

Welcome to the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) Network's fifth 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, 2023 has been filled with initiatives to further a survivor-centred approach, ensure prevention of CRSV, and enhance justice and accountability for survivors.

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KEY REPORT: A CRSV SURVIVOR'S JOURNEY, A UN ACTION EXHIBITION

On 20 June 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) Pramila Patten, as Chair of UN Action, officially launched UN Action's exhibition, *A Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) Survivor's Journey*. The Opening Ceremony was attended by approximately 120 high-level representatives from Member States, UN entities, NGOs and the private sector. The event featured remarks from SRSG-SVC Patten, human rights defender and CRSV survivor Ms. Jineth Bedoya Lima, Executive Director of UNODC Ms. Ghada Waly, H.E. Paulauskas of Lithuania, H.E. Ishikane of Japan, H.E. Kvalheim of Norway, and included a video statement of a survivor from South Sudan.

Open to all until 28 August 2023 in the Main Visitor's Lobby of the UNHQ in New York, this exhibition showcases the gravity of CRSV as an urgent threat to international peace and security through an array of photos, videos, text and interactive elements. The exhibition highlights the voices of CRSV survivors and the work of UN Action while reflecting on how a variety of actors can support the prevention and response to CRSV. The International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict took place in the same week, enhancing UN Action's visibility among those in attendance.

UN Action designed the exhibition to centre survivors of CRSV. Panels present how our project draw attention to the intersecting identifies of survivors, such as race, sex, gender, religion, and disability, and how we support their empowerment and rehabilitation. Viewers are also encouraged to scan QR codes that share testimonials from survivors in the SEMA Network and from the 10-year anniversary event of the CRSV mandate.

Beginning with a comprehensive overview of the CRSV mandate, the exhibition focuses on the journey of a CRSV survivor through multiple stages. By following a pathway marked on the floor, viewers are led through the prevention and occurrence of CRSV and shown how survivors may receive immediate, medium and long-term assistance supported by the UN, Governments, civil society, the private sector and the public. The exhibition illustrates the resiliency of survivors, their role as agents of change, while recognising that not all survivors choose to, or are able to, receive support.

We would like to thank the collaborators and sponsors of this exhibition: the SEMA Network, the Dr. Denis Mukwege Foundation, Bibliothèques Sans Frontières, VMLY&R, the Governments of Republic of Lithuania, Japan, and Norway. UN Action is honoured to have partnered with global marketing agency, VMLY&R, to graphically design and bring to life this exhibition. We invite all readers to visit the exhibition and experience the powerful stories of survivors.



Colombian human rights defender and CRSV survivor, Ms. Jineth Bedoya Lima (left), speaking at the Opening Ceremony



SRSG-SVC Patten guiding Deputy-Secretary-General Amina Mohammed around the exhibition

PARTNER HIGHLIGHT: UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

On May 2, 2023, SRSG-SVC Patten signed a Framework of Cooperation with the University of Ottawa. This partnership was born out of SRSG-SVC Patten's priority to expand the circle of allies for the CRSV mandate to include leading academic institutions. With a strong commitment to the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the University of Ottawa will be instrumental in CRSV research, especially through its recently established Gender, Peace and Security Collaboratory.



Signing of the Framework of the Cooperation with the University of Ottawa

Recognising the crucial role of academic institutions in addressing CRSV, the partnership will produce robust and transformative research. The collaboration will explore key themes such as mental health and psychosocial support to survivors of CRSV and CRSV in refugee and IDP camps. Through this partnership, the Office of SRSG-SVC also hopes to establish a Fellowship Programme that provides a space for South-North and South-South learning while researching under-explored fields of study relating to CRSV. An academic consultation committee with academics and activists may also be created to enhance the work of the Office of the SRSG-SVC and the UN Action Network. We are pleased to announce the University of Ottawa Research-Network on Women, Peace and Security's upcoming 3rd Annual Symposium. Taking place from 8 to 10 February 2024, this significant event will gather distinguished experts, researchers, and policymakers to address the urgency of eradicating CRSV.

CORE GROUP FEATURE: ADVOCACY



The Advocacy Core Group is the UN Action Network's working group focused on advocacy and fundraising. Chaired by the UN Action Secretariat, the Advocacy Core unites nine entities (DPO, DPPA, UN Women, OCHA, OSGEY, UNDGC, UNODA, UNODC, and UNAIDS) with a focus on amplifying the CRSV mandate to the public, civil society, the private sector, UN entities, and Member States.

Formed in 2020 after realising that there needed to be greater efforts to raise awareness of CRSV globally, the Core Group helped develop UN Action's Advocacy and Fundraising Strategies 2022 – 2026. These Strategies outline how the Network could deliberately mobilise funds, allocate resources, and mobilise partners and the public to demand change and support survivors of CRSV, including fundraising for \$100 million to the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund (CRSV-MPTF). Most recently, the Advocacy Core Group supported the development of UN Action's exhibition, *A CRSV Survivor's Journey*, which features many of the Core Group entities' work to address CRSV.



The Advocacy Core Group continues to lead the strategic re-development and revitalisation of UN Action's 2009 campaign, Stop Rape Now. Over the past year, the Advocacy Core Group has led the strategic re-development of the campaign and will continue to work tirelessly as the roll-out of the Stop Rape Now Campaign approaches later this year and into 2024. UN Action is grateful that global marketing agency, VMLY&R, has offered its services pro bono to the Advocacy Core Group as it takes on this work.

UN ACTION FOCAL POINT IN FOCUS: TONI STEWART

Ms. Toni Stewart is a Gender Specialist with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), with nine years of experience in gender affairs, refugee protection and humanitarian action. As UN Action's OCHA Focal Point, Toni is driven by the goal to advocate for the prevention and response to CRSV in humanitarian emergencies, having previously worked in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq with various international humanitarian and women's rights advocacy organisations.

As the convenor of humanitarian action and a founding member of UN Action in 2007, OCHA plays a unique role in advancing gender equality and its intersections with CRSV. It achieves this by conducting robust gender analysis, promoting meaningful participation of women in humanitarian decision-making processes, and prioritising the prevention, response, and mitigation of gender-based violence.



Toni is incredibly passionate about her work. When asked about her initial motivation to start working on the CRSV mandate, she reflected that her path started when she worked with a local women's organisation in northern Iraq, providing humanitarian support to women and girls who were survivors of sexual slavery and CRSV. Seeing the difference that tailored interventions made in survivors' lives inspired her. Recognising the need for holistic responses, including policy, development, and livelihood components, she embraced the opportunity at OCHA to work collaboratively and break down silos at the Headquarters level to support those on the ground effectively.

Since joining UN Action as an OCHA Focal Point, she sees her role as an opportunity to expand OCHA's meaningful engagement and to share valuable knowledge with OCHA's counterparts in the field. Offering strong advocacy, humanitarian resourcing, and analysis to make a difference in preventing and responding to CRSV are her key motivations in this position.

"UN Action is a key arm within the UN system on sexual violence in conflict. It can provide essential recommendations to Member States and SRSG-SVC Patten to identify existing gaps and support advocacy efforts." Toni recalled UN Action's recent press statement on the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (the DRC)* as an example of how the Network provides complementary information and drives advocacy based on input from actors on the ground.



Toni assumed the MC role at the Opening Ceremony of UN Action's exhibition

Toni emphasised that UN Action is pivotal in coordinating the engagement of all actors to effectively address CRSV. **"Encouraging a One UN approach is vital,"** and she envisions pushing all Network partners to enhance their commitments, making a significant difference in CRSV prevention. As a Network, she believes that it is unable to offer direct assistance, but its primary function lies in advocating for change.

Toni noted that to better support survivors, the UN Action Network must keep on:

"amplifying survivors' voices, advocating for their requests, and pushing for more opportunities for them within their organisations, while advocating for increased direct funding. This strategic approach is something our operational counterparts can't do, as they are not as close to the decision-makers."

*You can read UN Action's Statement on the DRC in [French](#) and [English](#).

DONOR SPOTLIGHT: LITHUANIA



After meetings between the Chancellor of the Government of Lithuania, Giedrė Balčytė, and SRSG-SVC Patten in 2022, Lithuania began supporting the UN Action Network and the mandate of the Office of the SRSG-SVC.

As a donor to the CRSV-MPTF, Lithuania contributes to the overall work of the Network. This includes the development of knowledge products, like the [Framework for the Prevention of CRSV](#), the expansion of the Network's understanding of CRSV and other thematic priorities, and awareness-raising initiatives. We are grateful to Lithuania for its latest contribution to the Network in Summer 2023.

Recently, Lithuania cosponsored UN Action's exhibition at UNHQ in New York, *A CRSV Survivor's Journey*, along with Japan and Norway.

Lithuania helped to amplify the voices of survivors and raise awareness about CRSV. Permanent Representative of Lithuania to the UN, H.E. Rytis Paulauskas, gave an empowering statement at the exhibition's Opening Ceremony, highlighting the need for the international community to support survivors of CRSV in their diverse journeys to healing and seeking justice.

Lithuania has brought CRSV survivors' stories to the forefront of the international community's attention and their support increases access to services for survivors. UN Action looks forward to continuing our fruitful collaboration in the years to come! **Thank you very much! Labai ačiū!**



H.E. Rytis Paulauskas speaking at the Opening Ceremony of UN Action's Exhibition



Lithuania's Chancellor Giedrė Balčytė and SRSG-SVC Patten in July 2023

UN ACTION MEMBER PROFILE: UN DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS (UNDGC)

The UN Department of Global Communications (DGC) joined the Network in August 2022. The communications arm of the UN, DGC raises public awareness and supports the work of the UN through strategic communications campaigns, media and relationships with civil society groups.

Through its global operations and offices in 60 countries, DGC actively and strategically promotes the work of the UN to the public, civil society, and Member States with trusted information, helping to put a spotlight on CRSV as an imminent threat to international peace and security. It also engages to build partnerships, share knowledge and work with the media.

DGC's engagement with UN Action serves to bolster the mandate's communication capabilities, providing critical feedback as the Network engages in communication, advocacy and information sharing. Most recently, DGC helped promote UN Action's [press statement](#) on the use of sexual violence in and around IDP camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Additionally, the broadcasting power of DGC serves to expand the reach of campaigns created by UN Action and the Office of SRSG-SVC. DGC's support with the recent UN Action exhibition, *A CRSV Survivor's Journey*, and the upcoming Stop Rape Now campaign have helped to clarify messaging and enhance the impact of the critical work of the Network and the CRSV mandate.



United Nations

Department of Global Communications