.

We look forward to advancing the work started in 2022 in the new year!

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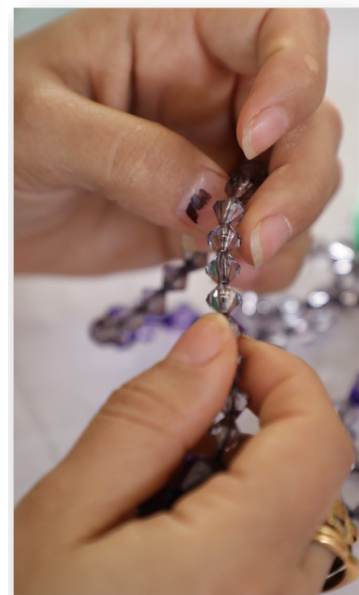
In Spotlight: 2023 Upcoming Initiatives



SRSG-SVC Patten speaking at the UN Action General Assembly event



Framework for the Prevention of CRSV



Art therapy offered to survivors through UN Action's project in Jordan

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: BIBLIOTHÈQUES SANS FRONTIÈRES

In October 2022, the Office of the SRSG-SVC launched a novel partnership with the French NGO Bibliothèques Sans Frontières (BSF) through a signing of a cooperation agreement. Established in 2007, BSF is a humanitarian non-profit that works to bring knowledge and information to people in need, working in over 50 countries around the world and impacting over six million people. BSF has curated thousands of items for programming addressing education, health, employment, citizenship, environment and sustainability, racial injustice and secularism.

The main focus of this partnership will be the deployment of modern technologies in implementing innovative initiatives in support of CRSV survivors, their families, and communities. BSF's Ideas Box is a transformational mobile multimedia centre that can serve as a safe space for creativity, innovation, and healing. The Ideas Box, when properly equipped, has the potential to provide a wide range of support services encompassing holistic care for CRSV survivors and communities ranging from mental health services and psychosocial support to legal support, educational activities, and vocational training.

A CRSV-adapted Ideas Box was showcased during UN Action's event on the margins of the high-level week of the UN General Assembly in September 2022. This partnership allows for exciting opportunities for collaboration on targeted solutions to fight CRSV. UN Action looks forward to adapting BSF's innovative tools to support survivors and increase knowledge and access to resources around CRSV.



The CRSV x Ideas Box displayed at UN Action's General Assembly event

## UN ACTION MEMBER PROFILE: INTERNATIONAL TRADE CENTRE (ITC)

The International Trade Centre (ITC) is one of UN Action's newest members, joining the Network in early 2022. At the intersection of a joint mandate with the World Trade Organization and the UN, ITC works to enhance inclusive and sustainable growth and development in developing countries, especially least-developed countries, and countries in economic transition.



As part of its strategic plan, ITC envisions a world where trade builds inclusive, sustainable and prosperous economies, especially through the inclusion of youth, women, and people in vulnerable situations. For example, through its SheTrades Initiative, ITC has connected over 3 million women to markets and value chains. ITC is also active in several countries, working with migrant, refugee and IDPs women to support them in developing business skills and creating gender-inclusive employment and income opportunities.

It is in this vein that ITC has become an integral member of the UN Action Network, providing expertise on what economic empowerment means within the context of CRSV: women's economic empowerment can play a critical role as a preventative measure against CRSV and to survivors in their recovery. Through a series of brownbags in 2022, ITC has led critical discussions with UN Action Focal Points, Senior Women's Protection Advisers (S/WPAs), and other relevant colleagues to help better understand economic empowerment opportunities in the context of CRSV, as well as to identify gaps in tools and strategies for future economic empowerment initiatives. We look forward to advancing these discussions and increasing economic empowerment activities in UN Action projects with ITC in 2023.

## SWPA IN FOCUS: MS. FABIOLA NGERUKA

"The CRSV mandate is a noble mandate, Yes, it is!" explained Fabiola Ngeruka, the Senior Women's Protection Adviser (SWPA) in Mali. *"To work on this mandate, you must have the heart to support the voiceless people who have had their human rights violated, when their state collapsed, they were displaced, raped and then those supposed to protect them, their families and communities, rejected them. They had no place to go, but they came to you and you are their only hope to recover. Is it not noble to support these people, to find a way to give them hope and maybe one day, put a smile on their face?"*

Fabiola accepted the role of the SWPA knowing she would contribute her years of experience working on gender-based violence in emergencies in Chad, Haiti, DRC, South Sudan, and Mali. However, above all, she was determined that she would bring her humanity and heart to her work. Two years ago, a 14-year-old girl, whom terrorists had kidnapped, was released after two months of capture to a One Stop Centre in Mopti. The One Stop Centre was able to provide basic services to the girl but quickly determined that she was a 'destructive' individual who was 'mentally ill' prior to this event and therefore would not be able to be helped further. Fabiola, hearing this case, intervened. "We needed to try," she said. Knowing that the only psychiatrist in Mali is based in Bamako (even today), she advocated among her colleagues to bring the girl there for analysis and treatment to no avail. It was only with the intervention of SRSG-SVC Patten that Fabiola and her team were able to mobilise the resources and necessary support to bring the girl to Bamako, where she was quickly treated. "Within two weeks," shared Fabiola, "the girl woke up [from her shock/'madness'] and was able to identify herself and ask for her family".

The UN was able to support the girl's return and pool together a small fund of US\$500 that helped the girl's mother start a small business in her village to take care of the family. This case illustrates the importance of acting with humanity, a notion that inspires Fabiola to be guided by the understanding that "every case matters."

*"It is not just about the number of cases. It is about the person behind that number. Even if it is one case, one figure, there is a human being behind that figure who has the right to live free from violence."*

In Mali, the prevention and response to CRSV is severely underfunded. "Mali has been forgotten," shared Fabiola. Currently, services supporting survivors of CRSV are often not available in remote conflict-affected areas and Fabiola and her team find themselves advocating for minimum funds to cover protection costs to transport survivors to where services are available. Fabiola also faces the challenge of raising awareness on CRSV and advocating for the rights of and services for survivors of CRSV, while respecting a conservative cultural context. The process of converting a patriarchal culture of silence and stigma into one of openness and support is not easy. But she has hope that the country will understand that CRSV will not stop unless there is a coordinated effort to stop it, and that survivors of CRSV will claim their rights, whether it is today or in twenty years' time.

In this vein, the global, strategic-level advocacy conducted by UN Action is critical to supporting Fabiola's work in Mali. "A SWPA cannot perform well without the guidance [from UN Action] and bringing our voices to discussions held at the highest levels, including at the Security Council," insisted Fabiola. As a result, in 2023, Japan will be funding a project in Mali, developed by Fabiola with support from the UN Action Secretariat. She also noted how the Team of Experts' (ToE) support on emblematic cases of CRSV has aided in engaging a weak judicial system. The ToE's work in Mali is crucial, as more than 197 survivors are still waiting for support from other stakeholders. Fabiola advocates for field-level, in-person support that would allow for deeper analysis of and response to cases of CRSV. "Where there is a survivor, [I need] someone to attend and support them," said Fabiola. Local organisations are receiving survivors and providing services to them with limited means to do so; it is integral that staffing vacuums in the CRSV mandate are filled by people who are willing and able to help and respond immediately, and with heart.

Fabiola reminded that with CRSV, it is easy to work with numbers of cases when reporting. However, she emphasised that we must not forget that behind each number is a story of someone whose life will never be the same.



## CORE GROUP FEATURE: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

In line with the survivor-centred approach articulated in [Security Council resolution 2467 \(2019\)](#), UN Action has prioritised economic empowerment in its current strategic framework and workplan. This includes providing vocational training and supporting survivors to participate in economic activities to encourage economic decision-making, including through recent CRSV-MPTF-funded projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia.

Economic empowerment is also emphasised in the Framework for the Prevention of CRSV as a means of preventing further harm to CRSV survivors to promote independence and socioeconomic integration. At the beginning of 2022, UN Action identified the need to better understand what economic empowerment of survivors means within the specific context of CRSV. To facilitate this understanding, UN Action along with one of its newest members, ITC, hosted two brownbags on economic empowerment. The aim of these brownbags was to trigger conversations among Network members on the concept of economic empowerment and to discuss the various approaches used across entities.

The first brownbag focused on clarifying core economic empowerment concepts to establish a working definition for the Network, featuring presentations on economic empowerment projects in Somalia and Myanmar. During the second brownbag, a series of UN Action Network members showcased their entities' economic empowerment approaches, best practices and lessons learned, using examples from South Sudan and Jordan. ITC and the UN Secretariat are currently working on a concept note which will incorporate all the inputs gathered during the two brownbags and outline how the Network can further engage in the economic empowerment of survivors. UN Action is looking forward to advancing its work on this critical topic in 2023.

## IN SPOTLIGHT: 2023 UPCOMING INITIATIVES

In 2023, UN Action aims to advance many of the activities started in 2022 and to begin new initiatives in the prevention and response to CRSV, including:



Implementation of the **Framework for the Prevention of CRSV** in pilot countries of concern



Completion of a critical **gaps assessment of the response to CRSV** in the Central African Republic, followed by a joint technical mission



Continued implementation by MONUSCO and OHCHR of a **UN Action project in the DRC** that has been addressing the fight against impunity for CRSV, improving access to multisector assistance to CRSV survivors, including medical, psychosocial, legal, socio-economic reintegration services, and enhancing women's recognition and participation in their communities



Filling **knowledge gaps on broader CRSV thematic issues**, such as the nexus of CRSV with trafficking-in-persons, violent extremism/terrorism and climate change, as well as the economic empowerment of CRSV survivors



Continued engagement to **bolster partnerships** with private sector and non-governmental organisations to synchronise efforts to prevent CRSV and support survivors



Implementation by UNFPA and MINUSMA of one **UN Action project in Mali**, funded by Japan, to ensure quality holistic care services (medical, psychosocial, and socio-economic reintegration) and protection of CRSV survivors and at-risk groups in Gao and Ménaka IDP camps



Launch of guidance document on what it means to take a **survivor-centred approach to CRSV** with the intended use by all critical actors, including Governments, UN entities, service providers and humanitarian aid workers



Revitalisation of the **Stop Rape Now campaign** with a projected launch date of the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, 19 June