



STOP RAPE NOW

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict (UN Action) unites the work of 13 UN entities with the goal of ending sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict. It is a concerted effort by the UN to improve coordination and accountability, amplify programming and advocacy, and support national efforts to prevent sexual violence and respond effectively to the needs of survivors.

Why did the UN establish UN Action?

Sexual violence in conflict is a serious, present-day emergency affecting millions of people, primarily women and girls. It is frequently a conscious strategy employed on a large scale by armed groups to humiliate opponents and destroy individuals, as well as whole societies. Sexual violence during conflict remains vastly under-addressed due to weak national protection mechanisms, inadequate judicial redress and piecemeal services for survivors. Many still view sexual violence as an inevitable, if regrettable, consequence of conflict and displacement – an attitude which encourages impunity for perpetrators and silences survivors. Yet rape during conflict is a war crime, crime against humanity, act of genocide and form of torture. As a grave violation of human rights and humanitarian law, it has received widespread condemnation.

In June 2008, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1820, linking conflict-related sexual violence with the maintenance of international peace and security, demanding the “immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed

conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians”. This means conflict-related rape is recognised as a core security challenge. In September 2009, the Council adopted a follow-on resolution (1888) to advance implementation.

Although a range of governmental, non-governmental and international initiatives to address sexual violence are being implemented, the scale and complexity of



the problem, coupled with poor coordination, has meant huge gaps in the response. The creation of UN Action responds to calls from women’s rights organizations, NGOs and rape survivors for the UN to do much more to provide a holistic response. It reinforces efforts by UN entities to better coordinate and streamline their activities, working as “one UN” at country and global levels.

What are the aims of UN Action?

UN Action is committed to aligning the UN’s work more effectively behind national efforts to address sexual violence, and to deepen partnerships with NGOs and civil society organisations that have been actively working to end sexual violence in conflict for many years. It operates through

existing UN coordination mechanisms including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and strengthens the work of the humanitarian Protection Cluster.

UN Action aims to strengthen both the UN's response to survivors and efforts to prevent sexual violence during and after conflict – recognising that the problem is a security as well as a humanitarian and developmental issue. UN Action supports women's engagement in conflict prevention and enhances their influence over peace negotiations and post-conflict recovery processes. This helps ensure that sexual violence is on the agenda of the justice and security sector. UN Action seeks to strengthen services for survivors, including health care, legal support and economic assistance to help rebuild their lives.



What are the focus areas of UN Action?

UN Action has three main pillars:

- 1. Country Level Action:** strategic support to UN action at country level, including efforts to build capacity, and targeted support for joint UN programming. For example, UN Action supported development of the first-ever *Comprehensive Strategy on Combating Sexual Violence in the DRC*.
- 2. Advocating for Action:** action to raise public awareness and generate political will to address sexual violence as part of a broader campaign to Stop Rape Now.
- 3. Learning by Doing:** creation of a knowledge hub on sexual violence in conflict, including data collection methodologies, international jurisprudence and effective responses.

What Guides UN Action?

- Rape is not an inevitable consequence of conflict. It must be prevented.
- Gender-based violence, including sexual violence, is a violation of fundamental human dignity and rights.
- Attempts to end sexual violence must address gender-based inequalities by empowering women, and protecting and promoting their human rights.
- Women must guide advocacy and programming efforts to end sexual violence and secure peace.
- Constructive involvement of men and boys is vital.
- Sexual violence in conflict and impunity for perpetrators are among history's great silences. We all have a duty to act.

UN Action works to enhance the UN system's response to Security Council Resolutions 1820/1888, 1325/1889, 1612/1882 and 1674, broadening the constituency for addressing sexual violence against civilians.

For more information:

Oversight for the work of UN Action is provided by a Steering Group consisting of Principals from the 13 UN system entities, supported by a small Secretariat. For more information please contact Gillian Holmes: gillian.holmes@unifem.org; or Letitia Anderson: letitia.anderson@unifem.org or visit: www.stoprapenow.org; www.facebook.com/UNAction

Join us in a display of global solidarity: cross your arms, take a photo and upload it at: www.stoprapenow.org/get-cross/

UN Action: making a real difference in the lives of women and girls during and in the wake of conflict – ensuring protection, services, reparation, justice!