United Nations Peacekeeping

2022

Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence

ANNUAL SUMMARIES OF ACTIVITIES AND GOOD PRACTICES BY UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

United Nations

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents activities and good practices by United Nations peacekeeping missions in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), focusing on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). The stories are presented based on the five priority objectives of the Policy on United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020) ("United Nations CRSV Policy").

Left: MINUSMA United Nations Police during an interaction with the local population in central Mali. Photo: MINUSMA.

Right: An event organized by UNMISS on 19 June to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, in Central Equatoria Photo: Isaac Billy/UNMISS.

FOREWORD

With the adoption of resolution 1325 in 2000, the Security Council for the first time addressed the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls. Eight years later, the Council adopted resolution 1820, which emphasized that sexual violence, when used as a tactic of war, impedes the restoration of international peace and security. Affirming that conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) can simply no longer be considered an inevitable by-product of war, this resolution set the stage for the international framework to tackle these crimes.

In 2022, United Nations peacekeeping operations played a critical role in translating the Security Council's agenda on CRSV into concrete actions that enhanced the protection of women, girls, men and boys and contributed to justice and sustainable peacebuilding. The present report is testimony to the dedication of peacekeeping missions globally to prevent and respond to CRSV, with a whole-of-mission approach, and despite ever-evolving operational challenges. I take pride in the fact that missions have demonstrated a survivor-centred approach when responding to CRSV, prioritizing the agency and empowerment of survivors. I also know that much work remains to be done, ranging from more effective prevention and training to better addressing the harm inflicted on survivors due to stigmatization, reprisals and the climate of impunity for CRSV crimes.

The Department of Peace Operations has adopted the Women Peace and Security Agenda as a cross-cutting theme, integrated through all priority areas of **Action for Peacekeeping Plus** (A4P+). We remain fully committed to addressing CRSV across our efforts to improve peacekeeping's effectiveness and support countries transition from conflict to durable peace. Protecting all individuals from sexual violence will remain a priority for the Department of Peace Operations in 2023, and beyond, as we endeavour to build a "New Agenda for Peace", with our Member States and United Nations partners.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix
Under-Secretary-General
Department of Peace Operations

WHY DO PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS WORK TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO CRSV?

CRSV is not only a serious human rights violation, but also a threat to international peace and security. Such violence committed by parties to the conflict and other armed perpetrators, inflicts long-term harm on survivors and communities and fuels displacement and conflict dynamics, thereby increasing the costs of armed conflict and impeding conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. CRSV constitutes a crime that is punishable as well as preventable under international human rights law, international humanitarian law and international criminal law. In a series of resolutions on the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, the Security Council has affirmed that effective action to prevent and respond to CRSV can significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security.

While all United Nations field missions should prevent and respond to CRSV based on their prevention and protection responsibilities, which vary depending on their mandates, four peacekeeping missions had a specific Security Council mandate to address CRSV in 2022: MINUSCA in the Central African Republic, MINUSMA in Mali, MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan. Senior Women's Protection Advisers have been deployed as expert capacity to support these missions' efforts to prevent and respond to CRSV.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Identifying and responding to early warning signs of CRSV with a whole-of-mission approach in South Sudan

"CRSV is a crime of monstrous proportion that needs to be addressed urgently through a sustained, 'whole of the mission approach'. While I served as Force Commander, UNMISS adopted a prevention strategy based on weekly situation reviews with the civilian population to share information and identify hotspots to plan patrols or semi-permanent deployment for surveillance. Early detection of CRSV threats through direct and confidential contact with the local population was vital and achieved through engagement with communities by teams of women peacekeepers. Senior Women Protection Advisors (SWPAs) together with CRSV focal points in UNMISS have helped the Force in identifying early-warnings indicators and coordinated timely responses to CRSV in areas with live conflicts. The mission also supported interventions on CRSV by community, civil society and government, such as awareness-raising activities, training for soldiers and arresting perpetrators. I can therefore say with conviction that the 'whole of mission approach' adopted by UNMISS, that deploys its full range of capacities with urgency, has significantly contributed to lowering incidences of CRSV".

Lieutenant General Shailesh Tinaikar, Force Commander in UNMISS between May 2021 and January 2022

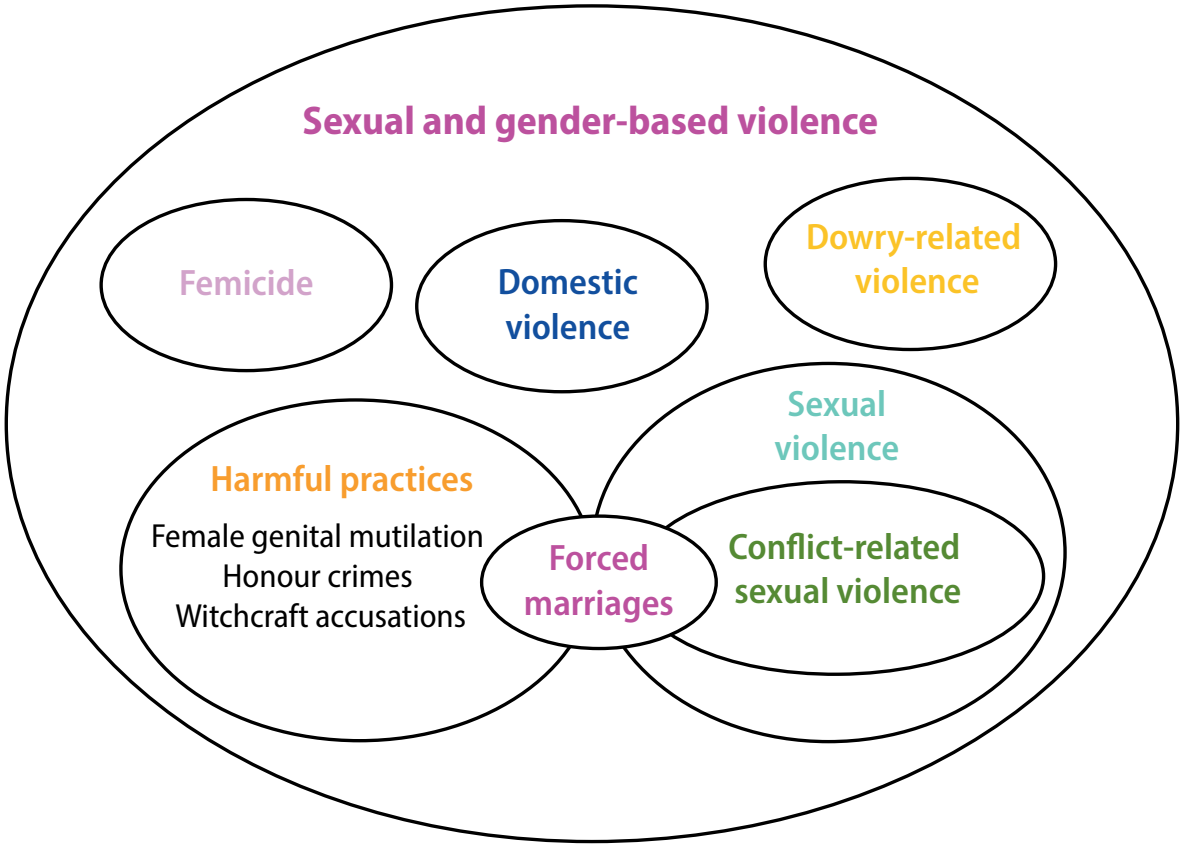
SGBV AND CRSV: UNDERSTANDING THE TWO CONCEPTS

Different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are perpetrated concurrently in settings affected by conflict. Preventing and responding to CRSV requires understanding and distinguishing such violence from other forms of SGBV affecting civilians.

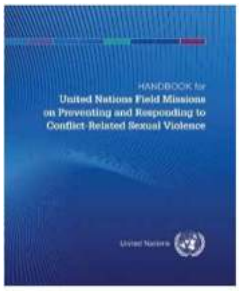
CRSV is one form of SGBV. SGBV is any type of violence directed against individuals or groups based on their sex or gender. Women, men, girls, boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) people can all be victims of SGBV. It however disproportionally affects women and girls owing to deeply entrenched gender norms and unequal power relationships.

CRSV refers to acts of sexual violence with a direct or indirect link to a conflict. Common forms include rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced prostitution and forced pregnancy. CRSV may be motivated by political, military, or economic objectives and is frequently used as a tactic of war and terror by conflict parties and other perpetrators profiting from the breakdown of law and order.

Awareness-raising activity by MINUSCA on the role of women in the promotion of peace in the Central African Republic. Photo: MINUSCA.



For sexual violence to be considered "conflict-related", the following links should be considered:
Temporal link This requires proximity between the act of sexual violence and the period of conflict, such as when sexual violence occurs during armed conflict. Sexual violence may also be considered conflict-related if it occurs in a context of instability that may escalate to armed conflict, or when it takes place in the aftermath of conflict.
Geographic link This requires that acts of sexual violence occur in conflict-affected areas, including areas of active warfare and other areas impacted by conflict.
Causal link This requires consideration of the extent to which pre-conflict levels of sexual violence are exacerbated by the conditions of conflict and/or ensuing displacement of the population and detention.



Read more about the concept and examples of CRSV in the *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*.

SURVIVORS SPEAK: HONOURING STORIES OF FEMALE AND MALE SURVIVORS OF CRSV

> I did not expect such a thing to happen to me, but I cannot even tell anyone about it – not even my family. No one will treat me like a man again if they know.

> I appeal to my relatives to leave out the past as I didn't willingly go to the bush. Let them speak good words to me and avoid hurtful words. I appeal to all the community members and even the chiefs to avoid saying hurtful words to those of us who found ourselves in the challenge of abduction.

UNMISS video honouring stories of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in South Sudan.

These are the words of survivors of CRSV from South Sudan who have chosen to break the silence on these crimes. Click here to watch a video produced by UNMISS honouring the stories of victims and survivors from South Sudan, including testimonies of their struggles and wishes.

Although women and girls continue to be those primarily affected, incidents of CRSV against men and boys have also been reported in conflict, particularly in detention settings. Men and boys and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, expressions and sexual characteristics face specific reporting barriers, including those relating to stigma and perceived emasculation, as well as particular physical and psychological consequences.

OVERVIEW OF CRSV TRENDS IN PEACEKEEPING SETTINGS IN 2022

Central African Republic: Armed groups signatories of the Political Agreement for Peace and Stability (APPR) were responsible for the majority of CRSV cases, often perpetrated during occupation of villages or in the course of hostilities in 2022. Cases of rape and sexual slavery were also attributed to the national armed forces and other security personnel[1] present in the country. Girls undertaking livelihood activities in the fields or the bush were most affected by these attacks. In a positive development, the President of the Central African Republic validated the National Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence linked to Conflict (2022–2023).

Mali: Growing insecurity, ongoing military operations, and frequent violence targeting civilians in the centre and the north of Mali, exposed communities to human rights violations, including CRSV and forced displacement. Unidentified armed elements, armed groups and militia, as well as members of the Defence and Security Forces of Mali and foreign military personnel were allegedly implicated in the reported cases of rape, gang rape and forced marriage, with an increase in cases against minors reported in 2022.

Democratic Republic of the Congo: Widespread cases of CRSV continued to occur in the context of attacks on civilians by armed groups and during clashes between armed groups and the national armed forces. In the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, sexual violence was systematically used by some armed groups as a means of intimidation and forced displacement of local populations. Internally displaced persons, particularly women and girls from rural communities, were disproportionally affected by sexual violence perpetrated by State and non-State actors.

South Sudan: While the security situation improved across South Sudan, rising incidents of CRSV perpetrated by State actors and non-State actors, including civil defence groups and community-based militia, were reported in 2022. Large-scale abductions of women and children during subnational violence, with abductees being subjected to acts of CRSV, continued to be an alarming trend. In Unity State, which accounted for nearly half of cases verified by the United Nations, sexual violence was committed systematically against women and girls by the joint Government forces and allied militias or groups and used as a method of warfare.

Detailed information on country-specific CRSV situations is available in the 2022 Annual Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

[1] Other security personnel refers to employees of private security companies in a contractual relationship with the Government of the Central African Republic (see paragraphs 4 and 42 of the OHCHR-MINUSCA report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the Central African Republic during the election period)

The following activities and best practices documented from peacekeeping missions in preventing and responding to CRSV are organized according to the five priority objectives of the United Nations CRSV Policy, known as the "PEACE" approach, namely:

1. **Prevention and protection of persons facing the risk of CRSV**
2. **Ending impunity for CRSV**
3. **Awareness and condemnation of CRSV**
4. **Capacity of national actors to effectively address CRSV**
5. **Empowerment of victims/survivors through political processes and their referral for support**

Click here to read the United Nations CRSV Policy.

OBJECTIVE 1 – PREVENTION AND PROTECTION OF PERSONS FACING THE RISK OF CRSV

Missions should focus their work on preventing incidents of CRSV. Working closely with concerned communities, including women's groups, field missions must proactively identify CRSV risks, provide early warning and prioritize preventive actions. Field missions should engage in a dialogue with parties to the conflict, to elicit formal commitments from their leaders on preventing and addressing CRSV.

STORY 1 — MONUSCO Civil Affairs Section, Gender Unit and Force Engagement Teams join hands to foster community prevention and response to CRSV.

The Civil Affairs Section, the Force Engagement Teams and the Gender Unit of MONUSCO leveraged community sensitization and local protection activities to raise awareness on CRSV and early warning mechanisms in South Kivu and North Kivu provinces throughout 2022. During these activities, women from local civil society organizations analysed the security situation, identified threats to their security and aimed to reinforce prevention through local community alert networks. In North Kivu, engagement with women leaders resulted in enhanced collaboration with local authorities, including the armed forces, the police and the local protection committees, to ensure timely sharing of CRSV alerts. In Ituri province, the Civil Affairs Section joined the Force Engagement Team in exchanges with women and girls on protection issues, including to sensitize them to the concept of CRSV and help them in identifying concrete protection recommendations, like increased MONUSCO patrols.

An Engagement Team from the MONUSCO Malawi Contingent interacts with women from the rural community of Maboya, North Kivu. Photo: MONUSCO.

STORY 2 Anti-Balaka armed elements issue command orders on sexual violence and disarm following MINUSCA engagement

The Senior Women's Protection Adviser from MINUSCA, during a sensitization session conducted for Anti-Balaka combatants in the Central African Republic. Photo: MINUSCA.

MINUSCA has documented ongoing patterns of sexual slavery and forced marriage of young girls committed by armed groups and security forces under the cover of marriage in the Central African Republic. To address these concerns, the Senior Women's Protection Adviser, jointly with the Force and the Head of Field Office, engaged in dialogue with three Anti-Balaka leaders in Batangafo, Ouham Prefecture, to exchange on their views, ideas and practices in relation to women and girls and the notion of sexual violence. Subsequently, a sensitization session for Anti-Balaka leaders and 120 of their elements was organized in August 2022 by the Senior Women's Protection Adviser together with Child Protection Unit and Human Rights Division. These armed group members were sensitized on human rights and international humanitarian law, including the notion of consent, the legal framework for marriage, gender equality, sexual violence, and child rights violations. Participants were encouraged to foster a culture of peace, to respect women and girls, and to engage in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The Anti-Balaka leaders acknowledged positively the initiative by MINUSCA to explain "norms that they didn't know about" and requested further engagement for approximately 300 additional armed elements. They agreed to issue command orders on the prohibition of sexual violence (verbal orders, as they are not literate). A total of 37 local Anti-Balaka members that had been sensitized, disarmed in January 2023, including the three Zone Commanders.

STORY 3 MINUSMA engages with a signatory armed group to accelerate actions to address CRSV

In line with its mandate to support the engagement of signatory armed groups to the peace agreement in the fight against CRSV, MINUSMA continued to pursue dialogue with the high-level members of the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA), through a series of technical discussions towards the effective implementation of commitments made by the group in the Unilateral Communiqué of the Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad on the Prevention and Fight Against Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and its action plan signed in July 2017. CMA's leadership subsequently renewed its commitment to accelerating implementation of its action plan by the end of 2023, including through the dissemination of command orders prohibiting the use of sexual violence by combatants.

STORY 4 UNMISS facilitates exchanges on CRSV between the armed forces and civil society organizations as part of its efforts to support implementation of the national action plan on CRSV

The Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser continued to provide technical assistance and accompaniment to the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) towards effective implementation of the 2021 Action Plan for the Armed Forces on Addressing CRSV in South Sudan. The JIC is composed of senior members belonging to parties to the conflict, namely South Sudan Peoples' Defence Forces (SSPDF), Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition (SPLA/IO) and South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA). A first of its kind interaction between civil society organizations who are members of the Joint Consultation Forum on CRSV[2] and senior officials of the JIC was organized to exchange views on how to collectively address the issue of CRSV. It was agreed that the two groups would interact regularly, with the support of UNMISS, to share information on CRSV early-warning indicators and hotspots, and strategize together on how to address protection and prevention concerns.

Interaction between the JCF and the JIC facilitated by UNMISS. Photo: UNMISS.

UNMISS also facilitated five visits of the JIC to military training centres in the country with the aim of capacity-building and awareness-raising on prevention and response to CRSV for future graduates of the National Unified Forces. The visits helped to assess the knowledge of the graduating forces on CRSV, to sensitize them on the issue and to formulate recommendations to the commanders accordingly.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and UNMISS leadership collaborate on the prevention and response to CRSV in South Sudan

Peacekeeping missions engage in dialogue with parties to the conflict towards formalizing and implementing commitments on preventing CRSV with the support of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The signing of the Joint Communiqué of the Republic of South Sudan and the United Nations on the Prevention of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in 2014 enabled the adoption of a series of national action plans on prevention and response to CRSV. Since then, the Special Representative has continued to engage with the Government of South Sudan, in collaboration with UNMISS, to support the implementation of these commitments.

Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, with Special Representative of the Secretary General of UNMISS, Nicholas Haysom, during a visit to South Sudan in October 2022. Photo: UNMISS.

In 2022, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, visited the country to re-engage key actors in collaboration with UNMISS leadership and the Senior Women's Protection Adviser. Such engagements included discussions with the President and First Vice-President and the Ministers of Defence, Justice and Gender, and emphasized the need for accountability measures to be taken by authorities, including towards prosecution of those who commit, command or condone CRSV. Special Representative Patten also met with survivors and their children born as a result of CRSV. On another occasion, the Special Representative and UNMISS leadership participated in a town hall meeting for UNMISS staff and partners to mark the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict 2022, highlighting UNMISS's strategic efforts to tackle CRSV and calling on the mission to focus further on prevention. **Click here to read** the summary of remarks by Special Representative Patten.

2 The Joint Consultation Forum was established by the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser in 2019 and serves as a platform for dialogue between UNMISS and civil society organizations in South Sudan working on concerns related to CRSV.

OBJECTIVE 2 – ENDING IMPUNITY FOR CRSV

Field missions should advocate for credible investigations and prosecutions of CRSV cases and promote safe and effective remedies, including reparations, for victims/survivors taking due consideration of a victim/survivor-centred approach. They should provide support to strengthen national capacities to address impunity for CRSV crimes by strengthening national criminal justice mechanisms, promoting safe and effective remedies for victims, promoting the respect of due process and fair trial standards, as well as supporting legislative and policy reform.

STORY 5 — 77 cases of CRSV by armed groups transferred to the Special Criminal Court of the Central African Republic and the Court's first verdict against a CRSV perpetrator

In a series of investigations, MINUSCA documented widespread incidents of CRSV perpetrated by a coalition of armed groups in the prefectures of Mbomou and Haute-Kotto between 2020 and 2022. At least 245 survivors were affected. As part of efforts to respond to these incidents, MINUSCA and partners, including the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and the United Nations Development Programme, united in their efforts to provide technical and operational assistance to the national authorities to conduct investigations, through the Joint Rapid Response Unit to Prevent Sexual Violence against Women and Children (UMIRR). A mission was deployed to Bakouma in March 2022 during which authorities interviewed a total of 123 victims and witnesses. Despite security fears as perpetrators continued to operate around the area, according to the local prosecutor, more than 400 alleged survivors of CRSV approached UMIRR to provide their testimonies during the investigations. Seventy-seven of these statements could be recorded and were forwarded for prosecution. In December 2022 the Prosecutor General of Bambari transmitted the file to the Special Criminal Court of the Central African Republic.

In addition, in 2022, as part of MINUSCA's ongoing support to the fight against impunity for sexual violence crimes, the mission delivered training sessions to judicial police officers of the Special Criminal Court on investigation techniques for crimes of sexual violence, among others. MINUSCA welcomed the first verdict delivered by the Special Criminal Court in October 2022 and the conviction of a commander of the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) for the rapes perpetrated by his subordinates, both as a war crime and as a crime against humanity. The Court appreciated his criminal responsibility for rapes on the basis of command of responsibility and the commander was sentenced to life imprisonment for this and other crimes. This decision was confirmed in December 2022 after appeal of the October sentence.

MINUSCA ensured the smooth running of the first hearing of the Special Criminal Court and provided security and protection for local judges, victims and witnesses. Photo: MINUSCA.

STORY 6 New convictions and prosecutions for CRSV cases with MONUSCO support to judicial authorities

MONUSCO continued to provide critical assistance to military, civilian and judicial authorities with the investigation, prosecution and trial of individuals charged with sexual violence crimes across the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In 2022, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, integrated within MONUSCO, conducted 10 field missions, convening different civilian and uniformed sections, to monitor and investigate major human rights violations, resulting in the referral of cases to judicial authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO also assisted the organization of six mobile courts in which CRSV cases were heard. During the year, the judicial system delivered 47 convictions on charges related to CRSV. Among the convictions, 22 were against members of the national armed forces, 11 against members of the national police and the others against civilians. In total, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and MONUSCO's Justice Support Section monitored and assisted authorities on 71 judicial processes involving CRSV.

MONUSCO also facilitated protection assistance and access to care services for survivors of sexual violence to enable their safe participation in the judicial process. Over 600 victims and witnesses received logistical, legal, and psychological support during hearings related to CRSV judicial processes. This assistance enabled the participation of victims and witnesses from distant locations.

STORY 7 UNMISS supports survivors of CRSV as justice is delivered through General Court Martials

UNMISS provided technical and logistical support to the Military Justice Directorate in the context of two General Court Martials addressing accountability for CRSV, during deployment in Yei, Central Equatoria State and in Bentiu, Unity State. In the former, five members of the South Sudanese Army, accused of rape, were convicted, dismissed and stripped of their ranks, sentenced up to 10 years imprisonment and required to pay compensation to survivors. UNMISS arranged for CRSV survivors in Yei to access counselling, interpretation, logistical assistance and psychological support during the proceedings, through a trusted local civil society organization. Assistance related to the General Court Martials was part of the mission's ongoing collaboration with the Military Justice Directorate, aimed at strengthening accountability within the army, including for sexual violence crimes.

UNMISS provides technical assistance and support to national authorities to increase accountability for serious crimes, including SGBV. Photo: UNMISS.

In parallel, in June 2022, the Military Justice Directorate inducted six Judge Advocates into a newly established Specialized CRSV Team with support from the UNMISS Rule of Law Advisory Section and the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser.

STORY 8 Mali adopts a new law on reparations drafted by the Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation Commission with MINUSMA support

In November 2022, the transitional authorities of Mali issued a law dedicated to the reparations of damages caused by serious human rights violations and abuses, including for survivors of CRSV. The bill, which was drafted by the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of Mali, defines the modalities for reparation of damages and offers financial compensation, free-of-charge medical services and rehabilitation measures for CRSV survivors and their children born out of rape. The Commission heard the testimonies of more than 23,000 victims and survivors, and suggested to the transitional authorities a draft dedicated to reparations. Obtaining reparations for CRSV survivors remains a challenge in most cases in Mali, and the establishment of a legal framework is an important step for their healing and recovery.

The establishment and operationalization of the Commission was strongly supported by MINUSMA, including in its work to hear from CRSV survivors and to draft and review the new law. MINUSMA provided technical support to members of the Reparation Commission, which was one of the five subcommissions of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. The Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser also conducted training sessions on techniques for conducting interviews with CRSV survivors, which benefited 45 members of all five regional offices of the Commission that conducted the hearings.

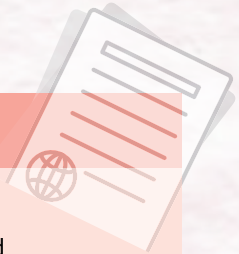
An information session for police officers on SGBV delivered by United Nations Police in the Central African Republic. Photo: MINUSCA.

OBJECTIVE 3 – AWARENESS AND CONDEMNATION OF CRSV

Field missions must work to raise society's awareness, at all levels, of CRSV, condemn its perpetration and cease any stigmatization or ostracization of victims. Missions will engage in advocacy, dialogue with parties to conflict, national authorities, and civil society; reporting; and strategic communication to increase awareness and overcome a culture of CRSV acceptance. In country situations in which CRSV is a concern, missions must establish monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements in line with Security Council resolution 1960 (2010).

STORY 9 — Regular reporting and information sharing on CRSV trends and patterns by MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS

Incidents and patterns of CRSV by conflict parties and other armed actors continued to be documented thanks to monitoring, investigation missions and reporting activities by peacekeeping missions and their partners deployed across field locations. Cases were publicly documented, and advocacy was conducted to bring perpetrators to justice and promote access to service for survivors and other victims of violence. The monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements working groups, convened by the Senior Women's Protection Advisers, enabled information sharing relating to early warning indicators and hotspots across United Nations entities for better coordination and cooperation on responses.



REPORTS AND PRESS RELEASES:

Bangui (July 2022): The United Nations issued a report on disturbing events in the Central African Republic based on investigations by the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA. The report describes how specific armed groups have perpetrated recurring acts of sexual violence in a systematic and widespread manner. **The report is available here** (in French).

Juba (September 2022): A joint human rights report published by UNMISS and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has documented violations committed in the context of hostilities in southern Unity State, with numerous killings, and abductions. Many of the abductees were subjected to sexual violence, including girls as young as 8 years old, and a 9-year-old girl who was gang-raped to death. A total of 131 cases of rape and gang rape were documented. **The report is available here.**

Kinshasa (December 2022): MONUSCO shared the results of a preliminary investigation into attacks allegedly perpetrated by the M23 armed group in Kishishe and Bambo, in North Kivu province, in late November 2022. Through interviews with survivors and witnesses, MONUSCO determined that at least 131 civilians had been killed and at least 22 women and five girls were raped during the attacks. **The press release is available here** (in French).

STORY 10 Religious leaders in South Sudan and Mali join voices with the United Nations to condemn CRSV and demand accountability

The South Sudan Council of Churches and the Islamic Council of South Sudan disseminated messages related to CRSV to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict drafted with the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser's technical support. This was the first time the Islamic Council disseminated messages on CRSV: "… Government institutions have the primary responsibility to support survivors with comprehensive services such as health, psychosocial counselling and justice. Communities, civil society, youth leaders and citizens in general should also support survivors in such efforts" reads the statement from the South Sudan Islamic Council.

The Senior Women Protection Adviser from MINUSMA at the conclave to adopt a fatwa on CRSV. Photo: MINUSMA.

In Mali, through regular engagement, MINUSMA strengthened its partnership with religious leaders of the High Islamic Council of Mali to amplify the efforts on the prevention and response to CRSV. Since the signing of a declaration of commitment in the fight against CRSV by the President of the High Islamic Council in Bamako in 2020 during a high-level advocacy panel, MINUSMA provided technical support for the development of an Action Plan outlining key commitments, notably including the adoption of a fatwa (a legal opinion on a point of Islamic Law) prohibiting CRSV. From 24 to 25 January 2023, the Mission convened 50 imams for a two-day conclave in Bamako, from all regions of Mali. As a result, in January 2023, the High Islamic Council drafted and formally adopted a fatwa on the prevention and response to CRSV.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Engaging with communities, local civil society and religious actors in Mali as a means towards CRSV prevention and ensuring a protective environment for survivors

"The Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser at MINUSMA has been raising awareness on and mainstreaming CRSV issues within mission components (police, military and civilians) and national counterparts, in close collaboration with civil society, including religious leaders. Keeping survivors at the centre of our interventions, following the survivor-centred approach, has been my method as the SWPA [Senior Women's Protection Adviser]. Impunity for CRSV crimes, social exclusion, fear of reprisals, stigmatization and lack of services remain areas of concern for survivors in Mali. To address these issues, in addition to engaging with state authorities, throughout 2022, my office engaged with the Haut Conseil Islamique to produce a fatwa on CRSV to be used during the Friday preaching. My office also strengthened community-based interventions, aimed to help build capacity of local organizations, to better prepare them to prevent and respond to CRSV and thereby support survivors."

Fabiola Wizeye Ngeruka, Senior Women's Protection Adviser, MINUSMA between August 2021 and March 2023

Statements from the Islamic Council and South Sudan Council of Churches.

STORY 11 MINUSMA reinforces capacities of civil society organizations on monitoring and reporting on CRSV

In order to strengthen prevention and response to CRSV, the Security Council, in its resolution 1960 (2010), mandated the establishment of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements (MARA). The information gathered is used to inform strategic advocacy, enhance prevention and programmatic responses for survivors of CRSV. As part of efforts to operationalize the MARA and to increase the availability of reliable information and analysis on CRSV, MINUSMA supported its partners in Mali in collecting, analysing, and using data on CRSV. Nearly 75 participants, including members of the gender-based violence subcluster and United Nations agencies, as well as government personnel from the National Human Rights Commission were part of training sessions conducted in Bamako and Mopti to enhance their capacity to collect, analyse and safely share information on CRSV, thereby improving the reporting quality and case analysis. The training conducted for Mopti region was important as most of the CRSV cases reported by MINUSMA were perpetrated in Mopti region and surrounding areas. Do-no-harm and confidentiality, among other principles, of a survivor-centred approach were emphasized.

The Women Protection Adviser in MINUSMA during a discussion on MARA. Photo: MINUSMA.

STORY 12 MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict through various media platforms

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Mission leadership from MINUSCA commemorates survivors on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, 2022

"MINUSCA and the UN agencies in the CAR intend to continue their close partnerships with the Central African authorities and their protection, advocacy, investigation and awareness-raising activities [on CRSV]. This combination of collective efforts, including by civil society, must amplify the fight and put an end to the culture of silence and impunity, placing survivors and prevention at the centre of our collective response."

Valentine Rugwabiza, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the MINUSCA since February 2022.

In commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, MINUSMA, in collaboration with the Cinema numérique ambulant, a local non-governmental organization, organized a mobile cinema session in Bamako, attended by 500 participants including youth groups. This film, produced by the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, featured a series of 10 testimonies of SGBV survivors in Mali to sensitize viewers about stigmatization. The participating authorities, the local community and religious leaders called on survivors to break the silence, denounced stigmatization and urged all participants to prevent SGBV and CRSV. The mission also participated in the International Forum on Sports in Bamako and made a presentation on CRSV for 1,000 participants during the opening ceremony. The Senior Women's Protection Adviser also participated in radio talk shows in collaboration with other United Nations entities to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Senior Women's Protection Adviser from MINUSMA, along with a representative of the United Nations Population Fund in Mali, addresses CRSV on Radio Mikado. Photo: MINUSMA.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the Office of the Special Adviser to the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Youth, Gender and Violence against Women jointly organized a conference dedicated to the elimination of CRSV. The event was attended by 48 women and 32 men, including high-level government officials, members of the national armed forces, civil society, the academic community, United Nations entities and the diplomatic corps. The event saw presentations on CRSV trends in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past years, as well as video testimonies from survivors. The Director of the Joint Human Rights Office and the Special Adviser focused the attention of the audience on the Joint Communique signed by the Government and the United Nations to prevent and respond to CRSV, as well as the promotion and protection of women's rights.

The Joint Human Rights Office and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo organize a workshop to commemorate the International Day. Photo: MONUSCO.

In South Sudan, UNMISS headquarters and field offices organized radio talk shows, marches, workshops and sports activities to spread awareness and mark the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict. In collaboration with the Minister of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare, UNMISS launched a six-month awareness raising campaign on the "survivor-centred approach" to prevent and respond to CRSV in South Sudan. The campaign specifically seeks to elevate the rights and needs of women and girls who become pregnant as a result of CRSV and their children, pursuant to the recommendations of the 2022 report of the Secretary-General. Click here link to listen to the radio show.

Senior Women's Protection Adviser announces the six-month awareness raising campaign on the 'Survivor-Centred Approach' on Radio Miraya. Photo: UNMISS.

NUMBER OF POSTS RELATED TO CRSV AND SGBV PUBLISHED BY THE FOUR MISSIONS ON THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEB PAGES IN 2022

MINUSCA	MINUSMA	MONUSCO	UNMISS
At least 42	At least 30	At least 24	At least 45

OBJECTIVE 4 – CAPACITY OF NATIONAL ACTORS TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS CRSV

United Nations field missions should work closely with justice, law enforcement and military authorities and civil society organizations to support: a) national ownership of CRSV prevention and response strategies; b) strong national legal and policy frameworks, including terrorism-related legislation; c) sustainable implementation capacities, including independent, impartial, prompt, effective and appropriately transparent investigations and prosecutions; and d) effective and gender-sensitive mechanisms to protect and support victims/survivors/witnesses, as well as access for the accused to legal aid.

STORY 13 MINUSMA, MONUSCO and UNMISS build capacities of police forces in line with respective national commitments on CRSV

MINUSMA has continued to train cohorts of Malian police officers to prevent sexual violence and to refer CRSV survivors to care service providers. Building on the joint project launched in 2021 by MINUSMA and the Malian Police to integrate new CRSV modules within the national police training curriculum and to build the capacity of the Malian police, the mission trained all 13 companies from the National Police Academy, reaching a total of 2,967 students, including 690 women, using the new CRSV module. The participants formally committed to a survivor-centred and gender-responsive approach while dealing with CRSV cases once they graduated from the police academy.

In South Sudan, the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser. in collaboration with the United Nations Police Special SGBV Team of UNMISS organized a two-day training for senior South Sudan Police Service officers to take stock of the progress and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the National Police Action Plan to address CRSV, launched in 2019. The discussions were meant to inform strategic decisions on the prevention and response to CRSV by the national police. The workshop was attended by 15 officers, including women officers, who received a refresher course on CRSV and then engaged in deep discussions on the Action Plan, with participants proposing ideas on how best to implement it in the future.

Left: Participants from the United Nations Police specialized police team on SGBV and the national police of South Sudan during an interactive two-day training on CRSV. Photo: UNMISS. **Right:** MINUSMA United Nations Police training the police in Mali on SGBV and CRSV. Photo: MINUSMA.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office provided technical assistance for the organization of two training workshops for senior national police officials that were focused on the investigation of SGBV, including cases of CRSV and violence against children. The participants included members of the National Police, Child Protection and Sexual Violence Prevention sections. These workshops, co-led by the United Nations Police specialized police team on SGBV, were aimed at identifying good practices and persistent challenges in the context of the judicial investigations carried out by the police, in particular, in cases of CRSV, and to develop a road map to strengthen the judicial response to these crimes.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

The specialized police team on SGBV (SPT-SGBV) at MONUSCO trains national counterpart to respond to CRSV.

"My role in the SPT-SGBV is to fight against SGBV and CRSV daily along with our national counterparts, the Congolese National police. I have been involved in the creation and delivery of a new multisectoral workshop for experts such as the national police investigators, psychologists, doctors and prosecutors. This training, which follows a survivor centred-approach, targeted officers in remote areas in South Kivu and Bunia regions and helped to share best practices with Judicial Police Officers and Inspectors in responding to CRSV survivors. Every day I try my best to increase protection for our host communities, one action at a time."

Ms. Fiorella Giuliana Litan Pineda, deputy SPT-SGBV team leader and CRSV focal point in MONUSCO, from June 2022 to June 2023.

STORY 14 Local civil society organizations empowered by MINUSMA to respond to CRSV and support survivors

Through community-based interventions that aimed to increase the protection for women and girls, MINUSMA regularly built capacity of local actors to promote a safe environment, free of stigma for survivors of CRSV. A total of seven civil society organizations and think tanks were able to design and expand their activities to end CRSV against women and girls following capacity-building sessions organized by the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser. Those organizations were able to contribute to CRSV case management by offering psychological support to CRSV survivors and referring them to appropriate services. At the request of these organizations, in 2022, MINUSMA provided sensitization training to a total of 1,845 participants during different forums and workshops on the prevention of CRSV and available services for comprehensive care of survivors.

STORY 15 MINUSMA builds capacity of communities on the link between CRSV and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons

In Mali, the proliferation of weapons, particularly small arms, and light weapons continued to fuel sexual violence perpetrated by unidentified armed individuals in 2022. Given that arms play a role in indirectly and directly facilitating CRSV, the security sector reform/disarmament, demobilization and reintegration Section and the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser collaborated with the Permanent Secretariat for Small Arms and Light Weapons to organize a series of capacity-building activities for a total 110 participants, including women from the community and religious leadership, youth and women of civil society groups, artisanal weapon makers, traditional hunters, and representatives of transporters. These sessions focused on the mainstreaming of gender, women and child protection issues during the design and implementation of policies, regulatory measures, and holistic security sector reform/disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Trainings also covered the dangers arising from the illegal possession of weapons, trading, and trafficking in connection to the perpetration of CRSV and GBV. The sessions on CRSV helped reinvigorate the beneficiaries in their efforts to prevent CRSV through sensitization and training sessions for community members and former combatants in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration cantonment sites.

STORY 16 Domestication and operationalization of the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of CRSV with UNMISS support

As part of support of UNMISS towards legislative reform in line with international legal provisions on CRSV, the Office of the Senior Women's Protection Adviser and the Rule of Law Advisory Section of UNMISS collaboratively organized a two-day consultation on the domestication and operationalization of the Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of CRSV developed by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict in 2021.This guidance is intended to assist State legislators and international organizations providing legal assistance to requesting States, practitioners such as prosecutors, investigators, and lawyers, civil society organizations in implementing a robust legal and procedural framework in compliance with international norms and obligations relating to CRSV. Attended by lawyers, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, the consultation was opened by the Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare. Participants discussed the draft Anti-Gender Based Violence bill and formulated recommendations in a statement subsequently delivered to the Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare for recognizing CRSV crimes and strengthening the provisions in the draft anti-GBV bill and other pending draft bills in South Sudan.

UNMISS and civil society organizations present to the Minister of Gender their recommendations for legal provisions on CRSV in South Sudan laws. Photo: UNMISS.

OBJECTIVE 5 – EMPOWERMENT OF VICTIMS/SURVIVORS

Peace and national reconciliation processes should address the needs of victims of CRSV and, to the extent possible, provide suitable avenues for victim/survivor support organizations to participate. Field missions must promptly refer victims/survivors to national or international actors that can provide the necessary medical, psychosocial, legal and economic support or physical protection.

STORY 17 — New law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the protection and reparation for victims of CRSV and other crimes against peace and security drafted with MONUSCO support

To ensure that the cause of supporting survivors of sexual violence finds place in laws, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO supported national authorities with the development of a law on protection and reparation for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and other crimes against peace and security. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office has maintained an active dialogue in recent years with the Office of the Special Adviser to the President for Youth and the Fight Against Violence against Women, to advance the implementation of the Joint Communiqué to address CRSV in the country (2013) and its Addendum (2019), which includes engagements to adopt such a law and to establish a reparations fund. MONUSCO participated in technical consultations and provided a comprehensive list of suggestions and comments on the draft law to ensure its compliance with international legal standards and that it forms part of a holistic transitional justice process. On 8 December, the National Assembly approved the draft law on reparations, and the law was promulgated by the Head of State on 29 December 2022. Reparations and protection are crucial aspects of justice for survivors in their fight against impunity, and this law represents a significant milestone for access to justice and redress for survivors of CRSV in the country. The implementing decree of the law on reparation is currently being drafted, and MONUSCO will continue to advocate with the Government for the full involvement and participation of survivors of CRSV in this decree and all transitional justice processes.

Responses for CRSV survivors by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

UNMIK has supported Kosovo in addressing the legacy of CRSV perpetrated during and after the 1998–1999 conflict through institutional capacity-building and facilitating the economic empowerment of CRSV survivors. Since its establishment in 2018, the government commission responsible for the verification and recognition of the status of survivors of CRSV received over **1,700 applications** for granting of survivor status. Throughout 2022, UNMIK, monitored and supported awareness-raising campaigns conducted by the commission to encourage survivors to apply for the status and access services. To amplify its advocacy efforts, UNMIK, in partnership with a local civil society organization, created a short **video** in both official languages that explains how CRSV survivors can apply for the pension from the commission and what services they may benefit from. As of September 2022, 1,322 applicants (1,261 women and 61 men) had been granted survivor status. In addition, UNMIK supported the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence by facilitating meetings with various stakeholders, including the government commission, a civil society organization and CRSV survivors themselves, echoing the need to pursue a human rights approach with regards to responding to CRSV.

Women in Kosovo during a demonstration for gender equality. Photo: UNMIK.

STORY 18 UNMISS supports 200 former abductees through a project to bring them back from "victimhood" and transform them into "agents of change" in their communities

Holistic responses to survivors' needs form an essential part of the survivor-centred approach. Keeping this important principle in mind, UNMISS and a local civil society organization, Rural Development Action Aid launched the second phase of a project providing livelihood support and trainings, as well as psychosocial support, for nearly 200 CRSV survivors, who had been abducted by armed groups in Western Equatoria, South Sudan. The project, which is funded by the European Union, aims to empower women and girls and to facilitate their reintegration into communities through socioeconomic empowerment. The ongoing project also seeks to establish survivors' networks and provide them leadership skills to be able to advocate for their rights and for the rights of other survivors of CRSV, effectively supporting their empowerment as change agents in their communities in Western Equatoria. Click on this link to see a short video on the project.

Project beneficiaries participating in a training. Photo: Rural Development Action Aid.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

UNMISS partners with a local organization to empower CRSV survivors in Western Equatoria, South Sudan

"Rural Development Action Aid's engagement with survivors of CRSV ensured that their voices, needs and choices were at the centre of our interventions which included creating an enabling environment, also addressing recovery from trauma. Economic empowerment brings dignity in the survivors' lives and helps them in improving their livelihood and plays a vital role in sustaining their families and communities. The survivors' networks provide a forum for them to express themselves, tell their stories and support them in their different endeavours. The survivor's networks also advocate for survivors who were not able to benefit from the project. These networks seek to enhance skills of survivors to manage day to day challenges, to bring hope and change in their lives and in their communities."

Father John Ngbapia, Director, Rural Development Action Aid, South Sudan

CHALLENGES TO PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CRSV

In 2022, peacekeeping missions faced a wide range of security, operational, and logistical constraints in implementing their mandates to prevent and respond to CRSV, for instance:

- The **systemic underreporting of CRSV** due to shame, stigmatization, fear of reprisals, inaccessibility to conflict affected areas, and the lack of resources and protection for survivors, was a challenge to mandate implementation faced by all peacekeeping missions in 2022.
- The **deteriorating security situation** in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, movement restrictions for United Nations personnel and anti-MONUSCO demonstrations further limited access for monitoring and reporting of CRSV in affected locations by MONUSCO.
- **Floods and poor infrastructure** in South Sudan limited access of the mission to certain areas affected by conflict thereby contributing to underreporting of CRSV by the missions in difficult to reach locations.
- The **fuel shortage** in the Central African Republic in 2022 impacted movements by MINUSCA and, in some cases, forced the mission to temporarily scale back operations while armed groups took advantage of the situation to seek to recapture strongholds lost in early 2021.
- The **political transitions** in Mali and recent turnover in government offices made sustainable engagement with authorities on the implementation of the Joint Communiqué on CRSV more difficult.
- **Limited budgetary and human resources** dedicated to the CRSV mandate implementation remained far from commensurate with the scale of the CRSV trends and patterns in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and South Sudan. In 2022, there were only 22 Women's Protection Adviser positions in mission budgets (9 international, 6 national and 7 volunteer).

A girl in Mali. Photo: MINUSMA.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF PEACE OPERATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

As part of its mandate to support peacekeeping operations in increasing effectiveness in preventing and responding to CRSV, the Department of Peace Operations provided ongoing guidance and technical support to missions, including through guidance tools, webinars on CRSV and the facilitation of the exchange of good practices on mandate implementation across missions.

Click here to watch a10-minute educational animated film by the Department of Peace Operations that illustrates how United Nations field missions prevent and respond to CRSV with a survivor-centred approach. This initiative was part of efforts to roll out the CRSV policy and handbook and to make the guidance content more accessible for field personnel.

The Department of Peace Operations also convened a training course for a group of 32 civilian and uniformed CRSV Focal Points and Women's Protection Advisers from peacekeeping missions, held in Entebbe, Uganda in November 2022. The event was organized in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Through presentations and practical scenario-based exercises, the course enhanced participants' knowledge and capacity to effectively prevent and respond to CRSV and strengthened in-mission collaboration and coordination on CRSV by enabling relationship building between participants. Click here to watch a short video.

Group picture from the training in Entebbe, November 2022. Photo: RSCE.

Going forward, efforts of the Department of Peace Operations to support the prevention and response to CRSV will continue to include the following areas of work:

- Promotion of whole-of-mission and coordinated approaches to mandate implementation, led by senior leadership, and in support of national commitments on CRSV
- Provision of user-friendly policy, guidance and technical support on CRSV by Headquarters
- Learning from past transitions to ensure CRSV prevention and response is fully integrated into future mission transition processes
- Updating specialized and scenario-based training on CRSV so that personnel capacity to prevent and respond to CRSV is enhanced
- Contributing to enhanced coordination and coherence on CRSV across the United Nations system, notably through sustained participation in the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict network
- Helping to raise awareness on CRSV among United Nations Member States and the broad public to increase support to this mandate.

Participants at the pilot training course in Entebbe, November 2022. Photo: RSCE.

REFERENCE AND CONTACT

"2022 Annual Summaries of Activities and Good Practices by United Nations Peacekeeping Missions in Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence "

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Front cover credits:
Left: In MINUSCA, women peacekeepers play an important role in building trust with local populations. Photo: MINUSCA.
Right: Workshop on mechanisms for monitoring, analysing and reporting on CRSV organized by MINUSMA in Bamako, Mali. Photo: MINUSMA.

Awareness-raising session on GBV organized by MINUSMA. Photo: MINUSMA.

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