

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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CONTENTS

OPENING NOTES	3
ACRONYMS	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	5
INTRODUCTION	6
Context	6
UN Mechanism to Address CRSV	7
Objectives & Signposting	7
Methodology	8
CRSV DEFINED	9
THE PRIVATE SECTOR’S ROLE IN GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	11
The Private Sector: a Partner in Peace and Security	12
Why Private Sector Contributions to the CRSV Cause Matter	12
BUSINESS ACTION FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CRSV	16
Action 1: Mainstream CRSV Principles	17
Action 2: Develop a Strong Corporate Responsibility Agenda	20
Action 3: Align Your Business with International Frameworks	25
Action 4: Develop Inclusive Economic Empowerment Initiatives	27
Action 5: Raise Local, National and Global Awareness & Increase Understanding of CRSV	33
Action 6: Develop Strategies to Support CRSV Survivors	37
Action 7: Commit to Social Investment and Philantahropy	42
ACTIONS TO DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY SUPPORT CRSV SURVIVORS	44
CONCLUSION	46
HELPFUL RESOURCES	47

OPENING NOTES

The UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network (UN Action), of which I am proud to be the Chair, has been uniting efforts across the United Nations’ system with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict for over a decade. Despite basic recognition that the United Nations addresses Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) , I am resolute in the belief that there is a need to grow the circle of allies to support the work of this critical network, and the discharging of my mandate. Key among such strategic partners to the United Nations is the private sector.

CRSV is war’s oldest, but most silenced crime. CRSV takes on many forms, including rape, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced marriage, all within the context of conflict. Disproportionately affecting women and girls, CRSV is a severely underreported crime that has the power to destroy lives, families and communities. In my role as the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, I have continuously heard from survivors of their desire to become full participants within their communities: a feat I strongly believe the private sector can directly contribute to. By initiating and investing in economic empowerment activities in the aftermath of CRSV perpetration, survivors across many conflict-affected contexts can live lives of financial freedom while boosting their families and communities for effective reintegration. The private sector is also well-positioned to indirectly support CRSV prevention efforts, such as through strengthening gender equality, upholding basic human rights and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Addressing CRSV: Private Sector Opportunities for Engagement gives compelling examples and outlines how innovative and unique collaborations with the private sector can effectively address CRSV. The development of this white paper with Committed to Good, of which I am extremely grateful for, will inspire private sector engagement and help foster more peaceful and prosperous countries.

PRAMILA PATTEN
Under Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict



While the private sector has taken fundamental strides in combatting many of today’s global development challenges, especially by aligning business operations and ambitions with the Sustainable Development Goals, there remains substantial opportunities for even further engagement. This is especially true of issues directly impacting progress towards gender equality, specifically conflict-related sexual violence, which has detrimental consequences for some of the world’s most vulnerable individuals and their communities.

We recognise our responsibility, as well as the critical need for the wider private sector to mobilise greater action on both a local and global scale to eradicate incidences of this war crime in order to better protect people’s human rights and dignity. As a leading private sector humanitarian staffing organisation with 16 years’ experience operating in conflict-affected contexts, and one that has been publicly recognised for our commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment, it was an honour to collaborate with UN Action on this important work.

This paper was designed to provide clear and transparent actions that can be taken by organisations of any nature and size, as well as in any location. It marks the start of a journey where the private sector will better understand how its tools and resources can be used to deliver an even stronger positive social impact in conflict-affected countries to realise a safer reality for some of the world’s most vulnerable. CTG has been implementing many of the practices addressed in this paper for years and looks forward to seeing other organisations adopt similar practices that advance the ambitions and goals of UN Action to help set strong foundations for a more peaceful and thriving future for all.

ALICE LAUGHER
CEO, Committed to Good



ACRONYMS

CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CRSV-MPTF	Conflict-related Sexual Violence Multi-Partner Trust Fund
GBV	Gender-based violence
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex
MPTF	Multi-Partner Trust Fund
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
OSRSG-SVC	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
PRI	Principles for Responsible Investment
SCR	Security Council resolution
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRSR-SVC	Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
UN Action	United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict
UN	United Nations
UNGPs	UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights
WEPS	Women's Empowerment Principles
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to all our colleagues from the UN Action Network and Committed to Good, and Dr. Robert Nagel on behalf of Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) for their valuable input in helping to develop this document.

DISCLAIMER ABOUT TESTIMONIES

All conflict-related sexual violence survivor testimonies and those from service providers are sourced from the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict's publication, *In Their Own Words: Voices of Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence and Service Providers*.¹ Some names have been changed to protect the identities of those interviewed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While private sector action towards sustainable development has gained traction in recent years, there remains huge potential for even further engagement. This is especially true for the prevention and eradication of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network (UN Action), constituting 21 UN entities across the humanitarian, peacebuilding, development spectrum, is the United Nations' only system-wide 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 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. By adopting practices that promote cultures of inclusion and respect, businesses can in turn help reduce or eliminate behaviours and social practices that perpetuate CRSV in the wider community. This applies to all businesses worldwide but especially applies to those operating in conflict-affected countries.

Beyond the moral imperative, business adoption of practices that align with UN Action's goals makes business sense. Not only do businesses centred around a culture of rights, inclusion and respect often outperform their peers, they also have the potential to foster more stable and prosperous societies, offering strong opportunities for business growth and performance.

While much literature exists on efforts to prevent, eradicate and respond to CRSV, the intersection between these efforts and business activity have not been explored. **Addressing CRSV: Private Sector Opportunities for Engagement** aims to fill this gap by exploring the role businesses can play in supporting the strategic goals of the UN to accelerate progress, especially towards supporting CRSV survivors.

This paper begins by providing an overall context of the perpetuation of CRSV and the efforts led by UN Action. Further to this, the paper outlines an action-oriented approach, in recognition of the varying corporate responsibility practices of businesses worldwide. This action-driven approach is divided into 7 sections. The first 3 address how the private sector can support prevention efforts and the final 4 address how the private sector can take further action to support response efforts. Firstly, the series sets out the importance of implementing CRSV principles within a private sector context as the primary foundation for engagement with UN Action's goals. In continuation, the paper encourages businesses to develop a strong corporate responsibility agenda to minimise risks and impacts, such as those related to human rights, on surrounding communities. The paper also notes how various international frameworks and agreements provide businesses with a blueprint to support this process. Furthermore, the paper also explores more specific actions that the private sector can consider to more acutely align business activities and operations to support UN Action. These include promoting inclusive economic empowerment; raising local, national and global awareness of CRSV; developing business strategies to engage with and support CRSV survivors; and providing UN Action with social investment and philanthropic support.

ACTION 1:

Mainstream CRSV Principles

ACTION 2:

Develop a Strong Corporate Responsibility Agenda

ACTION 3:

Align Your Business with International Frameworks

PREVENTION 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

RESPONSE ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

The World Bank classifies 39 countries and/or territories today as being fragile or conflict-affected, which according to the United Nations (UN) covers 2 billion people or a quarter of the world's population.² Conflict-related Sexual Violence (CRSV), which is perpetrated in complex situations of violence and insecurity, remains one of the greatest challenges to global sustainable development and the attainment of prosperity for the world's most vulnerable. The United Nations currently monitors 18 situations of concern where CRSV is a threat, including contexts of conflicts, post-conflicts, and those classified as "others", for the 2021³ reporting period. In 2021 alone, over 3,000 cases of CRSV were verified by the UN; that number, however, does not reflect the full scale and prevalence of these crimes.⁴ While certain groups are at a higher risk of CRSV, no one is exempt.



Despite the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire during the Covid-19 pandemic, recent years have witnessed a substantial increase in violence, with political violence proving to be more deadly than ever.⁵ Conflicts are becoming more internationalised, complex and protracted with civilians facing greater concurrent and overlapping threats than before.⁶ This intensification of violence and conflict has come at a huge cost to local economies and communities.⁷

Conflict has huge implications on the social order and fabric of communities, affecting everything from education, healthcare and poverty to infrastructure and social relations. Men and women experience conflict differently and it has been well documented that women, girls and minority communities disproportionately suffer the consequences of war.⁸ This has been recognised in the UN Security Council resolution 1325, which saw the launch of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in 2000 and is the foundation through which the UN addresses CRSV.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

To this day, situations of conflict often correspond with increased incidences of sexual violence, which has grave consequences on both an individual and community level. As recognised in the Secretary-General's annual report, sexual violence impedes livelihood activities against the recent backdrop of economic shocks and poverty driven by protracted conflict and pandemic related restrictions.¹⁰ CRSV is no longer seen as an inevitable by-product of war, but rather it constitutes a crime that is preventable and punishable under international law. To tackle CRSV holistically, the UN Security Council first specifically recognised and framed CRSV as a concept in 2008,¹¹ later followed by multiple resolutions outlining the mandate of UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action).¹² Chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC), this network of 21 UN entities¹³ is united by the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of armed conflict.

The international humanitarian and development communities as well as governments have traditionally played the most substantial role in CRSV prevention and response. However, given the increasingly complex nature of conflict, it is clear that responses to the world's emergencies are in greater need of coordinated multi-level sector action. This includes involvement by the private sector, which is increasingly being recognised as a major stakeholder for the contributions it can make. Greater private sector engagement, especially from businesses operating in fragile and conflict-affected countries, has the potential to result in enhanced impact and accelerated progress, which is especially needed to prevent and eliminate CRSV.

UN MECHANISM TO ADDRESS CRSV

Through various Security Council resolutions as part of the broader WPS agenda,¹⁴ the UN Security Council has stressed that CRSV can impede the restoration of international peace and security and can exacerbate armed conflicts.

The UN's main mechanism to address CRSV is through the UN Action Network. Created in 2007, the Network is a UN system-wide initiative that leads advocacy, knowledge-building, resource mobilisation and joint programming to prevent and respond to CRSV. The Network is led by the SRSG-SVC to provide strategic and coherent leadership on the CRSV mandate, with the overarching goal that CRSV is prevented, survivors' needs are met, and accountability of perpetrators is enhanced. UN Action's activities are bifurcated: those that are prevention efforts, which includes addressing root causes like gender inequality, and those that assist CRSV response after the perpetration

of the crime, such as service provision and livelihood support. Traditionally funded by governments, UN Action is beginning to explore new strategic partnerships with the private sector as of 2022.

OBJECTIVES & SIGNPOSTING

This paper was designed to inform the private sector on the integral role it can play to cultivate an environment that mitigates risks of, and even prevents incidents of CRSV. It is relevant to organisations operating anywhere in the world, but especially applies to businesses operating in fragile and conflict-affected countries where CRSV occurs. The paper has been designed to apply to businesses and private enterprises across all sectors and of all sizes, from local small and medium enterprises to larger multinational organisations. In doing so, it aims to show how the private sector, especially in conflict-affected countries, can make substantial contributions to UN Action in its efforts to address CRSV which can foster more peaceful and prosperous countries. The objectives of this paper are to:

- Explain UN Action's agenda and work to eradicate CRSV.
- Build knowledge on CRSV prevention and response by the private sector, by explaining how the private sector can adopt CRSV guiding principles in their engagement in CRSV efforts.
- Highlight the opportunities available for the private sector to engage UN Action to address CRSV, and outline frameworks that can be adopted or considered to assist with this.
- Inspire private sector engagement by providing insight into concrete actions that businesses can take to contribute to CRSV efforts through UN Action.

I never reported the incident as there was no reporting facilities around the village. On top of that the incident happened in the countryside where there were no designated facilities for reporting or even seeking medical care for such kind of violence.

(Luul Ali Geele* in Somalia)

This paper is divided into 7 recommended actions, as listed below, that can be taken by the private sector both within and outside of conflict-affected contexts to enhance its engagement with UN Action. These actions have been designed to recognise 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. Each of the actions can be implemented in any order, as well as individually or in conjunction with each other. The first 3 actions address how the private sector can support prevention efforts, where the final 4 address action that more directly support response efforts. In sharing this information, this report aims to highlight to the private sector how it can effectively prevent and respond to CRSV.



METHODOLOGY

This paper has been produced as a result of desk-based research and analysis, consultations with private sector organisations with extensive experience operating in conflict-affected countries, as well as with CRSV survivors and examination of previous testimonies, and further consultations with CRSV, human rights and gender equality experts.

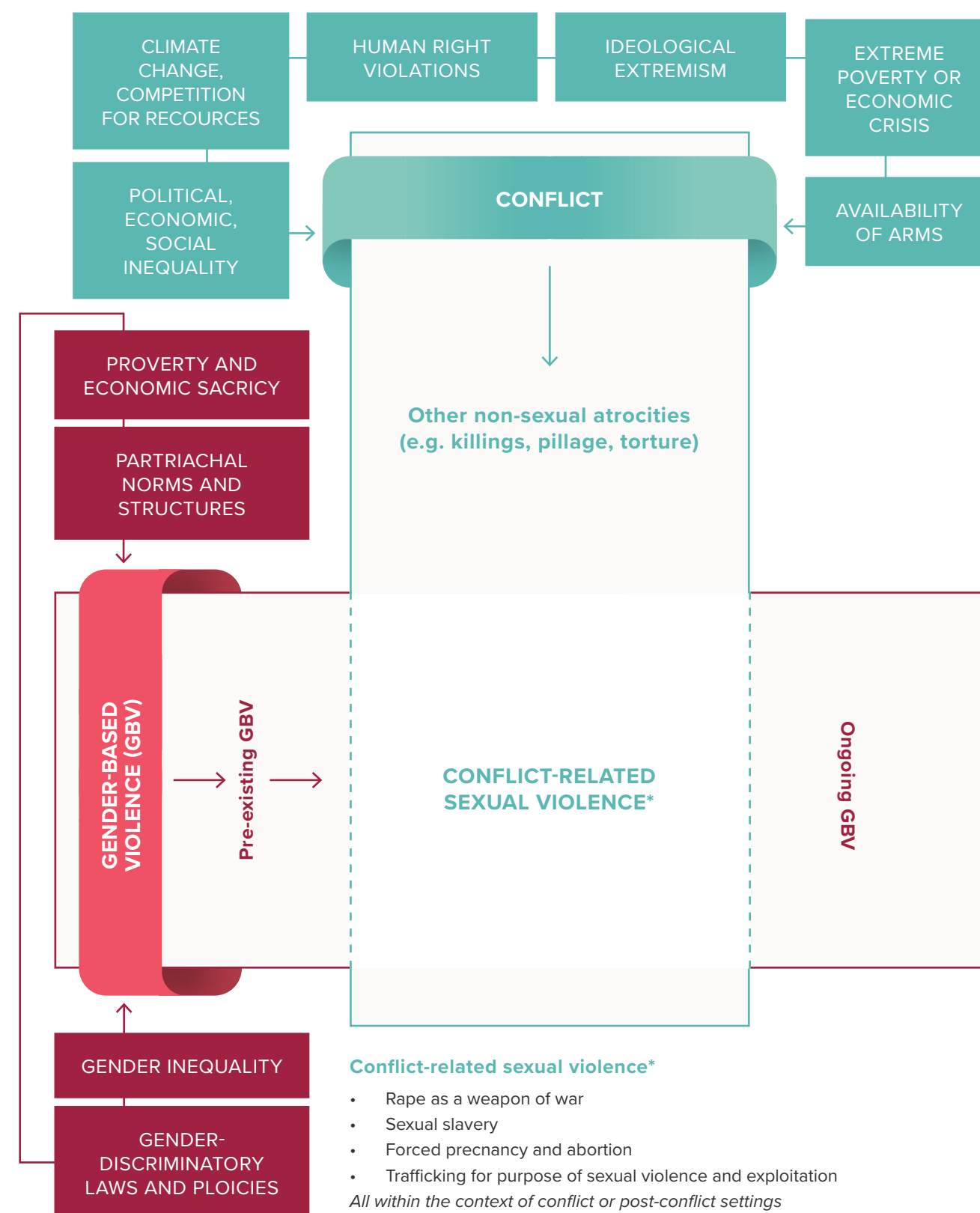
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I was ashamed of myself and disturbed in the mind as fellow men had taken my dignity away by sexually abusing me...
I could not report these atrocities done to me to any authority in DRC since the same authorities persecuted me and were still hunting me to destroy my life forever.

(Anonymous male Congolese refugee in Uganda)

CRSV DEFINED

This diagram showcases conflict-related sexual violence as a form of gender-based violence within a conflict context.



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.

CRSV is defined and recognised by its context, causes, motives and survivors, which differentiates it from gender-based violence (GBV). Under international law, CRSV is a war crime, crime against humanity, form of torture and can be an element of genocide. Conversely, GBV as a crime is defined by national legislation and therefore falls under national jurisdiction.¹⁶ Therefore, distinguishing CRSV from GBV is vital when it comes to justice and accountability efforts, as well as how actors respond in the aftermath of the crime.

CRSV AS A BARRIER TO GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

As a continued threat to global peace and security, CRSV prevents civilians, communities, and countries from moving forward to properly address global development challenges. CRSV shreds the social fabric, triggers displacement, and fuels armed conflict; it has also been used as a tactic of violent extremism, to finance 'terrorist' organisations,¹⁷ and as trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The conditions which CRSV exist are exacerbated by the crime itself, often continuing a cycle of poverty and instability and hindering socioeconomic progress.



THE PRIVATE SECTOR’S ROLE IN GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

According to the World Economic Forum, the private sector provides nearly 90% of jobs globally. This uniquely broad scope means that by taking action to minimise social risks and setting high standards of conduct, businesses, especially those operating in conflict-affected contexts, can become influential agents of change to make direct and substantial contributions to global sustainable development. This is in addition to their role in driving economic growth, providing essential goods and services, and generating tax revenues that can be used to support the development of social and economic infrastructure.

Many private sector organisations are already demonstrating their capabilities in creating innovative solutions to respond to these challenges by initiating technological advancements, leading modernisation in healthcare and helping millions escape poverty through the creation of decent work opportunities. Private sector contributions to development challenges can provide faster, more scalable and sustainable outcomes, as they can act with less restriction than governments, particularly when business and operational strategies directly align with global development ambitions. The private sector’s assistance in the prevention and response to CRSV through UN Action is no exception.



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This photo is for the purpose of illustration only.
Persons featured in the photo are not necessarily survivors of CRSV.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR: A PARTNER IN PEACE AND SECURITY

Globalisation and the interconnected nature of global trade and supply chains has meant that many international businesses have found their operations impacted by or linked to situations of conflict and fragility. As a result, businesses have an increasingly vested interest in realising their role as a partner for peace and security to support efforts to alleviate long-term consequences of conflict, such as CRSV. This is consistent with the established understanding that consolidated and sustained peace requires multi-stakeholder interventions, with input from governments, international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector. Today, the private sector’s legitimate role in peacebuilding, especially of businesses operating in fragile and conflict-affected countries, is more valued and in need than it has ever been before.

For those businesses that do not yet have established links to fragile and conflict-affected countries, it is vital to highlight that these conflict-affected countries, as well as other frontier markets, represent untapped potential and geographical diversification. Not only are many of their populations growing at extraordinary rates, but they are also included in some of the fastest growing economies in the world. While private sector investment in these fragile and conflict-affected markets does not come without substantial risks, the prospects for financial reward and social impact are high.

The private sector can play a substantial role in strengthening the capacity of society, which represents an essential component in the attainment of sustainable peace. Businesses both support the livelihoods of the majority of populations in conflict-affected countries, and have the potential to influence inclusion and social cohesion. The provision of jobs, services, tax revenue and public goods can all help shape outcomes conducive to greater security and the protection of human rights, and this applies to organisations of all sizes.

In many fragile and conflict-affected countries, small and medium enterprises make up the majority of market share, meaning they can collectively shape incentives for peace.²³ This happens through economic and social interactions, promoting social cohesion and providing employment opportunities for substantial proportions of the local population, contributing to greater economic security. While social cohesion²⁴ and economic security are not the only factors that determine peace, they are significant ones.

WHY PRIVATE SECTOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CRSV CAUSE MATTER

The pivotal role of the private sector in contributing to global development has been recognised in Our Common Agenda, the UN Secretary-General’s blueprint for accelerating action towards the SDGs. In light of this, UN entities have ignited a newfound focus on collaborating with the private sector to advance long-term and sustainable change.

As with development efforts in general, the private sector can accelerate progress towards the prevention and elimination of CRSV and provide new and innovative methods of supporting UN Action. As the world’s largest employer, the private sector has a direct impact on the economy and those it employs. Businesses are therefore uniquely positioned to address the root causes of CRSV, by reducing poverty, economic and gendered inequalities, as well as norms through the adoption of industry norms that empower women and challenge traditional gender roles. By identifying and addressing CRSV root causes, the private sector can directly contribute to CRSV prevention efforts.

Private sector companies have the potential to set a precedent of ethical standards and good business conduct that reach beyond government and public sector control to help suppress behaviours and practices conducive to CRSV. Women’s equal participation in the workplace can help undermine harmful gender stereotypes in several significant areas including, for example, their leadership capabilities and suitable job roles, to their contributions to public life and the economy. These perceptions, patterns of behaviour and social norms then diffuse into wider public life, promoting positive long-term change that help foster a reduction in incidents of CRSV.


As of yet, private sector engagement with UN Action and CRSV efforts, and the potentially significant role the private sector can play in supporting this has not been fully realised. However, this opportunity for engagement offers potential for impact and change on an unprecedented scale.

A. Businesses can Play a Critical Role in Defending Human Rights

Primarily, 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.

B. 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. As outlined in UN Women’s Global Study on 1325, growing evidence-based research is proving that countries with higher levels of gender equality are less likely to use force in relation to engagement with other states.²⁶ In line with this, if businesses take action to promote gender equality and address wider root causes of CRSV in conflict-affected or high-risk countries, they will help contribute to more stable economies and contexts where they can operate more profitably. This will help expand local markets in conflict-affected countries, in turn offering greater opportunities to empower women and support CRSV survivors. Over the long-term, businesses therefore have huge potential to enhance their productivity, performance and sustainability, providing lasting benefits to companies, their staff and wider local communities.

**Increased profitability and organisational performance**

Organisations that are driven by a purpose beyond their financial performance and take concrete action to help make the world a better place often outperform their peers in the long-term. The same applies for addressing gender equality and inclusivity more specifically, where companies with more diverse workforces perform better financially.²⁷ This increased profitability has been verified in numerous studies by McKinsey & Company, including one which analysed 1,000 companies across 12 countries.²⁸



**Enhanced reputation and exposure**

Increased consumer awareness has transformed corporate and organisational responsibility into an expectation. By committing to supporting the work of those such as UN Action, organisations are demonstrating their role as good corporate citizens, which in turn enhances their reputations amongst employees, customers and consumers. Additionally, consumers can actively support CRSV

survivors and the UN’s efforts to eradicate sexual violence by choosing to engage with corporations and organisations that advance these commitments.

CASE STUDY

L’Occitane Foundation: Empowering Women in Burkina Faso

L’Occitane en Provence, more commonly known as L’Occitane, is a French luxury cosmetic retailer. For over 30 years, L’Occitane has sourced fair-trade shea butter from women producers in Burkina Faso to help the women build sustainable livelihoods. It has done so by building long-term partnerships with local female shea cooperatives, which has subsequently allowed the women to play a key role in the country’s economic and social development.²⁹

L’Occitane’s business model has directly helped more than 200,000 people: 75% of women involved enrol all (or most) of their children in school and 84% of them are able to contribute to their family expenses. In 2018, L’Occitane’s Foundation committed to support over 33,000 women in Burkina Faso by the end of 2020; by March 2021, the Foundation had supported 42,000 women. To reach even greater heights, the Foundation’s new goal is to support 60,000 women to reach their entrepreneurship and empowerment by 2025.³⁰ On top of this the group’s foundation has also implemented education, literacy programmes, and entrepreneurial projects.

When a consumer buys a L’Occitane product made of fair-trade shea butter, they can be pleased knowing that a woman in Burkina Faso, and her wider community have been supported through the purchase.

Just as L’Occitane identified these particular shea cooperatives to establish a long-term partnership within Burkina Faso in order to create its product, other private sector organisations can also target communities affected by CRSV to mobilise them as suppliers or workers. By offering these communities with business or employment opportunities, the private sector can play a substantial role in empowering victims or survivors through their economic reintegration.



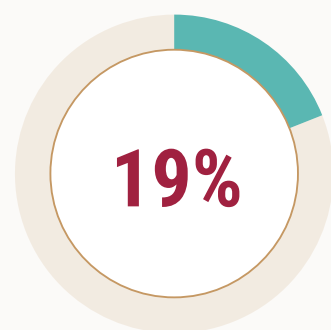
Attract and retain the best talent

Businesses that have an enhanced reputation and a clear commitment to corporate responsibility and diversity have been shown to attract and retain the best talent.³¹ By taking action to eradicate CRSV and promote the interests of CRSV survivors, such as by employing survivors or creating initiatives that support response efforts, businesses can help their employees and prospective employees feel an increased sense of purpose and commitment to their work and the organisation. In turn, companies' values and morals are aligned with that of the employee therefore decreasing the likelihood that this will be a cause for them to seek alternative employment.



Drive Innovation

By mobilising CRSV survivors and members of conflict-affected communities into business workforces, businesses can enhance innovation. Data shows that diverse teams outperform exclusive teams when it comes to innovation because they cultivate work environments where differences in background, opinion and perspectives are valued. This often gives team members greater confidence to voice their ideas and think outside the box, while reaching a wider audience. A Boston Consulting Group study showed that diversity-driven innovation can contribute to an increase in business revenue by up to 19%.³²



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CASE STUDY

inv!

The Invi Bracelet: Innovative Protection Technology

Invi, an innovative Dutch technology company, aims for a world free of sexual violence by creating impactful solutions and spreading knowledge and awareness. One of its tech pieces, the Invi Bracelet, is the world's only scent-based non-violent self-defence tool. When activated, a foul-smell is released which repels an attacker and alerts people in the surroundings.³³

The company developed a low-cost version of the Bracelet to make the innovation accessible for people in humanitarian and conflict-settings. The Invi Bracelet tackles CRSV prevention and response, while offering a low-cost solution to mitigate CRSV. In combination with a community awareness programme (Empowered 2 Protect), the Invi Bracelet was piloted in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. In 2019, its pilot initiative in the DRC reached 936 beneficiaries, with a smaller pilot in 2021 reaching 230 beneficiaries in Burundi and a further 40 beneficiaries in the DRC. Invi has secured funding for its Empowered 2 Protect initiative which projects to reach 10,500 beneficiaries to be scaled over the next few years.



Access New/Untapped Markets

Fragile and conflict-affected countries represent markets and economies with hugely untapped potential and geographic diversity. Already, these countries are home to 2 billion people with many of their populations continuing to grow at extraordinary rates, offering huge pools of new customers and workforce talent. Numerous conflict-affected countries are also rich in natural resources, including high-value resources such as diamond, oil and copper. With some of the fastest growing economies, these markets have the potential to offer businesses huge financial returns while simultaneously enabling businesses to contribute to local economic development. Additionally, providing CRSV survivors with economic opportunities allows companies to navigate the intricacies of local and unknown contexts more efficiently.

C) Businesses can Influence Positive Development Outcomes at National and Global Levels



Improve national productivity and long-term sustained economic growth

Gender inequality, which is one of the root causes of CRSV, is not only a violation of human rights, but it also poses a critical economic challenge. Countries that are not actively promoting gender equality are losing out on transformative economic growth and productivity. By advancing greater equality and closing the gender gap, economies across the world would stand to add \$28 trillion to the global economy.³⁴

\$28

TRILLION

By advancing greater equality and closing the gender gap, economies across the world would stand to add \$28 trillion to the global economy.



Promote greater health and social development of families, communities, and nations

Women who earn a secure income are more likely to invest their earnings on essentials, such as food, health or education for themselves and/or their children, improving the household's health and educational prospects³⁵ Subsequently, these benefits result in positive community development outcomes, providing lasting benefits for future generations.³⁶



Enhance community strength and resilience

When women and excluded minorities have greater agency and decision-making power, and access to and better control over resources, they are better able to prepare, adapt and respond to shocks,³⁷ such as sudden outbreaks in conflict, inflation, epidemics and natural disasters. Governments in conflict-affected countries do not typically have proficient resources to effectively respond to these incidents, therefore by strengthening the resilience of a larger portion of the population, communities can not only reduce the impact of these shocks but also recover much quicker.



Contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

By taking action to prevent and respond to CRSV, businesses will be making direct contributions to the advancement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. For example, companies that establish economic empowerment initiatives can directly contribute to the advancement of SDGs 1, 5, 8, 10 and 16, especially at the local and national levels. Additionally, depending on the industry and nature of the initiatives, companies can further positively impact the climate (SDG 13), the ocean (SDG 14), and the earth (SDG 15).



BUSINESS ACTION FOR PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO CRSV

There are numerous ways that businesses can engage with their surrounding communities to support UN Action in the eradication and prevention of CRSV.

Using case studies and examples, this section will explore 7 recommended actions that businesses can take in practice. These actions aim to 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. This section will cover both basic promising practices as well as examples that can be adopted by larger or more mature private sector organisations. Each of the actions can be implemented in any order, as well as individually or in conjunction with each other. While doing so, it is also important the private sector conducts these engagements with integrity and transparency.

BUSINESS OPERATIONS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED COUNTRIES

There are many different scenarios by which a company may have direct or indirect links with fragile and conflict-affected countries:

- Through provision of services, products or other resources
- Through natural resource or materials extraction
- Transportation routes going through affected areas
- As a result of supply chains or using business sub-contractors
- Delivery of philanthropic programmes or initiatives in these areas



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

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 - ACTION 7:** Commit to Social Investment and Philanthropy

ACTION 1: MAINSTREAM CRSV PRINCIPLES



The UN has developed a series of guiding principles to support personnel working on CRSV.³⁸ However, these principles can also be adopted by the private sector to further efforts to contribute to the UN's goal of maintaining international peace and security. The overarching goals of these principles are to ensure 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.³⁹

DO NO HARM

One of the primary and most recognised ways that the private sector can support peace and security efforts is by applying the 'Do No Harm' principle. Exercised in CRSV prevention and response efforts, it refers to the fundamental obligation not to expose any survivor to further harm or suffering, both physically and psychologically.⁴⁰ The private sector should always be aware of the potential risks of causing further harm to CRSV survivors in the context of their operations, including re-traumatisation, stigmatisation, violence, and marginalisation. While proactive efforts to protect and assist survivors of CRSV are often required, sometimes this implies that not taking action may be the best course of action. For example, in some societies, the stigma attached to sexual violence may result in survivors being rejected and marginalised after it becomes known they were subjected to CRSV, and in other communities, survivors may be forced to marry their attacker. In these instances, to prevent survivors being harmed in these manners by their families and communities, inaction may be the best action.

If a private sector enterprise decides to engage with survivors, it is strongly encouraged that a proper assessment be conducted, analysing the protection risks, gender dynamics, and social attitudes relating to sexual violence to determine factors which may result in further harm to survivors. Such an assessment would allow personnel to exercise good judgment, caution, and sensitivity in all interactions with survivors. This could be done in partnership with the UN and local civil society, particularly women's rights organisations whose purpose is to support CRSV survivors. Additionally, multi-national companies can partner with local organisations who are better aware of the potential dangers and harm to CRSV survivors, so as to mitigate risks.

In this corporate due diligence, another consideration under the Do No Harm principle is that of direct or indirect financing of potential perpetrators of violence against civilians, including those that commit CRSV. Private investment – as well as philanthropic aid – can reinforce market distortions if it feeds the war economy. This can happen, for example, by hiring armed militia members to protect a company's goods or staff, or by signing lucrative agreements with offending government officials: all of which could be perpetrators of CRSV.⁴¹ Any economic activity that benefits these actors has the potential to feed their activities; in turn, this can preserve the war economy and further exacerbate local power imbalances and the root causes of CRSV. To ensure this does not occur, companies can adopt a conflict-sensitive approach to investment, thereby bolstering a peace economy and actively choosing to support survivors through employment in normal peacetime economic activities.

Do No Harm in Context of Journalism and Media

Those reporting on CRSV, whether through video and photo content or written narratives, are responsible for applying the principle of Do No Harm, especially when interacting with CRSV survivors directly. Specific considerations to be taken include informed consent, privacy, zero tolerance for re-traumatisation, and the possibility for a CRSV survivor to withdraw participation at any point.

Responsible journalism in this context also requires journalists or photographers to be fully aware of the conflict or post-conflict context they are entering. This can include conducting local research to understand local cultural and religious contexts, as well as local laws, and mapping risk assessments to recognise power dynamics and the security situation. Further implementation of Do No Harm means understanding the needs of a CRSV survivor when being interviewed, including ensuring there is enough time for the interview, providing a safe environment, and confirming that the survivor is emotionally stable at that point in time for the conversation. The use of translators is also recommended to help the survivor understand the overall context of the interaction.

Do No Harm can also be reflected while interacting with CRSV survivors when it comes to their informed consent: *does the interviewee fully understand what they are agreeing to?* This includes ensuring that the survivor knows what will be discussed beforehand, how and in what context the interview/multimedia will be used, who will be able to see and have access to the material, and how long the material will be available. Further information about reporting on CRSV survivors while adopting the principle of Do No Harm can be accessed [here](#).

CASE STUDY

Service95:
Interview with a CRSV Survivor

Service95 is a podcast and newsletter service curated by English-Albanian pop singer, Dua Lipa. For its eleventh episode, released around the 2022 UN Security Council's Open Debate on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Dua Lipa interviewed CRSV survivor and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Nadia Murad, to talk about her ongoing fight to bring her perpetrators to justice. The podcast recounted an honest and productive conversation between Nadia Murad, human rights lawyer Amal Clooney, and Dua Lipa.⁴² By posting an authorised version of their conversation, Service95 adopted the principle of Do No Harm by providing Ms Murad with a safe space to personally recount her story, in her own words with her consent. The global platform offered effective advocacy around CRSV while mitigating re-traumatisation and further harm.



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This photo is for the purpose of illustration only.
Persons featured in the photo are not necessarily survivors of CRSV.

Do no harm in the context of natural resource and extractive industries

Companies in the natural resource and extractive industries, especially those in remote or hard-to-reach areas, are well-placed to integrate the principle of Do No Harm into their security operations, specifically in the sense that inaction is the best action.

Known as the “natural resource curse”, extraction operations often exacerbate social tension and armed conflict, therefore decreasing economic prosperity while increasing poverty and instability.⁴³ Consequently, CRSV incidences also increase. For example, companies related to diamond, oil, mineral or timber extraction often contract out security services to rebel or militia groups to guard extraction premises and resources. Given many of these groups are not local and brought into new environments, their attachment and respect to the local populations are minimal, causing a higher probability of violence and CRSV. Furthermore, the contracted security services often do not consider pre-existing social tensions. In turn, the contractors likely unevenly benefit one-side of the local conflict, further intensify hostilities.⁴⁴

There is also increasing evidence that CRSV is a by-product of the industry itself, specifically in remote conflict or post-conflict settings. For instance, the influx of individuals to mining towns frequently creates an influx for sex trafficking and CRSV. When committed in the context of conflict, trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is a form of CRSV. One study conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo found that women and girls living closest to the extraction sites with the presence of armed actors were almost three times as likely to experience sexual violence by a non-partner.⁴⁵ Additionally, given the direct correlation between gender-inequality and conflict, women and girls are frequently forced to traffic natural resources across borders, greatly enhancing their vulnerability to CRSV.⁴⁶

It is therefore imperative that private sector organisations in the natural resource and extractive industries thoroughly consider how they conduct their operations, so as not to increase the likelihood of CRSV. If companies do decide to contract rebel or militia groups in conflict-affected or post-conflict situations, please refer to the action table under Action 2 for concrete action points for organisations to ensure CRSV incidences are minimised or prohibited.

ADOPT A SURVIVOR-CENTRED APPROACH

A survivor-centred approach recognises that survivors are unique individuals and it seeks to empower them by prioritising their different needs, perspectives, and aspirations. It is an approach that pays attention to intersecting dimensions of identity that can shape inequalities, namely ethnicity, religion, migratory status, disabilities, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation and gender identity, and HIV status, among others; to ensure that survivors’ rights are respected, that they are treated with dignity, and that their capacity to make informed decisions and to guide interventions to prevent future incidents is promoted.⁴⁷ By placing the survivor-centred approach at the heart of operations, as well as taking gender and conflict sensitivity into consideration, businesses can mitigate harm to CRSV survivors, in addition to other stakeholders in the wider community.

How can the private sector align its activities with a survivor-centred approach?⁴⁸

- **Always protect and uphold the human rights of all workers, colleagues and wider stakeholders,** including the right to equality and non-discrimination, life, liberty; security of person; freedom from torture, cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment; and access to health care and services, etc.
- **Always treat all workers, colleagues and wider stakeholders with respect, dignity, and equally, without discrimination.** This applies regardless of the individuals’ sex, gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, language, political affiliation or any other opinion. These values must be ingrained into the companies’ work culture and promoted by leadership.

Take a Gender Sensitive Approach to Business

A central tenet of the survivor-centred approach involves taking gender-sensitivity into consideration in the workplace. Gender sensitivity is the aim of understanding and taking account of the societal and cultural factors involved in gender-based exclusion and discrimination in the public and private spheres.⁴⁹ All private sector representatives should use respectful non-discriminatory language and be conscious to not reinforce gender stereotypes or misogynistic masculinity. Businesses can help support efforts to eradicate CRSV by promoting the consideration of different experiences, needs and attributes of individuals of diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity in all interactions with staff, colleagues and wider stakeholders. This can be reflected in both internal and external communications, guidance notes or marketing campaigns.

Conduct Operations in a Conflict-Sensitive Manner

Another central aspect to take into consideration under a survivor-centred approach is that of the conflict. Conducting operations in a conflict-sensitive manner is rooted in a strong understanding of the local context.⁵⁰ Lack of awareness of the local context can unintentionally result in increased local tensions and gendered violence. For example, in situations where there are deep-seated identity-based grievances, businesses can develop hiring practices to ensure they are hiring in a balanced way that does not aggravate local tensions.⁵¹ The UN Global Compact and the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) developed a guidance for businesses to help them deliver operations and services in conflict-affected and high-risk areas that positively contribute to the local community. This guidance can be accessed [here](#).



How UN Action Supports This Action

UN Action is currently in the process of creating a guidance document titled, “Advancing Principles of a Survivor-Centred Approach to the Prevention and Response of CRSV”. Case studies were collated to illustrate when a survivor-centred approach was successfully, or unsuccessfully applied in the response to CRSV from UN Action members and civil society partners. Once finalised, the document will serve as a basis for lessons learned and promising practices that can be used for future CRSV efforts.



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This photo is for the purpose of illustration only.
Persons featured in the photo are not necessarily survivors of CRSV.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

SMALL TO MID-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES)

- Develop and implement a code of conduct that commits the organisation and its staff to upholding human rights and treating each other with respect.
- Mainstream non-discriminatory language throughout all company internal and external communications and advertising.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- Establish company Human Resources procedures that specifically aim to promote inclusion and equality such as a gender parity recruitment policy.
- Conduct conflict risk and impact assessments prior to establishing operations in a conflict-setting.
- Advertise job descriptions that indicate a company welcomes applicants from all backgrounds, genders and identities.

MEDIA INDUSTRY

- Conduct an assessment of the overall socio-political context prior to engaging with survivors.
- Use translators when speaking to CRSV survivors to help facilitate the interview and to make the survivor feel comfortable.
- Listen and follow survivors’ requests to pause or terminate an interview.

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

ACTION 2: DEVELOP A STRONG CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AGENDA



CRSV root causes need to be addressed as part of global prevention efforts. Private sector companies and corporations can address CRSV root causes linked to pre-existing gender-based inequalities, patriarchal social structures, misogyny, and discrimination by addressing their own internal policies and practices. Certain sectors, such as those in the extraction industry, can have a much bigger impact due to their immovable operations and role in conflict settings.⁵² Perceived differences between men and women are formed through social norms (such as the belief that women are an economic burden, rather than an asset to the household), practices (including assumed differences in childrearing practices), and structures (notably pay inequalities between men and women).⁵³ Unfortunately, structural gender-based inequalities are exacerbated in times of conflict, especially when compounded with poverty and institutional collapse. Far too often, these factors are interrelated and reinforce one another, facilitating a cycle that is hard to break and providing an environment of increased vulnerability and hostility where CRSV can occur.

CHALLENGE



How UN Action Supports This Action

Addressing the root causes of CRSV is a key criterion to all of UN Action's initiatives. For example, supplementary to this report, in 2022, UN Action will launch its Framework on the Prevention of CRSV, a conceptual guide on how different actors can prevent this heinous crime. A larger portion of the *Framework includes tackling the root causes of CRSV*, including gender inequality and economic instability which perpetuate conflict. Additionally, UN Action project activities' directly address structural gender inequalities by empowering women to become agents of their own change, as a step in their recovery.

In addition to mainstreaming principles to prevent and respond to CRSV, another crucial action that businesses can take to support CRSV prevention efforts and tackle wider drivers of exclusion, poverty and violence is to develop a strong corporate responsibility agenda and adopt good business practices rooted in respect for human rights. This is especially important for businesses operating in conflict-affected contexts that often lack adequate infrastructure and government capabilities to uphold and regulate human rights or other operational standards in business. Adopting a strong corporate responsibility agenda and good business practices that protect the human rights of its staff and those in the wider community provides a solid foundation upon which all other engagements with UN Action can be made.

In many parts of the world, corporate responsibility has become the rule, rather than the exception, and being a good corporate citizen is considered both a moral and business imperative. This is especially true in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing climate crisis where employees, clients and consumers across all industries globally have placed increasing importance on business need to take action to better support their staff and minimise their impact on society and local communities. While many businesses have already begun to make strides in their corporate responsibility journeys, this section addresses those who are at the start of this journey, or those who may wish to learn more about the basic tenets of corporate responsibility.

WHAT IS CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY?

Corporate responsibility is an approach that businesses can adopt to self-regulate their impact on society, the economy and the environment. It is rooted in businesses minimising and mitigating risks by adopting corresponding policies and practices that benefit the business and their staff while simultaneously promoting social and environmental responsibility. Engaging in corporate responsibility entails a business operating in a way that is contributing to the positive development of society and the environment, as opposed to negatively impacting them. Approaches to corporate responsibility are continuously evolving and are increasingly being incorporated as a key part of business operations, encompassing a huge range of different business strategies, practices and policies which can even support revenue generation. Among many other things, corporate responsibility can be used as an effective tool to address the root causes of CRSV by tackling widespread harmful social structures and practices that perpetuate sexual violence.

Corporate responsibility is especially important for businesses operating in conflict-affected contexts as non-responsible business practices can exacerbate conflict-related tensions and insecurity, resulting in increased incidents of CRSV. Businesses can use corporate responsibility and good business practices as a tool to guide the implementation of the 'Do No Harm' principle, ensuring no further social or environmental harm is caused to its staff or the wider community where it is operating.

Regulatory Compliance

Central to strong corporate responsibility is to ensure that businesses, at a minimum, comply with local regulatory requirements and aim to uphold relevant international instruments, ensuring operations are in line with international law and good practice. Each country holds different regulations, so it is important for businesses to always be acquainted with the relevant laws that apply to its operations. In the case of minimal local regulations or government ability to uphold such regulations, as can be the case in countries affected by conflict, businesses can refer to other international principles, frameworks or instruments for further guidance so as to have the strictest standards for the protection of human rights and thus CRSV survivors.

BUSINESS ETHICS AND GOOD CONDUCT

Business ethics are the moral principles that govern how a business is conducting its operations, forming a central pillar in the foundation of a strong corporate responsibility agenda. In order to help galvanise positive change, businesses must ensure their operations are being conducted with integrity, transparency and in an ethical manner. To do so, businesses require a robust system of clear policies and procedures, as well as leadership commitment to these policies. Given that the private sector is the largest employer globally, such high standards and best practice can set a precedent, especially in conflict-affected countries, for the wider community to also uphold high ethical standards.

1. Uphold Decent Work Opportunities

The private sector and business enterprises, both in conflict-affected countries and beyond, have a responsibility to uphold decent work opportunities, relating to the quality of employment for the staff they employ or contract as part of their operations. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has developed a system of international labour standards aimed at promoting opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity.⁵⁴

What is decent work?

ILO defines decent work as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity".⁵⁵

- Pays a fair income
- Guarantees secure employment
- Safe working conditions
- Equal opportunities and treatment for all
- Provides social protection
- Personal development and social integration
- Freedom to express concerns and organise

In relation to the employment of CRSV survivors, decent work can also translate into:

- Paid compassionate leave and mental health leave that allow space and time for survivors to heal without any questions or hesitation
- Medical benefits for mental health and psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive services

2. Create safe and welcoming work environments for all

In accordance with the guiding principles of 'Do No Harm', businesses, especially those operating in high-risk or conflict-affected contexts, have a responsibility to ensure the highest standards of Duty of Care for all their staff in order to prevent or mitigate risks that may result in their harm. Duty of Care encompasses everything from security, health, safety and wellbeing, and can be pivotal in ensuring the continued protection and support for CRSV survivors as employees.

A) Adopt a zero-tolerance approach

Adopting a zero-tolerance approach to unethical behaviour in the workplace, such as to violence, discrimination and harassment, helps businesses communicate their commitment to creating safe workplaces for all. Zero-tolerance works to prevent violence, including sexual violence, and facilitates swift action if something does happen. Not only does this encourage accountability, but it can prevent an incident from worsening or happening again. In conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts, it can encourage social cohesion and reintegration of survivors, while helping to bolster a culture of accountability and responsibility.

B) Reduce risks of violence and harassment

In addition to a zero-tolerance approach, businesses may need to take additional steps to meet the right of a world of work free from violence and harassment (including GBV) enshrined in ILO Convention No.190.⁵⁶ As potential employers of CRSV survivors, it is important for all businesses, especially those operating in conflict-settings, to take action to reduce risks and respond to violence and harassment in the workplace to help protect CRSV survivors from further harm. In doing so, companies can also help set a standard that prohibits violence against women in the wider public sphere.

Performing risk assessments can help businesses identify gaps in protection and understand where greater proactive measures may be required. These can highlight areas of business operations that may increase the risks of violence and harassment, such as working at night, in isolation or working in intimate spaces.⁵⁷

Organisational culture is cited as one of the leading factors in the occurrence of sexual harassment and violence at work, where

contrastingly, a positive culture reduces aggressive behaviour and violence.⁵⁸ Strong leadership commitment and a zero-tolerance approach, helps to uphold organisational culture, and clear messaging around company policies, especially around anti-violence and harassment can help promote a culture of mutual respect.

Although workplace violence and harassment can impact anyone, it often bears a gendered dimension and poses huge consequences for women's participation, productivity and quality of work.⁵⁹ Similarly, workplaces dominated by one gender or ethnicity are more likely to be hostile to individuals who do not conform to socially accepted gender norms, or minority groups.⁶⁰ In these cases, members of the LGBTQI+ community can also be at risk. Therefore, workplaces should take action to prevent and swiftly respond to incidents of violence and harassment not only because it is a human right for all, but because experiencing violence or harassment in the workplace can be hugely traumatic for victims/survivors of CRSV.

C) Promote health, safety and wellbeing at work

Duty of Care towards employees or other stakeholders also involves taking steps to ensure health, safety and wellbeing at work. This is particularly pertinent in fragile and conflict-affected countries where in addition to the psychological stresses of conflict-situations, many are also left without access to quality and reliable healthcare. The private sector has the opportunity to mitigate the consequences of CRSV by ensuring employees have medical benefits that provide or improve access to medical care, including urgent medical care or surgery, prescriptions and medication. This includes general medical care as well as that more specific to CRSV survivors, such as urgent medical services, emergency contraception, and other forensic and medical examinations, in addition to mental health and psychosocial support, such as therapy.

D) Implement a whistleblowing mechanism

Whistleblowing channels and a procedure for whistleblower protection provides employees or other stakeholders with the means to safely and anonymously report or provide information on possible wrongful activities occurring within the business and with protection against retaliation. Whistleblowing can be used to report anything from bribery and corruption to violence and harassment. These mechanisms

help establish cultures of openness, transparency and accountability, as well as a workforce that collectively rejects misconduct. These mechanisms can promote stronger cultures of reporting, especially in instances where there may traditionally be a widespread fear of reprisal, such as that which is often seen for CRSV. These protective mechanisms support the implementation of good governance practices that can ultimately result in the safeguarding of staff and stakeholders in the wider community from harm.

E) Introduce family-friendly policies

Family-friendly policies help create work environments that are more welcoming to women and individuals with substantial caring responsibilities. Gendered social norms have traditionally deemed unpaid care and domestic work a female responsibility, resulting in women globally dedicating a substantial proportion of their time to it. To put this into perspective, women are said to carry out at least 2.5 times more unpaid household and care work than men.⁶¹ For many women this is on top of other paid work, either in the informal or formal economy, thus resulting in a 'double burden.' According to the ILO this disparity begins with the onset of childrearing years, if not earlier.⁶²

While domestic and care work is an essential component of family wellbeing and a productive economy, this unequal distribution of work prevents women's full and active participation in the formal economy. Due to women's caring responsibilities and need for flexibility to cater to this, women often take up part-time work or work in the informal economy where wages are typically lower. Consequently, they are less likely to have employment contracts, legal rights or social protection and this upholds women's reduced labour market participation and the gender gap in economic empowerment.⁶³ Unfortunately, this preserves norms that associate male contributions to public life as being superior to those of women and maintains social structures and dynamics that contribute to sexual violence in times of conflict.

Gender equality, women's empowerment and the reduction of CRSV are inextricably linked to the achievement of more balanced family responsibilities. Family-friendly policies can be adopted by businesses to help recognise, reduce and redistribute the responsibility for unpaid care work between men and women. These policies can be divided into three pillars:

TIME-RELATED	The provision of special or childcare leave including maternity, paternity or parental leave, breastfeeding breaks or flexible working hours.
FINANCIAL-RELATED	Policies that provide cash benefits or grants for the care of children.
SERVICE-RELATED	Support with affordable, accessible and quality childcare services.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

SMES

- Uphold decent and secure work opportunities through provisions such as fair pay and safe working environments.
- Include gender-equality provisions within company policies and procedures.
- Create and implement a whistleblowing mechanism that allows stakeholders to report misconduct concerns confidentially and without retaliation.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- Develop strong corporate responsibility agendas and strategies that positively impact stakeholders beyond the company and its employees.
- Enhance staff medical benefit provisions, especially for staff in conflict-affected countries to ensure they have access to quality healthcare and medical treatments.
- Aim to exceed local labour law with respect to family-friendly policies to promote gender-equal relationships in the household.

NATURAL RESOURCE AND EXTRACTIVE

- Conduct a risk assessment and vet contractors to ensure that they are not associated with local militias or rebel groups nor complicit in CRSV.
- Incorporate gender equality into company's policies so that women are hired as frequently as men.
- Assess local socio-political contexts prior to contracting to local groups to avoid benefitting one side where social tensions exist.

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

ACTION 3: ALIGN YOUR BUSINESS WITH INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS



The third recommended 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. Similar to the previous action, advancing a strong corporate responsibility agenda, these frameworks offer businesses a solid foundation upon which to build more direct engagement with UN Action and CRSV survivors. Although these international frameworks are quite broad, activities such as tackling modern slavery, discrimination and climate change, as well as upholding basic human rights, complement efforts to address CRSV. Therefore, 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 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. They can be adopted by businesses of any size, operating in any context and at any stage in their corporate responsibility journey.

1. UN GLOBAL COMPACT TEN PRINCIPLES

The UN Global Compact is the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative, calling on businesses to align their strategies and operations with their Ten Principles. These Principles are universal and cover the topics of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption and aim to mobilise a network of sustainable businesses that support the UN’s goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and contribute to creating a more sustainable world. To date,⁶⁴ the UNGC has a network of over 20,000 companies 160 countries all engaged to be a force for good. Further information on the UN Global Compact’s Ten Principles and how to become a participant of the UNGC can be accessed [here](#).

2. UN GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS (UNGPS)

Developed by the then Special Representative of the Secretary-General on business and human rights, Professor John Ruggie, the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) define the responsibilities of states and business enterprises to prevent human rights abuses associated with business activities. The 14 principles set out in the section ‘*The Corporate Responsibility to Respect Human Rights*’ provide the baseline expectations and a blueprint for businesses on how to prevent, address and remedy adverse human rights risks.⁶⁵

- In order to implement the principles, the guidance suggests businesses should have at least the following in place:
- A statement of their policy commitment to respect human rights embedded throughout the organisation;
 - Human rights due diligence processes to:
 - assess their actual and potential negative impacts on people;
 - integrate the findings and take action to prevent or mitigate potential impacts;
 - track their performance; and
 - communicate about their performance);
 - conduct stakeholder engagement as a cross-cutting theme throughout; and
 - Processes to provide or enable remedy to those harmed, in the event that the company causes or contributes to a negative impact).⁶⁶

Further to this, UNDP and the Working Group on Business and Human Rights have since expanded on the UNGPs by producing an additional guide title, ‘*Gender Dimension of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*’, that supports the integration of a gender perspective when implementing the UNGPs.⁶⁷ The Guide can be accessed [here](#).

3. WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES (WEPS)

The 7 Women’s Empowerment Principles offer guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.⁶⁸ They provide a clear framework for businesses to take action against gendered inequalities in the workplace, helping to undermine harmful social structures and discriminatory practices, which are root causes of CRSV. Established by UN Women and the UN Global Compact, the Principles are informed by international labour standards and rooted in the understanding that businesses have a responsibility for gender equality and women’s empowerment. By joining this platform, businesses get access to a global network of like-minded companies and comprehensive guidance on how to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. Additional information about the WEPS can be accessed [here](#).



WEPS Gender Gap Analysis Tool

WEPS Gender Gap Analysis Tool

This business-driven self-assessment tool has been designed to help companies from around the world assess their gender equality performance.⁶⁹ The tool is also serves as a checklist, setting out a clear direction for future actions to help advance gender equality throughout a business, and can be accessed [here](#).

4. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#), also known as the 2030 Agenda, were created by the UN General Assembly in 2015. Made up of 17 Goals, 169 targets and 231 unique indicators, the Goals aim to mobilise the global community to come together and address some of the world’s greatest challenges by 2030. While the goals, targets and indicators were originally designed to serve governments and the public sector, there is a critical role for businesses envisioned in the Agenda.



How UN Action Supports This Action

The work of UN Action contributes to achievement of the SDGs, primarily SDG 5 – Gender Equality and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.



The SDGs provide a useful starting point for businesses wishing to take action towards, and communicate, business contributions to UN Action. Without achieving SDG 5 – Gender Equality, none of the other SDGs can be achieved; therefore, mainstreaming gender into all conversations, policies, and actions is vital. Please refer to the Resource Section at the end of this report to learn more about how private sector companies can align their corporate strategies with the SDGs.

JOIN THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL COMPACT

IMPLEMENT THE UNITED NATIONS GUIDING PRINCIPLES ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

SIGN AND COMMIT TO THE WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

ALIGN YOUR BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY AMBITIONS WITH THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

ACTION 4: DEVELOP INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES

CHALLENGE

In the 2021 Report of the UN Secretary-General on CRSV, it was noted that in almost all the situations of concern covered in the Report “sexual violence impeded women’s participation in social, political and economic life, highlighting the importance of addressing the root causes of sexual violence as part of promoting substantive equality in all spheres”¹. The majority of CRSV survivors come from socioeconomically marginalised communities, illustrating the vulnerability caused by low economic status that is only worsened as a consequence of CRSV. Moreover, stigma and discrimination surrounding survivors of sexual violence may restrict their access to socioeconomic integration which is exacerbated for displaced, migrant and refugee women and girls. Therefore, a holistic survivor-centred approach requires that survivors are heard and that there is investment to support survivors, including in the mitigation of the economic effects of sexual violence.

Economic empowerment offers a means of supporting survivors, particularly women and girls, to participate in existing markets, access work opportunities, voice agency in economic decision-making, and exercise control over their own resources. Efforts to mitigate the socioeconomic isolation of survivors and increase their access to social services are key to overcoming barriers associated with successful reintegration; however, there remains a paucity in understanding on how best to tailor such services and programmes to meet the needs of survivors of CRSV.



How UN Action Supports This Action

UN Action projects, such as in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Somalia, seek to increase CRSV survivors’ access to employment and to heighten their financial independence as a step in their recovery. Project activities include teaching survivors new skills, including gardening, arts and crafts, and sewing, as well as providing basic education, business development and livelihood skills training tailored to adapt to each survivor’s individual needs and goals.

GUIDANCE NOTE: EMPLOYING CRSV SURVIVORS

While there are no official guidelines for employing CRSV survivors, organisations should take extra precautions in line with the aforementioned principles of Do No Harm and survivor-centred approach (please see pages 17-19). For instance, to mitigate re-traumatisation, Human Resources’ application processes should avoid directly asking survivors of their status as a victim of CRSV. Instead, organisations can create programmes for only CRSV survivors that can be coordinated in partnership with local survivors’ networks or facilitated through UN Action. Additionally, companies can develop Human Resources policies such as sick leave without an explanation, flexible working arrangement, or secure working environments, to create an enabling and productive environment for a survivor. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that private sector organisations only employ survivors once they have the full capacity to provide sensitive support and are willing to respect the sensitivities around such employment.

CASE STUDY



Bèkske: Rwandan Empowerment Coffee

Bèkske is a fair-trade coffee brand cultivated in Rwanda and sold in the Netherlands. As of 2022, the Bèkske business model supports 75 female entrepreneurs, many of whom are survivors of the 1994 Rwanda genocide and of CRSV. For each kilo sold, the women receive €1.00 (40% directly into their accounts and 60% into the community fund), in addition to the nationally determined \$0.26 per kilo. Bèkske model also allows the women to receive 25% of the profit as shareholders.⁷⁰ In turn, the company returns roughly 39% of the revenues to local sources in Rwanda. Bèkske’s sustainable business model contributes to SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8 and 12: recognising that poverty can be resolved through strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social issues, including education, health, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. The women are able to be agents of their own change, becoming economically independent while supporting their families and greater communities.

Unlike many of the other case studies within this paper, Bèkske directly supports, employs and empowers CRSV survivors and their families. Its business model showcases how companies that are not based in conflict-affected or post-conflict settings can still make an impact to help war-torn communities rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Bèkske also exemplifies how other private sector companies can indirectly support CRSV survivors, insofar as consumers can buy its coffee with the sound understanding and comfort that the proceeds are supporting such women.

1. STRENGTHEN INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO DECENT WORK

Strengthening equitable distribution of employment is equally as important as strengthening the level of employment when seeking to reduce violence and achieve peace in conflict-affected countries.⁷¹ This is especially true for CRSV survivors for whom strengthening access to decent work facilitates economic empowerment and financial independence, both of which support recovery, reintegration and the development of secure livelihoods. Economic marginalisation of CRSV survivors is rooted in structures of political and social exclusion, which can only be addressed through inclusive economic development which considers not just the number and quality of jobs, but also accounts for their inclusion of marginalized individuals. By improving diversity and creating a workforce representative of the wider population, businesses can undermine unequal power imbalances, although such efforts do require businesses to engage men as allies to be successful in the long-term.⁷² This in turn supports the economic empowerment of CRSV survivors and marginalised communities while also contributing to social cohesion and long-term inclusive economic development.

“My only wish is to have a job so that I can be distracted and self-sufficient.”

(Anonymous female survivor in Iraq)



©UNDP Pakistana, Shuja Hakim
This photo is for the purpose of illustration only.
Persons featured in the photo are not necessarily survivors of CRSV.

CASE STUDY



Female First: Improving Women's Access to Decent Work in Conflict-Affected Countries

Committed To Good (CTG) is a private sector company that facilitates the implementation of humanitarian and development programmes in conflict-affected countries through the provision of specialised staffing solutions and Human Resources services. CTG has operational experience in more than 25 fragile and conflict-affected countries and employs over 8,000 staff, most of whom are nationals from the countries where it operates.

In 2017 CTG launched Female First, a gender parity recruitment programme designed to shift the paradigm by improving women's access to decent work opportunities in the humanitarian and development sectors in conflict-affected countries. Underpinning this programme was a comprehensive strategy addressing each stage of the recruitment process and CTG's goal that by 2030, 30% of its project-related roles will be represented by women. In 2022, CTG reached and exceeded its goal when it achieved 31% female representation globally.

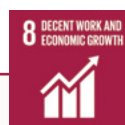
Following its success and momentum, Female First has grown to encompass several additional dimensions to ensure women are offered an equitable chance at securing decent work. This includes CTG's provision of job-readiness and career development training, which has been delivered to over 150 women in Gaza, Somalia and South Sudan, as well as CTG's Women in Aid Internship and Mentoring programme which offers young women tangible work experience opportunities. CTG's bespoke online learning platform CTG Learning also offers training to stakeholders on topics such as gender equality, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding and hostile environment awareness to help promote work environments where women can feel safe and empowered. Female First has opened the doors to many other endeavours through which CTG has facilitated conversations and initiatives at the local level around key topics such as gender equality, Women, Peace and Security and conflict-related sexual violence.

FEMALEFIRST

2. EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

Equal pay means that all workers have the right to receive equal remuneration for work of equal value. This right is upheld in the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No.100), and recognised in SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. Despite this, unequal pay remains a critical challenge with women still on average globally only making 77 cents for every dollar men earn.⁷³ According to the World Economic Forum it will take up to 268 years to close this economic gender gap.⁷⁴ This pay gap is a major cause of lifetime income inequality between men and women which results in women's increased financial dependence on men and perpetuates harmful social norms and biases that deem women's contributions to public life and the economy inferior to that of men. Each of these factors contribute to social dynamics and structures that are conducive to the perpetration of CRSV.

Labour policies are essential for promoting greater equality in remuneration within the workplace. The most effective policies are rooted in pay transparency, involving the disclosure of the earnings of employees and any gender pay gaps.⁷⁵ For more information on how to ensure equal pay for work of equal value please refer to the Women's Empowerment Principles Guidance note "Closing Gender Pay Gaps to Achieve Gender Equality at Work" which can be accessed [here](#).



By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value

CASE STUDY

Starbucks: Principles to Pay Equity

In 2009, global coffee company, Starbucks, set out to tackle equal pay. Less than 10 years later, Starbucks announced that it had reached 100% gender and racial pay equality for women, men and people of all races performing similar work throughout the US. The company then committed to reaching 100% gender pay equity for all employees in Starbucks company-operated markets globally in the future.⁷⁶

Starbucks established three principles to accomplish this goal: equal footing, transparency and accountability. As part of equal footing, the company maintained that it would not ask candidates about their salary histories. Consequently, hiring practices disallowed importing pay inequities each time someone new was hired. Additionally, to comply with transparency and accountability, Starbucks vowed to publish pay equity progress annually, as well as to conduct comprehensive compensation analyses to address any unexplained differences in pay. Starbucks also uses an offer standards calculator to determine starting pay range and roles, taking in consideration one's previous experience, skills and education. Furthermore, Starbucks has published its best practices and tools to achieve pay equity in order for other organisations to follow suit in recognising the importance of gender equality.⁷⁷

Conducting a gender pay gap analysis and addressing its existence can be applied to any business in any country. While it is a method that doesn't specifically target CRSV survivors, subsequent outcomes can help foster a community culture of inclusion that reduces incidents of CRSV. On top of that, businesses that employ CRSV survivors, conduct such as analysis, and act on the results, can directly help promote their economic empowerment and integration. The analysis itself however only provides the first step and must be supplemented by tangible and ambitious actions to close the gap. Only then will contributions promote inclusive economic empowerment.

3. LEARNING, EDUCATION & TRAINING

As mentioned in Action 2, women often are not afforded the same opportunities for career development as men due to labour market and income inequalities. Businesses can promote women's empowerment in the labour market

by providing them with learning and career development opportunities, both as an entry point to the labour market and to help encourage women to take on more managerial and leadership positions with greater responsibilities and influence. Such activities equip women with the tools and resources they need to attain leadership roles and will strengthen equal representation at all business levels, subsequently contributing to women's economic empowerment and greater gender equality.

A) Skills Training

Lack of access to appropriate skills training often presents itself as a significant barrier to women's ability to join and excel within the formal labour market. This includes both technical and soft skills which can include but is not limited to: Managerial/Leadership skills; Industry-specific skills; Business skills; Critical thinking skills; and Communication skills. Another example is digital skills which women lack on a substantial level compared to men. So much so that the International Telecommunications Union estimates that as many as 52% of the world's women are offline.⁷⁸ This contributes to women's underrepresentation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) roles globally which cover today's most in demand and highest paying jobs.⁷⁹ By providing female employees with the opportunity to enhance their career growth by supporting their development of additional skills, businesses can:

- Strengthen diversity across the business
- Fill skills gaps that exist in their workforce
- Increase profits
- Boost performance and efficiency
- Boost staff confidence
- Promote job satisfaction and retention

B) Internships, Traineeships & Mentorships

An internship is a period of work experience offered by an organisation for a fixed duration of time that provides those participating with exposure to the real working world, practical hands-on experience and the opportunity to develop new knowledge and skills. For businesses, interns offer access to new talent, cost savings, as well as an effective way to increase diversity amongst the workforce.⁸⁰

Similarly, a mentor is someone who teaches, advises and guides a less experienced and junior staff member. This is often a protected relationship used to support the learning and long-term career development of the younger colleague.

Both internships and mentoring can be used to drive everything from personal growth, confidence,

and skills development to the facilitation of new networking opportunities. On top of this, they can be used to promote organisational diversity by supporting disadvantaged groups with reaching their full potential, therefore enabling recognition and opportunities that may otherwise have not been available to them. These opportunities must however be of value to both the intern and the business. Companies should always provide interns and trainees with valuable work experience that encourages their career growth and skills development, while also being of use to business projects and activities at the time.

In order to directly support the CRSV prevention and response efforts, businesses can partner with women's organisations working with UN Action who support the recovery and reintegration of CRSV survivors to offer these individuals internship, traineeship and mentoring opportunities. This can set foundations for women's access to employment opportunities not normally available to them, and can support their economic empowerment and social reintegration.

4. SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

Female entrepreneurs face huge obstacles that hinder the growth of their businesses and therefore limit their economic empowerment, from lack of access to capital and social constraints to limited time and skills. Research shows that 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.⁸² In fragile and conflict-affected communities this can have a huge impact on poverty reduction and the strengthening of economic security for both men and women.

Private sector engagement with female entrepreneurs and female-owned businesses offers positive prospects that supports business growth and development. First and foremost, businesses can seek out female-owned business enterprises to contract as suppliers for the provision of products or services. Secondly, they can support community organisations and associations that support women's entrepreneurship development. More specifically, addressing some of the key barriers to female entrepreneurship businesses can also assist female entrepreneurs with gaining access to finance, business development resources or the provision of essential equipment on loan.

CASE STUDY

The Coca-Cola Company: Educating Nigerian Girls In New Enterprises (ENGINE)

Led by the Coca-Cola Company as part of their 5by20 programme, ENGINE brought together public and private sector partners to provide improved learning outcomes and economic status among marginalised young women in Nigeria. In recognition of the important role of women within the Coca-Cola value chain as producers, suppliers, distributors, retailers, recyclers and artisans, Coca-Cola aimed to build women's agency and confidence, by working to change community gender norms on child marriage and women's economic empowerment. The programme offered participants training in business, entrepreneurship, financial management, leadership skills as well as mentoring and support. Running between 2014 and 2017, over 24,000 girls participated, with a total of 8,622 women being placed in internships and vocational training or starting their own business by the end of the programme. The positive outcomes of ENGINE included greater agency and self-confidence amongst the female participants, including in their own learning abilities, and importantly, increased sustainable employment opportunities with 58 per cent of participants joining the Coca-Cola value chain.⁸¹

In the context of the conflict in Nigeria, women, girls and other minorities have faced heightened risks of CRSV including abduction, rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage. While Coca-Cola did not specify CRSV survivors within the criteria of marginalised individuals, it is possible that some of the women participants will have been impacted by CRSV directly or indirectly. This initiative demonstrates how private sector organisations can take action to address CRSV in a way that provides long-term benefits for their organisation, as well as members of the local community. In this case, Coca-Cola designed a programme with the aim to economically empower women, while driving business growth by cultivating a cadre of young female professionals that can subsequently take up employment in the labour market as part of the Coca-Cola value chain.

CASE STUDY

WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACCELERATOR MARY KAY

Mary Kay's Partnership with the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator

Mary Kay is a global beauty and entrepreneurship development company established in 1963. In 2019, Mary Kay inceptioned the Women's Entrepreneurship Accelerator (WEA), a multi-stakeholder partnership with six UN agencies that maximises the development impact of women entrepreneurship in achieving the SDGs.

Early 2022, WEA launched its online free Entrepreneurship Certificate Programme developed by International Trade Centre SheTrades and powered by Mary Kay.⁸³ The guided curriculum is designed to educate and empower women entrepreneurs through 27 interactive modules enriched with over 200 videos covering the key stages of the entrepreneurial journey through 7 Certificates. Free, with no barrier to entry, the curriculum is available to millions of women and girls on the SheTrades Learning space.⁸⁴ Participants are able to adopt an entrepreneurship culture, develop ideas through design thinking and learn start-up methodologies, prepare a business model canvas, design a pitch, identify sources of funding, arrange for mentorship, and set up businesses that have the potential to be economically viable. The launch of the Certificate Programme is supplemented at the national level with on-the-ground training for women from developing countries interested in entrepreneurship and/or planning to integrate into regional and global value chains.

The outcomes of the Entrepreneurship Certificate Programme expand women's access to entrepreneurship globally, thereby helping to reduce gender inequalities and raising women's economic empowerment including in humanitarian settings and conflict zones. Supporting women access to entrepreneurship training and capacity building programmes such as the one powered by Mary Kay, will foster more inclusive environments in the labour market for generations. Furthermore, while these trainings were not specifically produced or tailored for CRSV survivors, they could be expanded to such audiences, especially given translations of the Programme into English, Spanish and French, with Arabic, Russian and Mandarin following in 2022-2023.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

SMES

- Create a hiring quota to ensure equal representation of male and female employees, as well as individuals with disabilities and in the LGBTQI+ community.
- Pay all employees of the same paygrade equally to mitigate discrimination and promote inclusive work environments.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- Establish internship, mentoring or traineeship programmes for underrepresented communities, including CRSV survivors.
- Partner with local organisations who support CRSV survivors and integrate them into your supply chain.
- Develop programmes that teach women occupational and entrepreneurial skills and extend access to CRSV survivors.

TECH SECTOR

- Develop online courses that allow survivors in remote areas to access knowledge and learning materials.
- Upskill survivors through tech training so that they can enter the modern workforce.

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

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 individuals, regardless of gender or identity, in times of or surrounding conflict, is crucial in its prevention and response. For example, the needs of a CRSV survivor vary greatly from those of a peacetime domestic violence survivor; the latter can frequently receive immediate help within one’s own local community, whereas the former may be forced to wait for assistance with the establishment of a peacekeeping mission. Therefore, advocacy activities by the private sector can play a pivotal role in raising awareness of CRSV at the local, national and global levels.

CHALLENGE

1. TRAIN YOUR STAFF

Providing staff with training on topics related to CRSV and SGBV is already customary in the aid and development sectors. However, the private sector, especially those present in conflict or post-conflict communities, could support the UN agenda by furthering knowledge and information throughout its workforce in the form of trainings. These trainings can be offered both in-person and through online channels, to cater to various individual circumstances. Where trainings specific to CRSV are not available, it is strongly encouraged that businesses deliver training on broader areas, such as the prevention of GBV and the promotion of gender equality, in a bid to help address some the root structural causes of CRSV.

As of mid-2022, UN Action is in the process of creating online trainings on the basics of understanding CRSV as a concept, its prevention and response. Although these trainings are mainly geared towards those working in the humanitarian field and those in conflict or post-conflict contexts, UN Action aims to design a programme about CRSV that is more public-facing and for those in the private sector in the future.

2. FACILITATE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Local companies with strong ties to their communities can use their platforms to inform the population about CRSV, especially companies operating in conflict or post-conflict environments. Private sector companies can also share knowledge and information on CRSV with faith-based, traditional and community leaders as agents to promote attitudinal and social change. Likewise, the media can play a critical role in educating the public about CRSV. In line with the Do No Harm Principles and those around adopting a survivor-centred approach, digital, audio and in-print media corporations can elevate the voices of CRSV survivors, while ethically reporting on what sexual violence in conflict is and how to prevent it.

There are numerous informational materials that can be distributed to the wider community, that are also sector-specific:

- **CRSV Early-Warning Matrix:** Although written for field personnel, thematic areas around society, politics, the economy, media and the healthcare system can be applicable to the private sector’s interest. This detailed matrix provides an overview of various “red flags” of CRSV that the public can be receptive to in the wake of conflict.⁸⁵
- **Media Reporting on CRSV:** As the first to report on CRSV, especially those interviewing survivors, journalists and media personnel need the training and support to provide accurate and insightful reporting,

while reducing the risk to further harm.⁸⁶

- **The Health of Male and LGBT Survivors of CRSV:** The healthcare sector, as one of the most profitable fields globally, can increasingly address gaps in service provision to male and LGBT survivors of CRSV. This includes addressing physical health, sexual and reproductive health, as well as medico-legal responses.⁸⁷
- **Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on Investigation and Prosecution of CRSV:** Created by the Office of the SRSG-SVC to assist governments integrate provisions into their national legislation to address and prosecute CRSV, this document can be used by law firms as a guide for lobbying efforts, as well as those conducting investigations.⁸⁸
- **Preventing CRSV in Detention Settings:** This document outlines key preventive policies and processes that address and mitigate heightened risks of CRSV during the capture, arrest, interrogation, detainee transfer and body searches of an individual. The guidance can be used not only by those working in security sectors, but also by those whose family members have fallen victim to CRSV in detention settings.⁸⁹
- **Responding to the Psychosocial and Mental Health Needs of Sexual Violence Survivors in Conflict-Affected Settings:** The joint report provides recommendations as to how communities can respond to the psychosocial and mental health needs of CRSV survivors, including details on how to expand and adapt these services through the various stages of conflict.⁹⁰

CASE STUDY

Twinings Partnership with Business Social Responsibility (BSR) HerHealth

Twinings, a global tea company, partnered with BSR to deliver their HerHealth programme with small hold farmers and tea workers in Kenya, the majority of whom are women. In these communities, improved access to health literacy was identified as an essential need to promote improved health and wellbeing, as well as greater gender equality. This programme aims to deliver key health-related messaging and information to rural communities by training peer health educators to raise awareness of essential issues among women workers and their wider communities. Each of its programmes lasts for a period of 12-15 months, delivering a new educational module each month that covers issues ranging from reproductive health and family planning, sexually transmitted infections, menstrual hygiene, pre- and post- natal care, nutrition and non-communicable diseases.⁹¹ As of 2020, Twinings had reached over 34,000 women throughout their supply chain with results being realised in improved health behaviour, increases in the use of health facilities, workers feeling more comfortable discussing health issues and greater productivity at work.⁹²

This partnership provides a scalable model that can be used by other private sector organisations to help with the delivery of key messaging and information that not only supports UN Action’s goals, but additionally promotes gender equality, women’s empowerment and greater community health. Raising health awareness in communities affected by conflict can reduce stigma associated with gender-related health issues and help empower women to make their own health choices.

How UN Action Supports This Action

The UN Action Network creates numerous guidance documents and knowledge products on key CRSV themes, including how to adopt a survivor centred-approach and the prevention of CRSV. UN Action also holds seminars to raise awareness and discuss the UN’s priorities around CRSV efforts, such as around economic empowerment initiatives and the nexus between CRSV and terrorism. The SRSG-SVC, as the Chair of UN Action, also engages in political advocacy with governments, the private sector, and others in the UN system.



After the war, life continued somehow. I work, which has been very helpful for my mental health. In fact, my work gave me a sense of normalcy even during the Covid-19 pandemic. I have been working throughout it.

(Anonymous male survivor in Kosovo)

CASE STUDY

UNIQLO: Information Dissemination on Sexual and Reproductive Health

UNIQLO is a Japanese retail company that has used its platform to empower women through career building trainings and support, clothing donations, and employment opportunities. Using the attraction of donated clothing to gather women and girls, UNIQLO has taken advantage of these donation centres to disseminate information about women's health and other issues to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights. UNIQLO also encourages women to go for prenatal check-ups and to become more aware of available health and medical services.⁹³

Information sharing on CRSV, particularly its prevention, by the private sector can lead to the development of further capacity-building of local staff, lay workers and other professionals who can assist with society's stabilisation efforts in post-conflict settings. Larger companies, especially, can help disseminate information in communities along its supply chain. Additionally, in areas where CRSV occurs, knowledge about one's sexual and reproductive health is crucial, as survivors need to seek medical care within 72 hours after the perpetration of the crime. Such information about their sexual and reproductive help may help alert survivors of more serious injuries.



BAN KI-MOON



CHARLIZE THERON



ROBIN WRIGHT



DENNIS MUKWEGE

3. USE YOUR COMPANY'S PUBLIC PLATFORM TO HOST AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGNS

Local and international companies can engage in broader efforts to raise awareness of CRSV, regardless of the size of the company. One such way is to promote community awareness actions to help reduce stigma and promote access to services for CRSV survivors. Increasingly speaking about CRSV will desensitise the topic and provide a safer place to have constructive and honest discussions about survivors' immediate and personal needs. These can include, but are not limited to, psychological care, medical treatment, social integration assistance, sexual and reproductive health services, and basic education.

The private sector can also be involved in UN Action's public campaign. In 2009, UN Action launched its inaugural global awareness raising campaign, the StopRapeNow campaign, which reached over 128 countries. Members of the public, governments, and UN officials were asked to take action against CRSV by sharing a photo of themselves with crossed arms or the X gesture with the hashtag #stoprapenow. UN Action is currently in the process of revitalising and rebranding the campaign and will invite the private sector to participate during the campaign re-launch in late-2022. Participation can include through sponsoring the campaign to take a more prominent role in promoting the work of UN Action and the CRSV cause. Provisionally, the campaign will have digital and in-person elements, including through the use of social media, as well as trainings, webinars, and fundraising events to heighten CRSV as a pressing issue of our time.

Additionally, a private sector company can, for example, organise an event around the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June) with the local media to educate the public about CRSV. Such events can lead to educational interventions to address misconceptions and reduce stigma. Alternatively, private sector companies can reshare UN Action's social media content around key advocacy moments and days to promote the UN's efforts around CRSV. CEOs or other high-level individuals of international companies can become champions of the CRSV mandate for community and in-company mobilisation. By leveraging discussions around CRSV and highlighting the needs and stories of CRSV survivors on their platforms, the public will become increasingly encouraged to take action.

CASE STUDY

Congo Clothing Company: Using Fashion to Raise Awareness

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been a situation of concern under the UN's CRSV agenda for countless years, with the DRC recording the highest number of CRSV cases in 2021.⁹⁴ Developed with support from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT's) innovation ecosystem, the Congo Clothing Company uses fashion's unparalleled ability to transcend borders to raise awareness around CRSV and support CRSV survivors in the DRC.

The Company's end goal is to combine global awareness with the provision of economic opportunities to conflict-affected communities by lowering violence and contributing to the prevention of CRSV. For example, its apparel line - ranging from jackets, pants and accessories - highlights patterns that are reminiscent of the Kuba Kingdom - a 17th century kingdom based in the South-eastern part of today's DRC where CRSV is prevalent. Including such details advances a survivor-centred approach to showcase that CRSV survivors are agents of their own change: unique individuals with their own traditions, histories and stories, rather than weak and desperate victims of war. Consequently, the Congo Clothing Company is respectfully using its platform to speak about CRSV in a manner that reduces stigma and promotes empowerment initiatives and livelihood support for survivors. At its pop-up shops and events, the Company also asks attendees and participants to pledge their commitments to prevent CRSV, connecting the bridge between civil society and human rights issues.⁹⁵

Additionally, 10% of its profits are donated towards local organisations to help upskill CRSV survivors through training programmes. The brand also provides funding for items such as sewing machines. In the future, the Congo Clothing Company hopes to be the catalyst for the development of a robust textile industry by integrating survivors into its supply chain and providing them with a living wage.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

SMES

- Dedicate one session annually on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict (19 June) to teach employees about CRSV and how to prevent it.
- Encourage or make it mandatory for staff to complete an online course on CRSV or its root causes, such as gender inequality and discrimination.

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- Support companies along the value chain to engage with CRSV prevention content or sponsor those employees to attend a UN Action training.
- Host company-wide awareness activities that make employees better informed on CRSV and how they can help and respond.
- Partner with UN Action to develop private sector-friendly knowledge materials and training content.



Los daños en mi salud física emocional, sexual y reproductiva no han sido reparados. He asumido todos los gastos para denunciar (desplazamientos, fotocopias, etc.) y también todos los gastos de salud (sobre todo los medicamentos).

(Anonymous Testimony from a Colombian Survivor)

ACTION 6: DEVELOP STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CRSV SURVIVORS



Countries emerging from conflict urgently need to provide their populations with access to basic infrastructure and services, however they often lack the public revenue and government capacity to do so.⁹⁶ CRSV survivors particularly are in need of access to such basic services, notably medical care, such as sexual and reproductive health, as well as support to claim their rights for redress and reparation. Given that communities and individuals impacted by CRSV are often excluded from essential services that can support their recovery and reintegration, the private sector is emerging as an essential partner in the provision of basic services in post-conflict settings. From engaging in public-private partnerships to directly investing in conflict-affected countries, companies have become an integral player in the development of infrastructure and the promotion of peace.

Private sector service offerings across the world are vast, however 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, wellbeing and psychosocial support, finance as well as justice services. It is imperative to note however the lack of disposable income for many residing in conflict-affected countries. In light of this, businesses seeking to capitalise from these market gaps would fare well in assisting these populations by providing or extending their wellbeing and legal services at a reduced cost or free of charge where feasible for the business.

1. EXTEND ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES

After the perpetration of a CRSV crime, a survivor will need immediate access to quality multisectoral assistance and services, specifically medical physical and psychological care, to mitigate long-term consequences. Injuries can include, but are not limited to, urinary tract infections, unwanted pregnancies and related complications, sexually transmitted diseases including HIV, mental trauma, and even death. Medical attention within the first 72 hours of the crime is recommended to ensure the timely administration of sexual health kit and emergency contraception, with lifesaving health services and psychosocial interventions considered as first priorities.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, fear of stigma and homophobia can hinder survivors from seeking, let alone receiving, this critical care. Additionally, CRSV survivors who live in remote conflict-riddled areas are often unable to quickly travel to adequate hospitals or medical centres, putting themselves at risk of further danger to walk to their closest shelter, if such an establishment exists.

CHALLENGE



How UN Action Supports This Action

UN Action projects in conflict or post-conflict areas have a track record of providing medical and health services through One-Stop Centres, or shelters for CRSV survivors. One-Stop Centres cover the spectrum of multisectoral care and support, providing immediate, urgent, integrated an ethical service to survivors. Services include mental health and psychosocial counselling, medical treatment and care for injuries, such as the provision of rape kits, and the equipment of basic living necessities. In 2019, UN Action funding set up a One-Stop Centre in South Sudan which covered the refurbishment, equipping, staffing and provision of services to CRSV survivors for one year.



Most of the hospitals in the conflict-affected towns are stretched thin, with more than 70% of services not operational, and a severe lack of healthcare workers who have all fled the conflict. In addition to this, roads are blocked, and transportation is not working – all of which limits the survivors’ access to services and justice. When it’s safe to, they travel 12 km by foot to the main town to reach us.”

(Anonymous Frontline Responder in Ethiopia)

CASE STUDY



Safari Doctors, Kenya

In 2015, Umra Omar was visiting her home in Lamu County, Kenya when she learned about a life-saving medical aid project that had been abandoned because of insecurity posed by Islamist militants near the border with Somalia. Remote communities in the area were stranded without access to basic health services and some were victims of violent conflict. Safari Doctors’ work began with distributing vaccines and basic health services by motorbike to places no one else was willing to go.

Today, Safari Doctors operates as a not-for-profit social enterprise that drives forward innovative, community-driven healthcare solutions to increase the organisation’s sustainability.⁹⁸ Monthly mobile clinics bring vital services like family planning, vaccines and quality care to the doorsteps of those living in the hardest to reach areas. The Youth Health Ambassadors programme trains vulnerable young men and women to become Community Health Workers and agents of positive change. They have focused on promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights and menstrual hygiene management in marginalised communities, where incidences of female genital mutilation, early marriage and unplanned pregnancies pose serious challenges. Further to this, the team has also used football tournaments and school debate competitions as ways to successfully engage youth around these critical issues.

Many communities impacted by CRSV are in need of essential services provided by the private sector, however are unable to access them. While Safari Doctors is a not-for-profit by nature, similar for-profit principles and subsequent activities can be adopted by private sector organisations to support CRSV response. Safari Doctors provides a good example of how businesses can take action to not only extend their core service outreach to these communities, especially those in conflict or post-conflict environments, but also how this process can be supplemented by additional social impact initiatives that enhance their organizational impact within these contexts of a robust textile industry by integrating survivors into its supply chain and providing them with a living wage.

2. OFFER LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND LOBBYING EFFORTS

Mothers who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and their children often face life-threatening risks and harms, including physical injuries, psychological trauma, socioeconomic marginalisation, discrimination and stigma.⁹⁹ In many circumstances, discriminatory nationality laws and practices often require the involvement of fathers in conferring birth or identity papers, despite many fathers’ refusal to acknowledge the existence of their children. Consequently, mothers are unable to transmit their citizenship and/or nationality to the children, thereby barring them from receiving basis services and rights, such as healthcare, education, and the right to vote.

CHALLENGE

CASE STUDY

Clifford Chance

Clifford Chance LLP is an international law firm with a range of clients from all the commercial and industrial sectors, the financial investor community, governments, regulators, trade bodies and NGOs. At the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, Clifford Chance committed to provide pro bono and other in-kind support to its long term not-for-profit partners around the world who are working to secure justice, protection and livelihoods for women who have experienced gender-based violence, including securing legal protection for women at continuing risk of experiencing domestic violence and developing training and capacity-building programs with judiciaries and civil society organisations to eliminate bias in sentencing of crimes in relation to sexual violence.¹⁰⁰

Such practices can be applied in conflict-affected or post-conflict settings, especially within communities affected by CRSV, in order to support survivors in their pursuits for justice and accountability.

“Part of this ever-growing secret are children born out of rape, whose whereabouts are not always known to us. Some survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo admit never having told their child that it has been born as a result of a gruesome act. Others gave them free for adoption trying to hide any trace that would lead others to understand and believe the real truth.

Atifete Jahjaga, President of the Republic of Kosovo (2011-2016), Founder and Chair of the Board of Directors of the Jahjaga Foundation

How to Help: Voluntary Legal Engagement to Help Support Children Born of CRSV

Law firms, both at the national and international levels, can contribute to pro bono lobbying and legal assistance efforts to assist children born of CRSV. For example:

- Call upon States to ensure that legislation guarantees the rights of the child, including the right to legal identity and protection from all forms of discrimination
- Support governments in tackling gender-based inequality and discrimination as a root cause of CRSV, including through legal reform to eliminate discrimination that is codified into legislation



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CASE STUDY



Baker McKenzie: Fighting Domestic Violence Global Comparative Law Tool

Baker McKenzie is a multinational law firm that launched a Fighting Domestic Violence global comparative law tool in December 2021. Organised with Global Rights for Women and Every Woman Treaty, and with volunteers from Baker McKenzie, Google, Merck, 3M, Cummins, HP Inc. and Accenture, the tool is a collection and up-to-date analysis of domestic violence laws in 87 countries.¹⁰¹

Volunteers taking part in the project mapped local laws on domestic violence, and assessed law enforcement practices and related social protection and security measures with the aim of identifying any gaps between the status quo and the standards set in international and regional frameworks. It is designed to help local, national and international NGOs, public and governmental authorities assess relative effectiveness and identify gaps for improvement.¹⁰² The second phase of the project, launching in the coming months of 2022, aims to engage with domestic violence specialists on the ground to better understand their needs and to ensure the tool is useful in their daily work.

As domestic violence is grounded in gender inequalities and harmful social norms, addressing gaps in local and national domestic violence laws helps mitigate CRSV root causes. Baker McKenzie's provides a fitting example to the type of assistance law firms can provide to better their communities, including in conflict and post-conflict settings. Such a resource could be further adapted to analyse laws that incorporate or do not incorporate provisions relating to CRSV survivors right to justice and accountability, including redress and reparations, as well as stipulations relating to the investigation and prosecution of CRSV.

3. INITIATE FINANCIAL FREEDOM

In many contexts where CRSV occurs, survivors are often forced to flee their homes abruptly or become unable to return to their property. Consequently, survivors either lose or abandon their identification documents that are crucial for the provision of basic services. This is especially true for trafficking survivors, whereby their traffickers confiscate and/or destroy all personal documents. As CRSV survivors try to rebuild their lives, they are left unable to open bank accounts or apply for financial assistance, therefore prohibiting them from becoming financially independent.

CHALLENGE



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CASE STUDY

Survivor Inclusion Initiative (Participating financial institutions include Barclays, Royal Bank of Canada, and Bank of America)

The Survivor Inclusion Initiative (SII) is a project of the Liechtenstein Initiative for Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking (FAST), which aims to mobilise the financial sector against modern slavery and human trafficking. In many situations, survivors of human trafficking are often left without financial identities or banking products, often barring them from securing personal identification, acquiring legal employment, safely storing personal funds and obtaining housing and savings. In 2019, SII was launched in Canada, the UK and US to work with a coalition of financial institutions and survivor support organisations to facilitate trafficking survivors' access to basic banking services, such as checking and savings accounts, and to help survivors' financial recovery to become full financial participants in their communities. Some institutions offer additional products, such as debit cards, credit cards or financial literacy training. SII works through a very simple referral system: the survivor is referred to a support organisation that then refers the survivor to a financial institution. The close collaboration between the organisation and the financial institutions allows for a simple referral and onboarding using templates provided, which can be adapted to the survivor's circumstances. Survivor organisations are often able to verify survivor details and status, reducing transaction costs for financial institutions.¹⁰³

While these services are currently offered in non-conflict contexts and for those subjected to modern slavery and human trafficking, the same types of partnerships between survivor organisations and financial institutions can be replicated in areas where CRSV occurs or has occurred, especially as CRSV encompasses trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. The FAST Initiative also created a series of resources designed to help SII participant organisations in developing such successful operations which can be adapted to help CRSV survivors in opening bank accounts and learning financial literacy.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

MEDICAL FIELD

- Donate medical supplies to ensure that CRSV survivors immediate and long-term medical needs are attended to.
- Extend access to company's healthcare to include spouses and dependents.
- Share medical expertise to assist CRSV survivors by providing staff that are trained in sexual and reproductive health.

LEGAL SECTOR

- Provide pro bono services to assist CRSV survivors in their justice and accountability pursuits.
- Analyse national laws' provisions relating to gender equality, violence against women, and even CRSV to inform where lobbying efforts should be focused.
- Establish legal aid hotlines in remote locations for survivors to document their cases and learn about human rights.

FINANCIAL SECTOR

- Provide financing to CRSV survivors, including offering small business loans at low interest rates or Sharia-compliant financing for women entrepreneurs.
- Develop courses that can teach CRSV survivors financial literacy.
- Conduct proper risk assessments of companies who may be financing or associated with terrorist groups.

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

ACTION 7: COMMIT TO SOCIAL INVESTMENT AND PHILANTHROPY

CHALLENGE



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 its projects. Despite being historically funded by governments, UN Action is aiming to expand its donor base to the CRSV-MPTF to include the private sector in order to scale-up international and national CRSV efforts. UN Action's first MPTF, the UN Action MPTF, disbursed 22 million USD between 2009 and 2019 to fund 52 projects aimed at strengthening advocacy, building knowledge on, and supporting engagement at the country-level to address CRSV.¹⁰⁴ For comparison, the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women funded 157 projects, across 68 countries and territories, totaling \$74.7 million in 2021 alone.¹⁰⁵

How to Help: Social Investment and Philanthropy

In 2022, the UN Action Network endorsed its Fundraising Strategy that calls for the goal of raising 100 million USD to its CRSV-MPTF by 2026. Private sector investments to the MPTF, as well as in-kind donations to UN Action, can bolster initiatives to prevent CRSV, as well as to support CRSV survivors.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

PHILANTHROPY

- Support projects that target specific vulnerable populations, such as refugees and displaced persons at risk of trafficking through economic empowerment, LGBTQI+ refugees through service provision, and children born of CRSV
- Fund the deployment of skilled and trained personnel to conflict or post-conflict zones to ensure the timely, reliable and accurate information gathering of CRSV data for monitoring and reporting purposes
- Sponsor the construction or maintenance of One-Stop Centres, shelters that cover the critical spectrum of multisectoral care and support for CRSV survivors. These centres provide survivors with havens where they can receive legal assistance, mental health counselling, and medical treatment and care for injuries

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

IN-KIND DONATIONS

- Harness technology that provides CRSV survivors with online skills training so they can become self-sufficient and can enter the workforce
- Develop technology for law enforcement agencies and investigators that facilitates survivors' fight for justice and accountability
- Donation of supplies to fill dignity kits for CRSV survivors, which can include soap, sanitary napkins, a flashlight, a comb, toothpaste and a toothbrush
- Provision of materials for survivors' economic empowerment activities, such as arts and crafts, sewing machines, and agriculture supplies
- Use of locations and/or spaces for trainings and livelihood initiatives
- Match the number of purchases for a product with a number of products donated to CRSV survivors or UN Action's projects

CONTRIBUTIONS TO UN ACTION'S FUND, THE CRSV-MPTF

Between 2020 and 2021, UN Action provided funds to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Somalia that leveraged the strength of nearly 300 Somali women who were formally associated with violent extremist groups, many who are survivors of sexual violence. The women received entrepreneurship and economic empowerment support to ensure that they became active contributors to sustainable peacebuilding in their societies by promoting economic and personal resilience, social integration, and community engagement. Highlights from the project include:

- Some women pooled their money to start collaborative businesses, such as starting a small cooperative in goat-keeping and livestock trade
- Women produced canvas and leather handbags of their own design from skills learned in an industrial tailoring class
- Women were trained on how to plant a nursery following permaculture techniques as a food security measure, resulting in the establishment of a few plant nurseries
- Women's ability to access loans rose from 35% to 93% and their access to a reliable source of income rose from 24% to 92%

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

RETAIL SECTOR

- Donate supplies such as clothing, blankets and hygiene supplies to CRSV survivors
- Sell products that were created or sourced by CRSV survivors, whilst giving a percentage of the revenue to the survivors

TRAVEL INDUSTRY

- Deliver supplies needed by CRSV survivors to conflict-affected areas
- Donate travel kits to CRSV survivors staying in shelters throughout their recovery

SURVIVOR TESTIMONY

Hawa* was a participant who received rehabilitation services provided by IOM through UN Action funding. Having never had an opportunity to attend school as a child, Hawa enrolled in basic education classes and learned how to read and write.

This was a golden opportunity that arrived at my door when I most needed it. In the beginning, I didn't even know how to correctly hold a pen. I learnt so much. I can now read and write...I urge the implementing partners to continue providing rehabilitation services and education opportunities to women like me to help them leave the cycle of negative perceptions and gain valuable knowledge and life skills to have a better life.

*name changed to protect the survivor's identity

SMES

- Where financially viable, make a donation to UN Action as part of a corporate philanthropy initiative
- Encourage staff to group together to donate their unwanted items needed by CRSV survivors to local survivors networks or through UN Action's partners

MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

- Run matching fundraising campaigns
- Sponsor employee-run fundraising initiatives
- Donate to UN Action's fund to finance one of its catalytic projects helping CRSV survivors

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

ACTIONS TO DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY SUPPORT CRSV SURVIVORS



RETAIL

- **Employ survivors** - Partner or contract with organisations that employ CRSV survivors, such as employment in the garment industry, to enable them to become self-sufficient
- **Donate supplies** - Contribute clothing, blankets and hygiene supplies, such as soap, flashlights, toothbrushes, combs, and sanitary napkins to CRSV survivors who have fled their homes
- **Support survivor-operated businesses** - Sell products derived from natural resources that CRSV survivors locally source, giving a percentage of the revenue to the survivors

FINANCIAL

- **Open bank accounts** - Assist CRSV survivors in opening bank accounts to secure financial independence and safely save earnings
- **Teach financial literacy** - Provide basic trainings on financial literacy for CRSV survivors to give them the confidence needed to become agents of change
- **Lower loan threshold** - Reduce the loan threshold for CRSV survivors to place them in a better position to become economically independent in the process of their recovery

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TECH



- **Upskill survivors through tech training** - Provide CRSV survivors with digital skills, including participating in digital language classes, so they can enter the modern workforce and become economically empowered
- **Help prevent disinformation** - Mitigate the proliferation of disinformation, which facilitates violent conflict and cultivates environments where CRSV can occur
- **Develop online courses** - Create and design online trainings on CRSV for humanitarians, academics and the wider public

LEGAL



- **Provide pro bono services** - Donate your skills and time by providing legal advice to CRSV survivors as they seek justice and accountability for the crimes perpetrated against them
- **Set up legal aid hotlines** - Organise legal aid hotlines to enable CRSV survivors in remote locations to document their cases and learn about their human rights
- **Lobby** - Advocate for the inclusion of CRSV-survivor protections in national legislation, such as the determination of sexual violence as a crime and the payment of reparations for survivors

TRAVEL



- **Transport supplies** - Deliver supplies needed by CRSV survivors to conflict areas to help humanitarian efforts
- **Provide accommodation** - Provide free housing to CRSV survivors fleeing from conflict while they receive treatment and aid
- **Donate travel kits** - Donate travel-sized toiletries and personal care items to CRSV survivors staying in shelters as they recover

NATURAL RESOURCE AND EXTRACTIVE



- **Vet contractors** - Conduct a risk assessment and vet local contractors to ensure that they are not associated with local militias or rebel groups that are complicit in CRSV
- **Incorporate gender equality into policies** - Mainstream gender considerations, such as hiring quotas or equal pay provisions, to guarantee that men are not the only ones employed
- **Assess local socio-political contexts** - Consider social tensions prior to contracting with local groups to avoid exacerbating the situation and increasing violence

MEDICAL



- **Donate supplies** - Equip shelters, known as One Stop Centres, with medical supplies and medicines to ensure that survivors' physical and psychological needs and injuries are attended to
- **Contribute mental health services** - Provide CRSV survivors with immediate mental health care, including therapy, to recover from trauma
- **Share expertise** - Assist CRSV survivors in their recovery by providing staff that are knowledgeable and trained in sexual and reproductive health

ENERGY



- **Donate Solar Lights** - Provide public lighting to communities to reduce incidents of violence, including CRSV, especially in remote and hard-to-reach areas

These boxes aim to highlight opportunities for engagement. While they are divided into categories, they are not restrictive and many of the actions can be adopted by any organisation of any nature.

CONCLUSION

While private sector action towards sustainable development has gained traction in recent years, there This paper reflects the global community's collective recognition that the private sector is a key player in helping realise global sustainable development, especially in the attainment of a world without CRSV. The paper outlines why the private sector should be involved in CRSV efforts, from both a moral and business perspective. It has set out recommended actions with supplementary guidance that private sector organisations can adopt to ensure they are operating in a way which helps to reinforce the work of UN Action. This begins by informing readers of the CRSV guiding principles and how they can be applied within a private sector context. Following this, it encourages businesses to reflect on their corporate responsibility performance and to use corporate responsibility as the foundation for further engagement in CRSV prevention efforts. It then goes on to explore how private sector organisations can contribute through promoting inclusive economic empowerment; raising awareness and increasing general understanding; developing strategies to specifically target survivors, and finally how businesses can use social investment and philanthropy to directly support the funding of UN Action's work.

This report has used a variety of case studies to demonstrate what private sector engagement in CRSV efforts might look like. Each of the case studies highlight effective yet adaptable actions that can be applied within any context worldwide to help further the aims and goals of UN Action. The private sector should now have an overarching and realistic idea as to how it can tailor its existing efforts or initiate new efforts to prevent and respond to CRSV as a partner with the UN.



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HELPFUL RESOURCES

CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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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 forsslund@un.org.



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.



Committed to Good



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.