



STOP RAPE NOW

UN ACTION AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT



FRAMEWORK FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE



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

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UNITED NATIONS

FOREWORD

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The unabated brutality of sexual violence on 21st Century battlefields, and its recurrence with each new wave of warfare, continues to shock the collective conscience. War's oldest crime seems to be never out of the news cycle, spanning all of history and geography, with no region, religion, culture, or continent left unscathed. When the interagency network I Chair, UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, was launched in 2007, its founding vision was to bring political, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and human rights actors together with humanitarian responders and programmatic specialists, in a mutually-reinforcing manner, to amplify action to address sexual violence as a political, rather than exclusively technical, challenge. This was a corollary of viewing the issue through an operational security, as well as a gender, lens. Prevention was the driving impetus behind this agenda, which aimed to avoid perpetually reacting to the consequences of sexual violence downstream, in the absence of concerted upstream preventive diplomacy.

The advent of my mandate in 2009, to lead and cohere system-wide strategic advocacy and engagements, reflected this shift in paradigm and perspective, dispelling the myth of rape as mere "collateral damage" or an "inevitable by-product of war".

The advent of my mandate in 2009, to lead and cohere system-wide strategic advocacy and engagements, reflected this shift in paradigm and perspective, dispelling the myth of rape as mere "collateral damage" or an "inevitable by-product of war". The most insidious effect of the long-standing myth of inevitability was the implication that rape would always be pervasive in the midst of war and could not be prevented. In international relations, the framing of a phenomenon as inevitable generally reflects a lack of political will to change it, and is code for complacency and acceptance, which in turn breed fatalism and passivity. Against that backdrop, the series of resolutions that anchored this issue on the Security Council agenda, namely resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2331 (2016), and 2467 (2019), demanded zero tolerance and credible consequences for conflict-related sexual violence. Cumulatively, they represent a political commitment to lift the veil of silence, and bring the full repertoire of diplomatic and enforcement tools to bear to convert the vicious cycle of violence and impunity into a virtuous cycle of recognition, reporting, and real-time, real-world response.

These resolutions recognised that sexual violence is used as a tactic of war, torture, terrorism, reprisal, and political repression, which can propel forced displacement, punish and persecute targeted populations, and serve as an instrument of "ethnic cleansing" and social control, whether in intention or effect. Accordingly, the issue could no longer be "privatised" or side-lined from serious consideration by peace and security stakeholders, but was required to be addressed with alacrity as a self-standing threat to collective security, requiring preventive, precautionary, and protective measures, as well as an impediment to the restoration of peace, demanding de-escalation, and diplomatic pressure on perpetrators to induce behavioural change. This marked a fundamental rethinking of wartime rape, from being viewed as regrettable, like any other tragedy, to being understood as preventable, like any other threat. Although notoriously difficult to detect and anticipate, as an invisible and highly-stigmatized crime, conflict-related sexual violence has since triggered proactive, not just reactive, approaches to reducing vulnerability, including embedding the issue in wider risk assessment, civilian protection, and early-warning tools, including threat and hotspot mapping, as an atrocity that is planned or permitted, and therefore preventable.

The new normative framework enabled actors and advocates to connect the dots between sexual violence and the global network of political and economic interests perpetuating it, as well as with peace negotiations, transitional justice processes, ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreements, mandate authorizations and renewals of peacekeeping and special political missions, and the designation criteria and deliberations of sanctions regimes. It thereby broadened the circle of stakeholders, expanding our operational reach and impact, bringing a new consciousness and new constituencies to the search for solutions.

The present framework aims to enhance both structural and operational prevention. Structural prevention includes addressing gender inequality as a root cause and invisible driver of sexual violence, in times of war and peace. This may be manifest in discriminatory laws and harmful social norms, such as stigma, shame, and victim-blame. Long-term structural prevention aims to build a protective environment and foster the resilience of individuals and communities at risk, including through peer support networks and economic empowerment, recognizing the links between economic security and physical safety. Operational prevention includes more immediate risk mitigation measures and early action in response to red flags and early-warning signs. For instance, the Matrix of Early-Warning Indicators of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, developed by my Office in 2011 and widely rolled out in the field, has improved monitoring of misogynistic hate speech, incitement, dehumanizing propaganda, extremist ideologies, changes to mobility patterns, arms accumulation,

abductions, forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, community stress, and other signs of impending or escalating sexual violence, translating the concept of prevention into operational terms for frontline actors. These qualitative indicators, as discussed and summarized in the present document, also underscore that hard data is not a pre-requisite to timely interventions, including the pre-positioning of services, deterrence patrols and escorts, political advocacy, contingency planning, and protection dialogue with parties. This tool marked an innovation in the field by virtue of not just looking at sexual violence as an early-warning indicator of wider conflict and instability, but as an atrocity that could be prevented per se. This is particularly significant in the case of sexual violence, given the rate of incident reporting is understood to be orders of magnitude lower than the actual prevalence rate, owing to stigma, constrained humanitarian access, and paucity of service-provision. It is clear that if we wait for comprehensive data, it will always be too late. Our responsibility is not only to help the victims, but to help ensure there are no more victims.

Yet early-warning signs are too often missed or dismissed because the voices of local women in the path of violence are not heard and heeded by the international community. Recent years have seen a rising trend of reprisals against women and girls who are vocal and visible in public life. While the importance of upholding women's rights, even in the midst of war, and protecting women's rights defenders at risk, are widely acknowledged, macro-level trendlines are moving in the wrong direction and feeding the flames of violence through runaway military spending, the spread of armed groups and private military companies, extremist ideologies including in the relatively ungoverned digital space, the proliferation of arms, increasing inequality, and an epidemic of coups and military take-overs, which have turned back the clock on women's rights.

This prevention framework articulates a two-track approach that aims to both prevent sexual violence in the first instance, and to mitigate the secondary harms to affected individuals and communities that arise in its wake. Compliance with existing norms and obligations is the most effective form of primary prevention. That is why I have emphasised the importance of moving from commitments to compliance, and from resolutions to results. Through timely, accessible assistance that is survivor-centred, rights-based, and trauma-informed, secondary harms can also be prevented, enabling survivors to rebuild their lives and livelihoods, and replace horror with healing and hope. Services must include medical care, sexual and reproductive healthcare, psychosocial support, safe shelter, livelihood opportunities, and access to justice, reparations, and redress. Essential civilian infrastructure is often decimated by war, at the same time as social safety nets unravel. Social dynamics can be either supportive or stigmatizing; they can either inhibit or enable further harms, hence the importance of socioeconomic reintegration support for survivors and their children, to strengthen the bonds of social cohesion. Indeed, stigma and untreated physical and psychological trauma can have lethal consequences, with some survivors describing the ensuing isolation, rejection, fear, and shame as worse than the act of violence itself. Many have succumbed to their injuries, to HIV/AIDS, traumatic fistula, suicide, "honour killings", maternal mortality, poverty, or reprisal attacks, including to silence victims and witnesses. Prevention permeates every action taken pursuant to my mandate, from advocacy to raise the red flag about risks and impending violations, to resource mobilization to expand the operational response, to engaging with traditional and religious leaders to help shift harmful social norms, to gender-responsive justice and security sector reform, training and sensitization of arms bearers, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), and community violence reduction (CVR) initiatives. As this framework illustrates, with the right combination of incentives, disincentives, and norms that are known, understood, and enforced, conflict-related sexual violence can be prevented.

In that respect, international law can exert a powerful restraining influence on the behaviour of both States and non-State armed groups. Prosecution is also a form of prevention and deterrence, with institutions like the International Criminal Court (ICC) casting a long shadow that can shape the behaviour of belligerents. While questions have been raised about the deterrence theory in practice, the counterfactual is everywhere in evidence: impunity serves to embolden the perpetrators and is tantamount to license to rape, with amnesty and immunity associated with continued or increased violence. Access to justice is particularly important given sexual violence crimes are characterized by staggering rates of recidivism. We have learnt over the years that legal and policy frameworks only have deterrent value if visibly and consistently enforced. Moreover, we must

deliver justice not just law, meaning social justice in communities as well as courtrooms. Survivor-centred rules of procedure and evidence are critical to minimise the risks of re-traumatisation or physical danger before, during, or after trial. Sanctions and accountability must work in tandem to change the calculus made by arms bearers and commanders, even during active conflict. It is also important to note that conflict and mass population flight can create conditions conducive to human trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual exploitation and forced prostitution, which flourishes in a climate of impunity.

Prevention demands permanent prioritisation, given the continually changing face of war, and the ever-evolving peace and security landscape. We cannot effectively prevent what we do not adequately understand. This framework consolidates key findings from academic research and leading scholars in the field, to deepen our collective awareness of the causes and consequences of conflict-related sexual violence.

In developing this framework, I was inspired by the words of survivors I have met in warzones around the world, who have repeatedly told me: "what happened to me could have been prevented", and "no one else should have to suffer as I did".

I launch this framework in the conviction that history does not simply repeat itself; people repeat history, or they make different choices. Through our annual reports, my Office has built a public historical record for this crime, and continues to shed light on previously invisible victims. Each of the tens of thousands of cases we have reported cry out for justice and redress; each of them could have been prevented. In this effort, we are only as strong as our partnerships, and must pursue a multistakeholder approach in collaboration with Governments, civil society, the private sector, the donor and diplomatic community, and survivors themselves. At this time of cascading global crises, the demands on my mandate continue to grow. We have shifted the paradigm from inevitability to preventability, but a corresponding shift is needed in terms of the public spending paradigm, to allocate resources equal to the scale of the challenge. Sustained political resolve and resources will signal to survivors that they are not forgotten, and that international law is not an empty promise. Our ultimate aim is to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, including its most intimate and enduring atrocity, the scourge of wartime rape. We must dig deeper and unearth the intertwined root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, and in their place sow the seeds of prevention and change.



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September 2022*

INTRODUCING THE FRAMEWORK

Through a series of resolutions on women, peace and security, the United Nations Security Council (“Security Council”) has emphasised that sexual violence, including when used as a tactic of war, torture, or terrorism, or as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population, can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and threaten international peace and security.¹ The Security Council has thus taken conflict-related sexual violence up as an area of grave concern, asserting the need for effective prevention and response measures in order to promote the maintenance of international peace and security.²

Over the past decade, increasing evidence shows great variation how, when, and why sexual violence during specific armed conflicts is committed. Not all parties to armed conflict commit sexual violence to the same degree, in the same ways, or at all.³ Further, even within a single armed conflict, commission of sexual violence may fluctuate across geography or time. This variation indicates that sexual violence is not inevitable in armed conflict.⁴ It also suggests that, with the right interventions and disincentives, conflict-related sexual violence can be prevented.⁵

General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) underlined the importance of Member States’ involvement and cooperation in sustaining peace at all stages of conflict and in all its dimensions, stressing that sustaining peace is imperative to preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict. In response, the United Nations Secretary-General placed prevention at the centre of all United Nations efforts.⁶

As part of these efforts, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, as Chair of the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in

Conflict network of 23 entities, presents this Framework for the Prevention of Conflict-related Sexual Violence.

Much programmatic work is already being done to address gender-based violence in emergency settings. This Framework complements those critical efforts by addressing how prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in particular is also a peace and security imperative. Prevention demands not only a programmatic response at the individual and community level, but a political response grounded in the women, peace, and security agenda and international humanitarian law. Programmatic mandates and political protection mandates should address the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence strategically and in a complementary, mutually-reinforcing manner.

The Framework outlines critical elements and considerations for prevention, in order to guide decision-making in a clear and comprehensive way.⁷ It builds on general acceptance that the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence must involve normative change and the elimination of gender inequality and power imbalances, but also highlights critical political and security-focused approaches that can help reduce the occurrence of armed conflicts in which this particular form of violence necessarily arises. For this essential work, Member States and other political entities must be engaged. This Framework provides guidance to this end and further aims to dismantle silos by enhancing efforts and collaboration between diverse actors within broader efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. In doing so, the Framework contributes to the overall prevention of conflict and human suffering, which lies at the heart of the United Nations mandate.⁸

PREVENTION: ALIGNMENT WITH UNITED NATIONS PRIORITIES

The prevention of conflict-related sexual violence contributes to the fulfilment of several critical UN priorities.

Women, Peace and Security Agenda

First, prevention of conflict-related sexual violence is a core aim of the women, peace and security agenda, which was established by Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and expanded in subsequent resolutions. For over two decades now, the women, peace and security agenda resolutions have consistently highlighted the need to prioritise prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, alongside response.⁹ Member States are encouraged to implement these resolutions to domestically advance the agenda.¹⁰

Resolution (Year)	“Prevention” in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security
1325 (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding efforts; Emphasises the important role of women in maintaining and promoting peace and security; Stresses the need to include women in decision-making as it relates to conflict prevention and resolution; Recognises perpetration of sexual violence in conflict.
1820 (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Condemns the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war; Declares that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide; Recognises that prevention of and response to sexual violence in conflict can contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security; Urges the Secretary-General and his Special Envoy to include women in peace processes, including those related to the prevention of conflict; Calls for the cessation of impunity and proposes the development of mechanisms to provide protection against violence for women and girls; Notes the coordination role of the inter-agency initiative UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.
1888 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reiterates the threat of sexual violence in conflict to international peace and security, noting that action by civilian and military leaders is a key preventative mechanism to demonstrate commitment and political will, to combat impunity and to enforce accountability; Urges parties to conflict to report and investigate acts of sexual violence; Calls for the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, to lead and cohere system-wide efforts, promoting cooperation and coordination primarily through the interagency UN Action network; Calls for the deployment of Women Protection Advisors as well as a Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.
1889 (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reiterates the necessity of women's participation in peace processes, including in the prevention of conflict; Emphasises factors limiting participation; Calls for the development of indicators to measure implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).
1960 (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls for development of an accountability infrastructure for sexual violence in conflict to end impunity; Requests the Secretary-General to list in an annex to the annual report parties that are credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict on the Security Council agenda; Calls upon parties to armed conflict to implement time-bound commitments to end sexual violence in conflict; Calls for monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements on conflict-related sexual violence.
2106 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasises the need to increase women's participation in mediation, post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding efforts to address sexual violence in conflict; Underlines the importance of all actors in accountability measures to end impunity.
2122 (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Endeavours to increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, reinforcing the Security Council's commitment to incorporate women, peace and security thematic issues into its agenda.
2242 (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises the critical need to address root causes of armed conflict, references the importance of disarmament in achieving gender equality, and affirms the necessity of an integrated approach to peace processes.
2467 (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognises structural root causes of sexual violence in conflict, including gender inequality; Calls for a survivor-centred approach to prevention and response efforts, including in peace processes and other reform efforts; Calls for strengthening justice and accountability mechanisms by use of sanctions and the provision of reparations.
2493 (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urges a recommitment to the women, peace, and security agenda, noting setbacks in its implementation since adoption of resolution 1325; Calls for the full and meaningful participation of women in peace processes; Recognises the importance of civil society organisations, including women's organisations.

Sustainable Development Goals

Prevention of conflict-related sexual violence also contributes to achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by addressing specific targets related to gender equality, reduced inequalities and peace, justice and strong institutions.¹¹



- Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**
- 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all girls everywhere
 - 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and privatespheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
 - 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
 - 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
 - 5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources
 - 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels



- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**
- 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status
 - 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard



- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**
- 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere
 - 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
 - 16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all
 - 16.4 By 2030, significantly reduce illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime
 - 16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels
 - 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels
 - 16.a Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ADVANCED BY THE PREVENTION OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Fig. 1

Our Common Agenda and other calls from the Secretary-General

This Framework aligns with the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights (2020), which sets out overarching guiding principles for seven domains which collectively advance the United Nations human rights agenda.¹² The Call to Action affirms fulfilment of human rights considerations as a core component of broader prevention efforts, encompassing the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

Prevention is also central to Our Common Agenda, issued by the Secretary-General on 5 August 2021. The Common Agenda highlights the need for renewed multilateralism in an age of growing risk and integrates the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development among its commitments.¹³ Specifically, the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence supports Commitment 3: Promote peace and prevent conflicts and its particular call to place women and girls at the centre of security sector policy. It also addresses Commitment 5: Place women and girls at the centre and its call for the eradication of violence against women and girls, including through development of an emergency response plan.¹⁴

BUILDING ON EXISTING PREVENTION EFFORTS AND GUIDANCE

Conflict-related sexual violence is an expression of gender inequality and occurs in the context of other forms of gender-based violence, including sexual violence. As a result, longstanding approaches to combat gender inequality and gender-based violence are critical to prevention efforts. Conflict-related sexual violence differs from general forms of gender-based violence, however, due to its connection with armed conflict. Its prevention is thus also tied to the prevention of conflict itself. The Secretary-General captured this relationship in his report on 3 June 2020, noting that the end goal of the conflict-related sexual violence agenda is not a “war without rape”, but rather a world without war.¹⁶

For this reason, preventing conflict-related sexual violence requires attention to deep-rooted political, socioeconomic, cultural, environmental, and institutional drivers of conflict.¹⁷ Several United Nations documents call for a coherent, comprehensive, and coordinated approach to conflict prevention through structural, systematic and operational approaches.¹⁸ In particular, the United Nations has long established the critical role of women, girls, and women's organisations in conflict prevention and resolution, and has stressed the need for their equal and meaningful participation and full involvement in efforts to promote peace and security at all levels.¹⁹ Engagement of youth and representatives of other often-neglected or invisible populations (e.g., communities associated by race, gender, indigenous or disability status) is also critical.

To address this complexity and promote a comprehensive approach, this Framework incorporates by reference significant existing guidance related to the prevention of gender-based violence and conflict generally (see Annex 1: Related Guidance and Frameworks).²⁰ It then complements and builds on this

Finally, the Framework aligns with recommendations the Secretary-General made on 29 March 2022, for Member States, donors and regional and intergovernmental organisations to adopt a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence; to ensure that operational provisions and expertise on prohibiting and addressing sexual violence inform the design and implementation of peace, ceasefire, cessation of hostilities and/or subsequent agreements; to ensure protection measures and timely responses for civilians at imminent risk of conflict-related sexual violence, including those in detention, displacement, or migration settings; to mitigate the risks of sexual violence associated with livelihood activities; to tackle the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, including structural gender inequality and harmful social norms; and to ensure that the next generation of national action plans on women, peace and security, as well as related regional and local action plans, include budgeted operational provisions relating to the structural prevention of conflict-related violence.¹⁵

longstanding work by highlighting specific considerations for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in particular, providing conceptual and pragmatic elaboration as needed. In doing so, this Framework clarifies how conflict-related sexual violence may be addressed in furtherance of national commitments to uphold and defend human rights and to abide by the responsibility to protect,²¹ as well as in the context of broader efforts to prevent conflict and promote lasting peace and security.

This Framework does not explicitly cover sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers. Instead, it complements *The United Nations Secretary-General's Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse: a new approach* (2017) and the *Policy on Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach to United Nations efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* (2021), which together set forth a system-wide approach to prevent and respond to sexual abuse and exploitation, including by United Nations peacekeepers in the context of armed conflict.²² While sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeepers is related to conflict-related sexual violence, prevention of and accountability for these issues are operationally distinct in terms of institutional mandates, policies and protocols to ensure they receive thorough and context-specific consideration.²³ This division of labour also acknowledges the important role peacekeepers can play, separately, in the detection and prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. Duty-bearers responsible for the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence and those responsible for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse work in complement to address these related but distinct violations.

CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE: A CLOSER LOOK

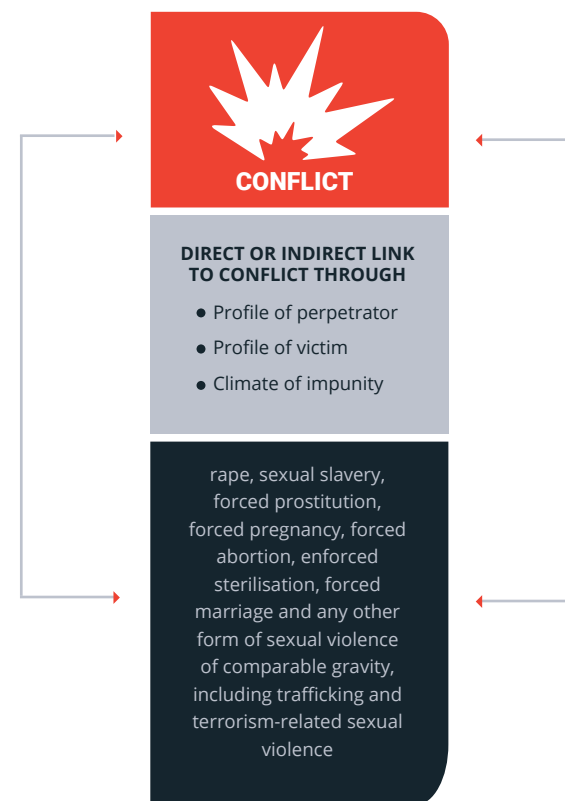
WHAT IS CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Conflict-related sexual violence is an invisible, silenced and stigmatised crime, and is often committed by those who are meant to provide protection. The United Nations Secretary-General defines conflict-related sexual violence as referring to rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls, or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.²⁴ This link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a State or non-State armed group, including terrorist entities or networks;²⁵ the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority, or targeted on the basis of gender inequality or of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity; the climate of impunity, which is generally associated with State collapse; cross-border consequences, such as displacement or trafficking; and/or violations of the provisions of a ceasefire agreement.²⁶ The term also encompasses trafficking in persons, i.e., the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons for the purpose of the exploitation, including of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, of slavery or slavery like practices, and other forms of exploitation,²⁷ when committed in situations of conflict.²⁸ In the case of adults, a means by which the action is achieved must be present to constitute trafficking, including a threat or use of force, coercion, deception, fraud, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, abduction, or giving payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person.

The Security Council has also noted, and the Secretary-General affirmed, that certain terrorist groups have adopted gender-based violence, including or in particular sexual violence, as part of their ideologies or as a tactic of terrorism, with survivors suffering as both victims of terrorism and survivors of sexual violence.²⁹ Terrorist groups may also engage in trafficking in persons, including for sexual purposes, as a source of financing and recruitment.³⁰

Effective prevention of conflict-related sexual violence requires first understanding the many reasons and ways it happens

Acts of sexual violence can constitute atrocity crimes, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocidal acts.³¹ As such, Member States have the duty to protect, investigate, and prosecute.



ACTS OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE ARE CONNECTED TO ARMED CONFLICT IN DIFFERENT WAYS, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY

Fig. 3

ROOT CAUSES AND CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

Prevention of any form of violence requires elimination of its root causes, or the fundamental, underlying conditions driving a specific event.³² The occurrence of an event may be influenced by certain factors or conditions that increase the event's likelihood in a certain context. These "risk factors" or "contributing factors" may also accelerate the speed at which the event happens or the severity of its impacts. Identification of these factors can help guide and target prevention efforts to areas or populations most vulnerable to harm.

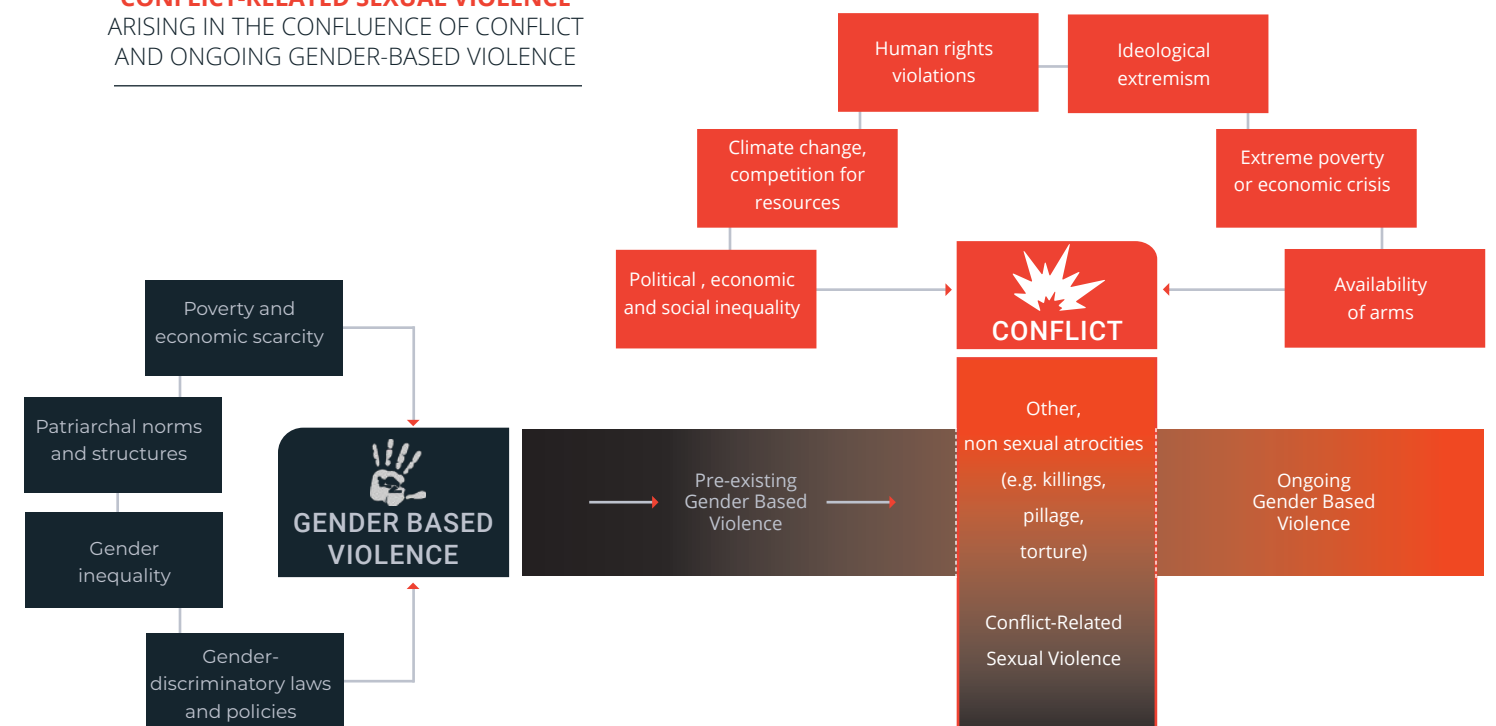
Conflict-related sexual violence is a complex form of violence arising from multiple, intersecting root causes.³³

On one hand, conflict-related sexual violence arises in the context of conflict and so it is in part due to the drivers of armed conflict itself. These include political, economic and social inequalities; human rights violations; extreme poverty or economic crisis; climate change, environmental degradation, and competition for natural resources; ideological extremism; and availability of arms.³⁴ The United Nations Office of the Special Advisers on

Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect have also identified several factors associated with risk of conflict outbreak, escalation or resurgence, such as: tension between different groups or lack of social cohesion; absence of the rule of law, including conflict-related failure of formal and informal justice and protection systems; arms proliferation; forced displacement; impacts of climate change, including climate-related disasters and access to natural resources; and the existence of criminal networks or generalised violence.³⁵

At the same time, conflict-related sexual violence is also a form of gender-based violence, which is driven by gender inequality and power imbalances within a society. Several United Nations entities have identified basic risk factors for gender-based violence. For example, UN Women's *RESPECT Framework for preventing violence against women* (2019) notes conditions ranging from individual to societal level, e.g., childhood exposure to violence in the family, high levels of power disparity in relationships, discriminatory laws on marriage, divorce, and child custody and gender discrimination in institutions.³⁶

CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE ARISING IN THE CONFLUENCE OF CONFLICT AND ONGOING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



CONFLICT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ARISES IN THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN ARMED CONFLICT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, SO THEIR DISTINCT DRIVERS INFLUENCE ITS OCCURRENCE

Fig. 4



Conflict-related sexual violence sits at the confluence of armed conflict and gender-based violence. As such, risk factors associated with conflict-related sexual violence draw from conditions linked to both conflict and gender-based violence, often creating unique, compound risks.³⁷ They can manifest from individual through supranational, political levels. For example, conflict-related sexual violence may arise due to the co-occurrence of misogynistic extremist ideologies and access to weapons and the war-related destruction of social support and protection networks.³⁸

Depending on the conflict, different characteristics or circumstances may increase individual or community risk of conflict-related sexual violence. At an individual level, a person's sex, gender identity, and position in a hierarchy of power may put them at heightened risk for specific forms of conflict-related sexual violence. For example, women and girls of childbearing age are primary targets for reproductive harms such as forced pregnancy, forced sterilisation, and forced marriage. Detainees during wartime are at risk of conflict-related sexual violence due to their captive status; they can be sexually tortured during interrogation or forced to perform sexual acts in exchange for food or safety. Male combatants, such as in West Africa, have reported high rates

of sexual violence, as well.³⁹ It is also important to note specific vulnerabilities of persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics, who have been singled out for sexual violence or "social cleansing" on account of their non-conforming sexual orientations or gender identities.⁴⁰

Age is another potential risk factor in some contexts. For example, children (under 18 years of age) and youth (18 through 29 years of age) may be vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups or terrorist organisations because they are perceived as being more susceptible to manipulation. Participation in these organisations can increase the likelihood of their exposure to sexual violence — as victims, perpetrators, or both.⁴¹ Age, too, exacerbates the influence that other risk factors may have on an individual. For example, situations of instability can limit the means for education and employment, inciting youth to join parties to a conflict because of their frustration with constrained future opportunities, exacerbating risk for not only victimisation but also perpetration of sexual violence.⁴²

Several other characteristics may influence an individual's or community's risk of conflict-related sexual violence, including actual or presumed race, ethnicity, political opinion, or relationship to enemy

fighters. Certain circumstances may also matter, such as displacement or detention status, the presence of occupying forces in a community, or increasing political or electoral violence, including targeted violence against women human rights defenders and political activists on social media or elsewhere.⁴³ Protection programming may also inadvertently prioritise certain racial, ethnic, or religious groups over others. As such, it is critical to take an intersectional approach to understand the way multiple aspects of a person's or community's identity or relative position in a hierarchy of power may give rise to compounded vulnerability and discrimination.⁴⁴ For example, women of childbearing age in a particular ethnic group may be targeted for forced pregnancy or forced abortion in contexts of ethnic cleansing. Similarly, men of "fighting age" may be targeted for either recruitment or elimination and subjected to sexualised forms of harm in the process. Rural indigenous women associated with political opposition may be violated by armed actors and struggle for access to and recognition by the legal system, due to a history of marginalisation and discrimination. Compounded identities of oppression add to the invisibility or stigmatisation of conflict-related sexual violence, which remains the only crime for which a community is more likely to blame and shame the victim rather than the perpetrator.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RISK MITIGATION

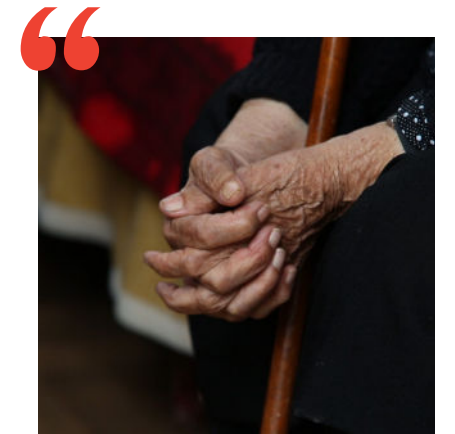
Certain conditions and circumstances may reduce risk of exposure to conflict-related sexual violence, as well. For example, certain factors are understood to be protective from gender-based violence generally. These include laws, norms, and relationships that are based on gender equality, as well as women's access to secondary and higher education, employment, and general empowerment.

There is limited research on factors and interventions that serve to protect individuals from conflict-related sexual violence,⁴⁵ specifically. However, some studies do indicate the importance of support for survivors, including increasing social inclusion and reducing stigma and shame as critical ways to prevent further harm. A study examining social relationships and re-integration in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, found that support programs significantly improve both perceived social inclusion and economic well-being for survivors of sexual violence and others, with the effects of economic well-being greater for survivors than other women. From a practical guidance standpoint, the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action* (2015) provides valuable guidance for humanitarian actors seeking to reduce risk of gender-based violence in humanitarian emergency settings.

UNDERSTANDING PERPETRATION

Disaggregation of conflict-related sexual violence is critical for effective prevention, which must be context-sensitive and target specific forms of harm and perpetrator motives.⁴⁸ Foundational to these efforts is the critical need to ensure that any prevention approach responds to the power imbalances, differential forms of discrimination and gender inequalities fuelling this violence.

Sexual violence is not a tactic of warfare in all conflicts.⁴⁹ The forms of sexual violence, identities of the perpetrator(s) (i.e., the armed group), identities of the targeted group(s) (i.e., survivors), motivations for perpetration and locations of perpetration differ within and across conflicts.⁵⁰ Documenting variations in sexual violence perpetration⁵¹ helps clarify its range of forms, motives, and circumstances — including when it is used as a tactic of war.⁵²



Protection and natural resources

Armed groups may engage in illicit extraction of natural resources, often to fund their operations and continue to fuel conflict.⁴⁶ Sexual violence is used as a tactic of intimidation and social control to displace populations from settlements surrounding natural resources, disproportionately affecting ethnic minority and indigenous populations. Women living in proximity to mining sites are at heightened vulnerability of sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and trafficking. Women environmental rights defenders have been targeted specifically.

Protective programming in this context must be flexible and attuned to women's needs. Some women rely on access to these areas for their livelihood, including to access employment. Rather than limiting women's access to these areas, for example, protective programming should focus on improving security to limit sexual violence while maintaining access.⁴⁷

Variation

It is critical to avoid approaching conflict-related sexual violence as a single phenomenon because it has many forms, perpetrators, and survivor profiles, and can happen at different frequencies across contexts. Scholars have noted that armed groups within the same country and conflict can perpetrate sexual violence to different degrees or at different times, and some may barely commit it at all. Groups can also have varied “sexual violence repertoires”, which include the different forms of sexual violence that groups perpetrate.⁵³ Further, women, including female combatants, are sometimes perpetrators.⁵⁴

Motivation

Analysing the repertoires of sexual violence by armed groups reveals differential motivations behind perpetration. These differences do not reflect or imply a hierarchy of wartime horrors, but instead highlight how prevention efforts must be comprehensive to combat the myriad ways in which sexual violence can be weaponized.

The perpetration of conflict-related sexual violence is deeply rooted in patriarchy and other forms of structural gender inequality. Women and girls across the world suffer conflict-related sexual violence at the hands of soldiers, traffickers, terrorists, and even family members. Recently, there is increased awareness of how gender norms can drive the use of conflict-related sexual violence to punish or emasculate men, boys and persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics.⁵⁵

Perpetrators may take advantage of collapsed protection infrastructure or a general context of impunity. Even seemingly random or individual actions may be connected to, or influenced by, a surrounding armed conflict. Sexual violence is also committed in furtherance of some organisational policy or advantage as a tactic of war. It may be authorised or ordered by command, either explicitly or implicitly.⁵⁶ It may also be a non-military policy, such as to control the sexual and reproductive lives of combatants.

- An off-duty soldier rapes a woman he encounters in town
- One or more members of a group takes advantage of chaos in acute conflict to sexually assault neighbour(s) from a different ethnic group
- Mid-level commanders keep women in private apartments, using them for sexual services and sharing them with comrades without fear of punishment
- Border authorities routinely and collectively demand sexual acts from persons fleeing conflict in exchange for border crossing without fear of punishment
- Armed actors rape civilians to intimidate political opponents or displace communities from their territory
- State actors subject detainees to sexual humiliation or torture in the course of interrogation
- Terrorist organisations abduct and sell women and girls into slavery to finance terrorist activities
- Armed actors force female members to take oral contraception to undergo abortions, to avoid pregnancy while in service
- Rank and file members of armed groups rape civilians to create bonds of friendship and trust between forcibly recruited members and to signal masculinity
- Armed groups use sexual violence as a tactic of genocide and ethnic cleansing

Regardless of how or why they are perpetrated, acts of conflict-related sexual violence all harm those who experience them, leaving physical, psychological and social impacts. These acts can also be crimes under national or international criminal laws. For all these reasons, States have a duty to prevent harm, protect the population and provide accountability for the full range of these acts of conflict-related sexual violence.

Rebel groups and organisational structure

Research has also produced useful insights regarding organisational structures of rebel groups and non-state actors.⁵⁷ Findings have shown, for example, that groups that engage in forced recruitment practices are more likely to perpetrate gang rape than other groups, possibly to forge intragroup cohesion through shared transgression.⁵⁸ Some groups demonstrate selectivity in their use of sexual violence. For example, the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia prohibited sexual violence generally while still institutionalising forced marriage as a way to create a new ethnic group or new generation of laborers, respectively.⁵⁹

Scholars have also studied restraint shown by armed groups.⁶⁰ Controlling the commission of sexual violence in armed conflict is often due to ideology. Leftist organisations promoting structural gender equality, for example, risk undermining their ideological position and may lose legitimacy by perpetrating sexual violence.⁶¹ In contrast, some scholars have observed that ideologically conservative armed groups, including religious extremists, may perpetrate higher rates of sexual violence, in line with ideologies that perpetuate gender inequality.⁶²

Organisations relying on civilian support or assistance may show restraint in order to build trust with the local community.⁶³ Some organisations may recruit members who are already ideologically aligned and do not require socialisation, while others may show restraint in order to recruit women.⁶⁴ Note, however, that while the presence of women combatants may indicate an ideological commitment to gender inequality, it alone may not deter sexual violence.⁶⁵

For rebel groups and non-state actors in particular, prevention targeting perpetration requires disaggregation of motive in order to effectively incentivise their prohibition of sexual violence, including from political and ideological standpoints.⁶⁶ Given the critical role gender norms play in armed actors commission of or restraint from sexual violence, prevention efforts should be informed by an analysis of power and gender in the given context.



LEVEL OF OPERATION	Approaches to prevent occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence	Approaches to prevent occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence
<p>Institutional / Structural</p> <p>Institutional and structural factors include systematic prevention efforts, often undertaken by State entities. These measures are taken at large scale, often nationally.</p>	<p>Gender-sensitive early warning and early response systems, which may involve: Detecting increases in misogynistic hate speech, sexual and gender-based violence, and other early warning indicators of increasing insecurity; including sex-and age-disaggregated data and analysis; implementing technological tools that exist for monitoring of, and alerting to conflict-related sexual violence; and including youth, women, and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics in the development of early warning systems.</p> <p>Meaningful participation of women in arms control and disarmament processes; implementing gender-responsive arms control initiatives; disaggregating data on small arms and light weapons by sex, age and licit or illicit origin.</p> <p>General education</p> <p>Policies and approaches to scale-up comprehensive sexuality education that is age- and culturally-appropriate and which focuses on gender equality, respect, consent, and healthy family and intimate relationships.</p> <p>Human rights education for community members to clarify understanding of rights and prohibited behaviours.</p> <p>Training and sensitisation of investigators, human rights defenders and even general citizens in the detection and ethical documentation of human rights abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking.</p> <p>Security forces and personnel of armed groups</p> <p>Codes of conduct, training on attitudes / protocols / responses with military / peacekeepers/ police / aid workers; policies to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse; deployment or increased recruitment of female officers.</p> <p>Ongoing training on international humanitarian and human rights law training for armed forces.</p> <p>Direct engagement with armed actors (both command level and ground troops) to understand their structures and priorities, in order to understand how to disincentivise commission of conflict-related sexual violence as well as incentivise its prevention or punishment; normative change around gender equality and rule of law can help support response to these incentives.</p> <p>Combatant-focused initiatives, including: engaging with leaders of State and non-State armed groups to identify opportunities for training, reporting, vetting, and discipline related to the commission of sexual violence; disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) programs that target reduction of sexual violence.</p> <p>Strengthening capacity of police and immigration authorities and border control officers to detect and respond to potential victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including conflict-related trafficking and other forms of exploitation, at borders and other contexts of displacement.</p> <p>Provision of foot and vehicle patrols and security details to vulnerable areas; establishment of safety protocols.</p> <p>Development of complaint mechanisms within State institutions, to capture and respond to reports of gender-based violence including during and after periods of conflict and other emergencies, including conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking in persons.</p> <p>Implementation of prevention efforts in detention settings, including: personnel trainings; unfettered access for monitoring bodies to document cases of conflict-related sexual violence; complaint mechanisms for safe reporting, including for women, men, youth, and persons with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression and sex characteristics; separation of authorities responsible for detention and for interrogation; separation of detainees by age and gender, especially during transfers; official and comprehensive records of all detentions requiring mandated body searches; maintenance of humane interrogation settings, as per, inter alia, the Body of Principles, the Nelson Mandela Rules, the Bangkok Rules, and the Havana Rules; prohibition of transfers to detention settings violating established international human rights law.</p> <p>Laws, policies, institutions</p> <p>Legal frameworks that aim to eliminate gender inequality and address gender-based violence generally, as well as conflict-related sexual violence specifically, including ratification and domestication of the <i>Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court</i>, and the <i>Convention on the Elimination on Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)</i>. Further, domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 <i>Convention relating to the Status of Refugees</i>, and other relevant international instruments can strengthen prevention of intersecting vulnerabilities to gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence specifically. Additional legal provisions are critical, e.g., those allowing for prosecution of violent extremism, terrorism, conflict-related trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, and child recruitment and exploitation by criminal armed groups, including those designated as terrorists. The <i>Model Legislative Provisions and Guidance on the Investigations and Prosecutions of Conflict-related Sexual Violence</i> can guide legislative reform processes.</p> <p>Updated counter-terrorism legislation that criminalises gender-based, including sexual and other forms of violence by terrorist groups, including trafficking in persons.</p>	<p>Laws, policies, institutions (continued)</p> <p>Policies aimed at preventing gender-based violence and supporting survivors, generally, as well as specific to conflict-related sexual violence. This includes mainstreaming prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence within national action plans on women, peace, and security.</p> <p>Building institutional frameworks with the capacity and competence to investigate and prosecute international crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence. This potentially includes: specialised police, prosecution, and judicial units; initiatives involving community or customary justice systems; supporting the development of cases at relevant national, regional, and international criminal tribunals.</p> <p>Training relevant officials, including law enforcement personnel, border control officers, judges, and prosecutors to identify indicators of trafficking in persons in areas affected by armed conflict in supply chains.</p> <p>Compliance with anti-money-laundering and combatting financing of terrorism standards; financial investigations, include anti-trafficking in financial intelligence units, develop indicators for identifying suspicious transactions or money-laundering linked to trafficking.</p> <p>Peacebuilding for prevention of sexual violence</p> <p>Promoting women's meaningful participation and leadership in nation- and peacebuilding.</p> <p>Incorporation of sexual violence prevention measures in ceasefire negotiations and monitoring; inclusion of women in negotiating bodies.</p> <p>Gender-responsive Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR), Community Violence Reduction (CVR) and partial redistribution of military expenditures to social and economic infrastructures.</p> <p>Small arms and light weapons regulation and control, possibly including: Implementing the Arms Trade Treaty (AVRES/69/49); Implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat, and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects; Adding weapons-related issues into national action plans on women, peace, and security; Incorporating gender analysis and gender-responsive monitoring in national small arms control mechanisms.</p> <p>Gender-sensitive justice and security sector reform aimed at increasing human security, possibly including engagement with police, military, and non-State armed groups; enhance effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations to detect and respond to risks of conflict-related sexual violence, assist with law reform, contribute to early warning efforts and targeted patrols, and conduct community-level political engagement.</p> <p>Integration of conflict-related sexual violence into laws, policies and practices aimed at countering violent extremism.</p> <p>Decreased military spending and increased state investment in social programs (e.g., access to education, jobs, and healthcare), possibly including: expanding the use of gender-budgeting tools and programming to influence military spending levels and strengthen citizen oversight of military budgeting through enhanced transparency and accountability; strengthening civilian oversight of security and defence sector expenditure; increasing participation of women in positions of power that influence military spending decisions; submitting data on military spending on an annual basis for inclusion in the United Nations Report on Military Expenditure.</p> <p>Engagement and protection of specific groups</p> <p>Early warning systems with inputs from diverse communities, including youth, individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics, rural community members, and indigenous and displaced populations.</p> <p>Support and protection efforts focused on those in remote and rural areas where justice and protection systems may be weak.</p> <p>Support and protection efforts focused on internally or internationally displaced populations, to reduce compounding vulnerabilities to sexual violence, trafficking, and sexual exploitation; special attention to be paid to unaccompanied children and individuals with disabilities, who often have unique challenges in escape from armed conflict.</p> <p>Laws and mechanisms to protect human rights defenders, particularly women's rights activists, and women working in the political space.</p>

LEVEL OF OPERATION	Approaches to prevent occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence
<p>Community</p> <p>Community factors include the immediate social context in which violence may take place (e.g. villages, cities, displacement camps), and the ways in which specific features of these communities can influence the prevention of the occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence.</p>	<p>Promotion of positive attitudes, beliefs, and norms that advance gender equality, challenge gender discrimination, and condemn violence against women; awareness-raising about how discrimination based on diverse and intersecting aspects of identity such as race, gender, age, socio-economic status, and diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics contributes to vulnerability to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.</p> <p>Community-based solutions that directly or indirectly address risk factors for conflict-related sexual violence, including: supporting local women's organisations and survivors' networks; fostering women's political leadership and economic empowerment; working with women's groups to rebuild social cohesion, create socio-economic reintegration programs, and promote community-level conflict-resolution efforts.</p> <p>Political engagements that support the peaceful resolution of conflict and prevent relapses into violence and insecurity.</p> <p>Community awareness and mobilisation around issues of gender equality, anti-discrimination, intrafamilial violence, and the forms and impacts of conflict-related sexual violence, potentially including: Education on rights related to sexual coercion; increasing opportunities for women to participate in political, economic, and social activities; engaging with men and boys, including on issues of masculinity, gender equality, healthy family relationships, and human rights generally.</p> <p>"Safety mapping" to identify areas of perceived risk of conflict-related sexual violence or gender-based violence, generally, and areas of perceived safety, possibly including: increased monitoring and accompaniment in danger areas; increased number of safe spaces; and development of clear systems of location and reception.</p> <p>Sustainable and climate-resilient livelihood options, including through investments in nature-based solutions, for local communities suffering from compound impacts of climate change and conflict.</p>
<p>Individual</p> <p>Individual factors comprise personal characteristics of biology or personal history that influence an individual's likelihood of experiencing or perpetrating violence.</p>	<p>Work with diverse actors to strengthen factors that protect individuals from conflict-related sexual violence, building from broader gender-based violence prevention approaches (see RESPECT Framework) while also adapted to conflict-specific risks, such as individual economic empowerment in contexts of sudden displacement or lost livelihood; education about signs of trafficking and other forms of exploitation; and enjoyment of family unity and strong social networks to provide protection in periods of armed conflict and displacement, as well as aid in the detection and prevention of trafficking, including by armed groups or terrorist organisations.</p> <p>Preventing potential and former perpetrators from committing conflict-related sexual violence in the future, including through arrest, trial, detention, and, with survivors' perspectives and rights fully taking into account, rehabilitation.</p>

PREVENTING THE OCCURRENCE, ESCALATION, AND RECURRENCE OF CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Fig. 6

PREVENTING OCCURRENCE: THEMATIC ISSUES

The section provides additional background and discussion of certain approaches and themes featured in the above table on the prevention of occurrence, escalation, and recurrence of conflict-related sexual violence. It describes fundamental, structural, longer-term prevention approaches and nearer-term, operational and programmatic ones.

Elimination of gender inequality: Fundamental and cross-cutting

The elimination of gender inequality is a fundamental and cross-cutting aspect of prevention of conflict-related sexual violence. It should inform all aspects of work aiming to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. Research has indicated a correlation between the level of gender equality in a country and the tendency of the country towards war. Specifically, data indicate that States with higher levels of gender equality — political, social, and economic — are less likely to resort to the use of force in relation to engagement with other States. Other recent research suggests that the security of women is one of the most reliable indicators of the peacefulness of a State.⁶⁸ Further, harmful social norms and power differences related to gender are understood to contribute to the perpetration of gender-based violence in both peacetime and in times of conflict. For all these reasons, structural efforts to prevent the occurrence of conflict-related sexual violence should include efforts to eliminate gender inequality and power imbalances. This can happen in many ways, including the development and implementation of laws protecting equal rights and prohibiting gender-based discrimination, ensuring access to education for women and girls alongside their male counterparts, and promoting full and effective participation of all people regardless of gender in the public and political life of the country. Work surrounding the fifth Sustainable Development Goal on the promotion of gender equality offers additional possible prevention efforts. The fundamental work of building gender equality is broader than this Framework and is guided by myriad other guidance documents.

Disarmament and arms control

Human suffering and destabilisation resulting from illicit arms trafficking has been historically recognised,⁶⁹ integrated into conflict prevention efforts,⁷⁰ and aligned with the women, peace, and security agenda.⁷¹ The ubiquity of small arms and light weapons in conflict-affected areas destabilises a community at one level and also emboldens individual armed actors to commit atrocities against civilians without restraint. Indeed, conflict-related sexual violence is directly correlated with increased militarisation, resurgence of hostilities, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and the proximity of arms bearers to civilian

populations.⁷² The illicit flow of small arms and light weapons facilitates conflict-related sexual violence,⁷³ including fuelling insecurity for internally displaced women and girls, and allowing transnational smugglers, traffickers, and armed groups to operate. Additionally, research suggests that gun ownership is associated with expressions of masculinity, power, and control,⁷⁴ operating as an additional driver of conflict-related sexual violence.

Disarmament and arms control are thus key to preventing atrocities like conflict-related sexual violence.⁷⁵ Importantly, the Arms Trade Treaty (2012) connects the export of arms with the risk of gender-based violence. Pursuant to Article 6, State Parties cannot authorise arms transfers if there is a risk that they will be used in the commission of war crimes, which can include some forms of conflict-related sexual violence. Further, Article 7(4) requires State Parties to assess the risk of arms "being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence against women and girls."⁷⁶ However, there is little indication that States consistently conduct this risk assessment.

Member States have also begun reporting on their efforts to conduct a gender analysis when implementing the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (PoA) (2001).⁷⁷ More can be done to ensure its application, and for more gender-responsive and transformative approaches to all arms control and disarmament.⁷⁸

Reducing military spending and increased investment in human security and social support

Military spending closely relates to broader development goals and disarmament efforts.⁷⁹ Article 26 of the United Nations Charter recognises the need to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion of the world's economic and human resources to arms.⁸⁰ Despite an understanding of the interconnectedness between military spending, development, arms, and armed conflict, military spending has continued to increase in recent years. A growth in military spending can negatively impact international security by, inter alia, spurring arms races, inciting increased military spending elsewhere or, most importantly, diverting funds away from social infrastructure and other development and human security priorities.⁸¹ In fact, military spending is so high that reallocation of small percentages of the overall budget can make significant strides in developing social infrastructure.

Only four of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security, including 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015) and

2467 (2019), reference military expenditure. They take a limited focus on small arms and light weapons, which only account for a fraction of global military spending.⁸² High military spending in post-conflict settings, however, significantly increases the risk of recurrence of conflict.⁸³ It also has potential impacts on broader gender equality efforts, with high levels of spending correlating with lower levels of women's equality regarding choice, agency and participation in decision-making during and post-conflict.⁸⁴ Reallocating military spending to the development of robust social infrastructure is thus a critical preventive measure linked to conflict and sexual violence. It will reinforce efforts towards gender equality and shift militarised narratives of resolution towards cooperation, trust-building, and dialogue.⁸⁵

Accountability through laws, prosecution, and sanctions

Accountability for conflict related sexual violence can contribute to prevention; it can be strengthened through legal frameworks, prosecution and sanctions. These efforts should be made in alignment with General Recommendation 31 of the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (2014), which outlines the responsibility of States to develop robust legal frameworks that address all forms of gender-based violence, while also taking concrete measures to increase access to justice through full implementation and enforcement of these laws.⁸⁶

Strengthening legal frameworks for gender-based and international crimes

As noted in Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), strong legal frameworks and justice institutions are important aspects of the fight against conflict-related sexual violence. Laws can have preventative value. First, the criminalisation of gender-based violence and atrocities indicates what is and what is not acceptable behaviour in a society, holding tremendous normative value and contributing to the rule of law. Criminalisation may also increase vulnerability and perpetuate harmful norms, such as through the criminalisation of certain sexual orientations and gender identities. In these instances, legal protection mechanisms may need to be implemented. Second, these laws and institutions may also have preventative value insofar as robust frameworks to punish gender-based violence and atrocity crimes are a necessary first step in making accountability efforts possible later, should these acts occur.⁸⁷

Unfortunately, domestic legal frameworks are often inadequate to comprehensively address conflict-related sexual violence. As a threshold matter, criminal code provisions may need strengthening in order to ensure full accountability for day-to-day gender-based violence, such as gender-inclusive definitions of rape (to account for victims of all genders), elimination of defense provisions that allow rapists to evade conviction by marrying their

victims, and repeal of provisions criminalizing consensual sexual acts between members of the same-sex. Procedural reform may also be necessary. For example, rules of evidence and criminal procedure in cases of gender-based violence should be survivor-centred and minimize risks of re-traumatisation or physical danger – before, during, and after trial. UN Security Council resolution 2467 (2019) outlines several additional procedural measures that States should take, including the elimination of corroboration requirements that discriminate against victims as witnesses and complainants, and providing access to legal aid, meaningful witness protection, and protective methods of testifying consistent with rights of the accused.⁸⁸

It is essential to develop multiple avenues to accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. National courts play an increasingly critical role.⁸⁹ To maximise domestic courts' ability to address international crimes including conflict-related sexual violence, a national legal framework must incorporate relevant aspects of international criminal law and international humanitarian law. States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court⁹⁰ should ensure its full domestication and address any potential conflicts with substantive and procedural aspects of existing domestic law. Domestic legal systems faced with crimes committed prior to their enactment or domestication of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide provisions may also need to address potential retroactivity challenges and avoid complications related to the principle of *nullem crimen sine lege* (legality principle), which can cause an accountability gap for crimes committed decades ago. This may require legislators and the judiciary to clarify the applicability of customary international law in domestic criminal proceedings.⁹¹ Since these trials often happen years or decades after the commission of crime, legal systems may also need to repeal statutes of limitations for rape and other sexual offenses to preserve the chance of future prosecution under either international or national law.

Additional provisions may be valuable in terms of strengthening chances of legal accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. These include ensuring clear mechanisms for the submission of amicus curiae briefs to assist local judges in their consideration of charges of conflict-related sexual violence as an international crime, especially useful in cases of sexual and gender-based crimes, where the international jurisprudence is complex and dynamic.

To further close the impunity gap for international crimes including conflict-related sexual violence, national legislation should also clarify and strengthen the operationalization of principles of “universal jurisdiction”, whereby national courts may prosecute atrocity crimes even if they were not committed on a State's territory or against its own citizens. The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 impose an obligation of all states to prosecute “grave

breaches” of international humanitarian law; the 1984 Convention Against Torture codifies the principle, as well.⁹² The threat of prosecution in multiple countries, through extradition or even through unexpected personal arrest abroad, may serve as a deterrent for certain actors.

Finally, legislative frameworks should clarify the extent to which survivors of atrocity crimes including conflict-related sexual violence can access reparations – including through administrative mechanisms or judicial processes. These legislative provisions can lay the groundwork for preventing further psychosocial, physical, and economic harm to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and others.

There are a number of tools available to guide domestic legislators in their law reforms efforts. In 2021, the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict developed model legislation on the investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence.⁹³ In addition, United Nations entities such as UNODC and UN Women have developed model legislation for a number of related criminal justice matters, including violence against women,⁹⁴ the trafficking in persons,⁹⁵ rights of victims of terrorism,⁹⁶ and child witnesses and victims of crime.⁹⁷

Investigation and prosecution

While legal accountability for conflict-related sexual violence is essential in its own right, the preventative effect of prosecution is not well understood. Scholars have generally focused on whether the prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence has been associated with a reduction of these acts in the same country or context, but recent research indicates that there is not a positive effect of trials on subsequent sexual violence by nonstate armed groups.⁹⁸ However, the United Nations posits that prosecution has value as a form of prevention and deterrence, and that judicial processes have preventative value in myriad other ways. First, criminal trials reinforce societal condemnation of violence and help counter impunity. Outright signals of impunity, including amnesty agreements, are associated with continued or increased sexual violence.⁹⁹ Second, increased awareness or prospects of prosecution for conflict-related sexual violence may disincentivise armed actors. Deterrence theory posits in part that, where actors act rationally, prosecution may disincentivise future criminality if the chance of punishment is certain and consistent. For this reason, predictability of investigation of conflict-related sexual violence may signal a greater likelihood of prosecution and thus have deterrent effect on certain armed actors. Consistency of and public awareness about the prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence may optimize its deterrent effect. Third, accountability and justice processes counter impunity, which is tantamount to a license to rape, and its emboldening effect on perpetrators and potential perpetrators.

It is critical to ensure not only that the investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence occur at national and international levels, but that it is survivor-centred. Several tools have emerged in recent years that can guide ethical and effective evidence collection and prosecution efforts across jurisdictions, including the *Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence* (2020), *International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict* (2017), *The Global Code of Conduct for Gathering and Using Information about Systematic and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* (“Murad Code”) (2022) and the *WHO Ethical and Safety Considerations for Interviewing Trafficked Women* (2003).¹⁰⁰

Sanctions

Sanctions tools offer significant –and, as yet, largely unexploited– potential to advance protection from conflict-related sexual violence. The threat of sanctions sends a powerful political signal that can alter the behaviour of parties to conflict. For those operating beyond the reach of the rule of law or for those who do not fear judicial accountability, sanctions in the form of arms embargoes, travel bans and asset freezes can remove their means of doing harm, divest them of resources and limit their freedom of manoeuvre. The application of targeted sanctions can increase the cost and consequences of conflict-related sexual violence, and as such establish deterrence and enhance prevention of such crimes. Sanctions as a means of political pressure reinforces the gravity of sexual violence as a threat to security and an impediment to the restoration of peace, and can generate political commitments from the relevant parties to put in place concrete prevention measures.

Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019), addressing conflict-related sexual violence, have put in place a framework for compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law that consists of regular monitoring and reporting of violations, the listing of perpetrators suspected of committing or being responsible for sexual violence, engagement with State and non-State actors for adoption of prevention measures, and the imposition of sanctions and other targeted measures to enforce compliance.

These resolutions have expressed the link between the conflict-related sexual violence agenda and the Security Council sanctions regimes in increasingly precise and operational terms, including by reaffirming the Council's commitment to adopt sanctions against persistent perpetrators of sexual violence, and by mandating information sharing and cooperation between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Security Council sanctions committees as well as their expert panels and monitoring teams.

Critically, sexual violence is now reflected in the designation criteria of several country-specific sanctions regimes. Out of the 14 Security Council sanctions regimes currently in place, eight now incorporate conflict-related sexual violence as part of their designation criteria. This includes explicit reference to sexual violence as a stand-alone designation criterion for targeted sanctions in the cases of Central African Republic,¹⁰¹ Somalia,¹⁰² South Sudan¹⁰³ and Libya.¹⁰⁴ Other regimes explicitly include sexual violence in designation criteria as part of broader international human rights and international humanitarian law, such as in the cases of the Democratic Republic of the Congo,¹⁰⁵ Mali¹⁰⁶ and Yemen.¹⁰⁷ In Sudan, Security Council resolution 1591 (2005), establishing the sanctions regime, refers to sexual violence in its preamble.¹⁰⁸

Since 2016, the Security Council has also considered the imposition of thematic sanctions, to target individuals associated with terrorist groups and networks involved in sexual violence, sexual slavery and trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation in connection with armed conflict. This reflects the newfound recognition of sexual violence as not only a tactic of war, but also a tactic of terrorism, directly related to the recruitment and resourcing strategy of violent extremist groups – most notoriously, ISIL, Boko Haram and Al Shabaab.¹⁰⁹ Significantly, Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) expresses for the first time the nexus between conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking in armed conflict and terrorism.¹¹⁰ It calls for sanction measures against members of terrorist groups responsible for sexual violence or the trade and trafficking of women and girls.¹¹¹

In spite of the normative developments at the level of sanctions resolutions, the current practice of Security Council targeted sanctions to address conflict-related sexual violence remains inconsistent across and within sanctions regimes. Individuals and entities who have crimes of sexual violence added to the narrative accounts of their violations are not always designated primarily on the ground of rape or sexual violence. Furthermore, the parties listed in the annual reports of the Secretary-General are not consistently the individuals and entities designated by sanctions committees. Persistent perpetrators listed by the Secretary-General should be referred for the consideration of relevant sanctions committees.

Enhancing overall compliance of parties to conflict also requires that sanctions and judicial accountability measures work in tandem. Therefore, the recipe for transformation necessitates both sanctions for perpetrators and justice and reparations for victims. There is room for creativity here. To extend accountability into the private sector, for example, private companies can be encouraged to file public commitments to refrain from investing in third party entities that may be financing human rights abuses, including

conflict-related sexual violence. Specific measures to improve effectiveness of the sanctions tool include:

- Continuing efforts to ensure sexual violence as part of the designation criteria for sanctions, particularly stand-alone designation criteria in resolutions updating all relevant sanctions regimes. However, once designation criteria have been adopted, they must be activated;
- Enhancing cooperation between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Panels of Experts of Security Council Sanctions Committees; and deepening the expertise on conflict-related sexual violence of the Panels;
- Strengthening the information on conflict-related sexual violence to Sanctions Committee, including through the inclusion of sexual violence information and listing recommendations in the reports of Panel of Experts to respective Sanctions Committees, as well as more regular briefings by Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict;
- Developing guidance, protocols and training materials for investigation of conflict-related sexual violence by Panels of Experts; and
- Evaluation of the impact of sanctions on listed individuals in terms of deterrence and behavioural change.

Crucially, in engaging national authorities in affected countries, emphasis should not only be placed on sanctions and punitive measures, but primarily on the support that the United Nations can provide in aid of national efforts to deal with the problem.

Finally, Member States can also coordinate the use of unilateral national sanctions and regional sanctions to maximise collective impact, especially in contexts where there are no United Nations sanctions regimes or there is a lack of consensus in the Security Council that may paralyze sanctions regimes.

Perpetration in detention settings

As recognised in Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), conflict-related sexual violence occurs in detention settings and detainees are at heightened risk of harm.

Extensive guidance exists defining detention and laying out the requirements for humane treatment of detainees, including in situations of armed conflict.¹¹² International criminal law jurisprudence has further established that sexual violence during

international and non-international armed conflict can amount to torture.¹¹³ Conflict-related sexual violence may be perpetrated at any point during detention, including during capture and arrest; interrogation; transfers, as perpetrated by personnel and other detainees; and body searches, as well as upon admission or during detention. Detention settings in armed conflict exacerbate existing unequal power dimensions between personnel and detainees, increasing vulnerability and the risk of the occurrence of sexual violence.

Women and girls, in particular lawyers, journalists, and activists, are often detained as punishment for their or a male relative's opposition to a regime, as a way to disrupt family and community bonds, or as a way to gain information about male relatives.¹¹⁴ Men and boys in detention are often perceived as either enemy combatants or as having connections with opposition groups, leaving them at heightened risk of harm in detention settings, including to coerce confessions or extract information. Individuals of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics can also be targeted for sexual violence in detention due to their perceived violation of dominant gender norms.¹¹⁵ Sexual violence in detention may also be used as a tactic of terror towards opposition communities.¹¹⁶

Conflict-related trafficking in persons

Trafficking in persons, a fundamental violation of human rights,¹¹⁷ is used in conflict contexts for purposes including sexual exploitation, forced and child marriage, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, forced marriage, forced labour, domestic servitude and forced criminality, and disproportionately affects women and girls.¹¹⁸ Trafficking in persons can occur where there is displacement across borders or internally within a State and it may be perpetrated by terrorist organisations, extremist groups, State actors or non-State armed groups. As with other forms of gender-based violence, trafficking in persons constituting sexual violence stems from existing inequalities and power imbalances.

Refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons, stateless persons, persons seeking asylum, persons displaced across borders and persons with irregular migration status are vulnerable to trafficking in persons. Conflict-related sexual violence may itself be cause for displacement or seeking asylum, including for reasons of gender-related persecution. Indigenous populations often experience forced displacement or are at risk given existing political and economic marginalization leading to migration in search of new opportunities. These populations may also be subject to statelessness.

Children experience heightened vulnerability, particularly those who are displaced, unaccompanied, separated from their families, seeking international protection, or born of wartime sexual

Risk factors for trafficking in persons:

For individuals

- Status as a refugee, migrant, internally displaced person, stateless person, person seeking asylum, person displaced across borders, or person with irregular migration status
- Person of diverse sexual orientation or gender identity, whom are at particular risk of targeting by extremist groups
- Person of marginalised race or ethnicity
- Survivor of trafficking in persons, including child survivors and children born of wartime rape
- Person without legal documentation to work
- Residence in informal settlements, internally displaced person sites, or refugee camps

Risk factors for trafficking in persons:

For communities or nations

- Restrictive migration policies, including xenophobic and racist approaches to migration
- Climate-related emergencies, including those resulting in displacement; lacking relocation or migration plans; or lacking access to employment opportunities, social protection, or child protection
- Status as a transit or destination country

violence, and are often neglected in child protection systems and disproportionately targeted by armed groups. Children may be recruited by armed groups into combatant roles; into supporting roles, for example, to gather intelligence; as sexual slaves; as spouses to armed actors, for example, to control local populations or fulfil sexual demands of armed actors; and as rewards to armed actors or associated groups.¹¹⁹ Early child marriage is often a harmful coping strategy, as it may be pursued as a source of economic support for families receiving limited humanitarian assistance.¹²⁰ In these ways, trafficking of children is linked to the sixth grave violations against children in armed conflict.¹²¹

Victims of trafficking are often targeted through abduction, including through attacks on schools or at internally displaced persons sites and refugee settlements.¹²² Survivors of abduction may be arbitrarily detained or held indefinitely at displacement sites.¹²³ Children, too, are often arrested and detained, often for alleged associations with armed groups.¹²⁴ Women and girl victims of forced marriage are also frequently presumed to be associated with armed groups, and may be arbitrarily detained after release.¹²⁵ Men and boys are often forgotten victims of trafficking, a gender bias which limits service provisions and anti-trafficking programming.

The UNODC *Human Trafficking First Aid Kit for Law Enforcement Agencies* can be consulted to understand the complexities of identification and further documentation of these crimes.¹²⁶

Addressing the nexus between trafficking, terrorism, and conflict-related sexual violence

In armed conflict, terrorist organisations and extremist groups may engage in trafficking in persons¹²⁷ to incentivise recruitment; generate revenue; terrorise populations into compliance; displace communities from strategic areas; indoctrinate communities through forced marriage; establish, alter, dissolve, or destabilise kinship ties and social structures; establish statehood by controlling reproductive capacity to raise a new generation in their image; elicit operational intelligence; entrench ideology by suppressing women's rights; extort ransoms from families; gift as in-kind compensation or payment to fighters to resell or exploit; and hold women and girls in sexual slavery for use as human shields and suicide bombers.¹²⁸ These examples indicate the use of trafficking in persons as "part of the political economy of war,"¹²⁹ with women themselves viewed as the "wages of war."¹³⁰

Due diligence obligations under international law requires the prevention of and response to trafficking in persons, including in armed conflict. Prevention requires a victim- and survivor-centred, trauma-informed and human rights-based approach that is not siloed within broader law enforcement and security sector efforts.¹³¹ Persons fleeing armed conflict are often vulnerable to trafficking due to disruptions of protective social networks and new risks arising during forced internal or cross-border displacement.¹³² Prevention efforts must strengthen relevant infrastructure, including the structures and risk factors enabling displacement, to mitigate these disruptions. Given the extremely low prosecution of trafficking in persons cases, accountability is needed to act as a deterrent and curtail impunity. Criminal justice systems should be sensitive to the complex experience of survivors of trafficking, safeguard victims' rights and ensure that they are not punished for acts

committed while subject to the control of traffickers.

This is particularly true for survivors with alleged affiliations with terrorist organisations, who may be seen as perpetrators of unlawful activities that they were forced to commit.¹³³ This can mean that, instead of being seen as entitled to protection and support, these survivors are targeted by State counter-terrorism measures and vulnerable to arrest and detention. Broad application of counter-terrorism laws has also led to forced disappearances of men and boys.¹³⁴ It is imperative that these survivors are seen as victims of violent crime and not stigmatised or penalised for actions taken while under the control of terrorist groups. Victims, too, may be open to classification as victims of terrorism. However, the benefits of this designation require further exploration.¹³⁵

Early warning systems

Early warning systems can contribute to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence insofar as they measure risks through a set of indicators that can be targeted and then, with adequate systems and resources, mitigated by preventative action. Sexual violence is often included as an early warning indicator of violence, including of violent conflict and atrocity crimes. Early warning systems can also be designed to measure the risk of sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, or of the violation of human rights more broadly. They can also help detect conflict-related sexual violence indirectly, by forced recruitment. Gender-sensitive analysis is thus critical to identify the most effective, context-specific indicators of violence. Gender-sensitive indicators, often informed by sex-disaggregated data, can enhance early warning capacity by improving the predictability of risk.¹³⁶

Monitoring indicators is central to early warning systems and can be carried out by several actors, including human rights organisations, civil society organisations, women's protection advisors, activists and journalists. Actors from diverse backgrounds, including gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, age and religion, are needed to effectively monitor indicators. It is essential to provide safe and effective mechanisms for reporting observed changes in indicators.¹³⁷

A diverse set of actors provides insight into different social dynamics, enabling identification of subtle changes in community-level relations that may indicate or even contribute to national-level tensions. For example, women may observe changing patterns in how men and boys are spending their time, including attending clandestine political meetings or combat training; the storage of weapons in homes or community centres; or occurrences of domestic violence or

upticks in other local-level indicators of community stress.¹³⁸

Youth in particular are keenly aware of shifting social and political dynamics, in part because they are increasingly more connected to and engaged with social media and other digital information platforms, allowing them to both detect concerning developments and disseminate information quickly. Similarly, gender and sexual minorities may have specific and valuable observations about evolving dynamics in different, often invisible corners of the community. For guidance on how to work with local communities to develop context-specific indicators, see *Gender-Response Early Warning: Overview and How-To Guide*.¹³⁹

Early warning systems include indicators that address military and security factors, humanitarian and social factors, political and legal factors, as well as economic factors. Indicators included below were identified in United Nations publications and frameworks, including the UN Action's *Matrix of Early Warning Indicators of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence* and UN Women's global study, *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace*.¹⁴⁰ These indicators are not mutually exclusive and can inform early warning for multiple forms of violence.

EARLY WARNINGS SYSTEMS

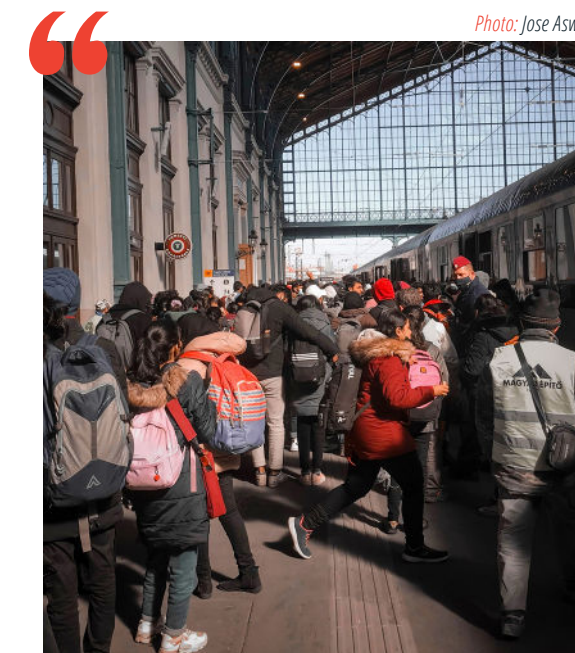


Photo: Jose Asweth

Gender-sensitive indicators for conflict prevention early warning systems

- Sex-specific movement of populations
- Increase in female-headed or male-headed households
- Increased harassment, arrest and interrogation of civilian men by security forces
- Changes to patterns of gender roles, e.g., men occupied with political activities or women taking over more productive roles in the household
- Hoarding of goods or lack of goods on local markets
- Training in weapons for men, women and children at community levels
- Increased propaganda, news stories, or programmes glorifying militarised masculinities
- Resistance or curtailment of women's involvement in marketing and trade or in public community discussions
- Increased numbers of meetings by men for men
- Random and arbitrary detention of men
- Increased misogyny or hate speech

Early warning indicators for conflict-related sexual violence early warning systems

- Armed groups rewarding or indoctrinating aggressive, hypermasculine behaviour
- Combatants operating under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Actors placing military bases or encampments in close proximity to civilian centres
- Changes in mobility patterns of women and girls, e.g., sudden absence from schools or marketplaces otherwise unexplained by contextual or seasonal factors
- Increase in female-headed households due to an absence of men from communities or to an increase in the number of women rejected by husbands and communities
- Mass displacement due to insecurity or emergency
- Disappearance of girls reported by family or law enforcement officials en route to or from schools in areas where arms bearers are present
- Violent, unconstitutional changes of power
- Permissive or encouraging rhetoric about rape and justifications for sexual violence voiced by political leaders
- Women candidates and voters in an electoral process targeted for violence and targeting of women human rights defenders as well as female journalists, including psychological, gender-based, and physical violence
- Drop in the price of arms or increase in supply
- Inflation and food insecurity
- Increased reports of women's involvement in the shadow war economy, including trafficking and prosecution
- Increased reports of abductions or forced recruitment by armed groups
- Armed groups expressing conservative or extremist ideologies
- Changes in men's inability to live up to societal ideas of manhood, e.g., male loss of status, joblessness, or ex-combatant status
- Increased misogyny or hate speech

Early warning indicators for conflict-related trafficking for purposes of prostitution or sexual exploitation

- Abductions and forced disappearances, particularly of children
- Restrictions on educational opportunities, employment opportunities, or access to medical care, forcing civilians to seek these services elsewhere
- Denial of humanitarian access, which may result in displacement
- Implementation of restrictive migration policies
- Increased economic desperation, which may force migration or limit economic opportunities to those requiring exploitation
- Increased occurrence of climate-related emergencies or of instability surrounding natural resources
- Increased serious acts of violence against women and children, or creation of conditions facilitating acts of sexual violence against those groups, including as a tactic of terror
- Imposition of life-threatening living conditions or the deportation, seizure, collection, segregation, evacuation, or forced displacement or transfer of protected groups, populations or individuals to camps, rural areas, ghettos, or other assigned locations
- Marking of people or their property based on their affiliation to a group
- Increased misogyny or hate speech

Increasing engagement and protection of specific groups

Efforts to prevent conflict-related sexual violence require inputs from diverse populations, including not only men and women, but also youth and marginalised communities, such as persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics, indigenous individuals, migrants, and persons with disabilities — all of whom may have differing protection insights and needs. Engagement of diverse groups in prevention planning requires an intersectional approach, understanding the multiple and overlapping identities and vulnerabilities different people experience both in peacetime and in times of armed conflict or situations of concern.¹⁴¹ For example, women's rights activists and women human rights defenders may require heightened protection, particularly in times of political tension.¹⁴²

PREVENTING FURTHER IMPACT: POTENTIAL APPROACHES AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

A second major area of prevention focuses on the mitigation of deepening harm to individuals and communities once conflict-related sexual violence has already occurred. This includes both near-term response to recent injury to an individual survivor, as well as longer-term efforts to rebuild and sustain peace at the community level. While these approaches have not all been evaluated for effectiveness across contexts, they may provide illustration of ways to prevent further negative impacts to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their communities in a multi-layered way.

LEVEL OF OPERATION	Approaches to prevent further impact
<p>Supranational</p> <p>Supranational measures operate above or between States, at the regional or international level.</p>	<p>Access to international protection (asylum/refugee status, temporary protection, etc.) on grounds of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking in persons, by sensitising and resourcing asylum officers, and strengthening access to legal assistance and accompaniment throughout application and adjudication processes.</p> <p>Safe migration pathways to minimize risk of re-trafficking.</p> <p>Access to reparations from international justice processes or funds.</p>
<p>Institutional / Structural</p> <p>Institutional and structural factors include systematic prevention efforts, often undertaken by State entities. These measures are taken at large scale, often nationally.</p>	<p>Awareness-raising campaigns and social mobilisation, including to address and reduce stigmatisation of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence, generally.</p> <p>Enhancing health systems and ensuring health worker capacity to provide survivor-centred care (in line with interpersonal violence responses), including mental health and psychosocial support for survivor self-empowerment.</p> <p>Collaboration between gender advisors and advisors focused on counterterrorism, preventing violent extremism, and security, to ensure synergies and gender-responsive service provision.</p> <p>Implementation of trafficking indicators to identify victims of trafficking in persons, who may be otherwise unwilling to identify themselves due to shame and stigmatisation, or fear of deportation or detention.</p> <p>Resourcing of and access to comprehensive gender-based violence support services and effective referral pathways to ensure survivors' access to support, including medical, psychosocial, legal aid, and shelter.</p> <p>Law, justice, and policy</p> <p>Promotion of legal reforms, enhancing access to justice and accountability (at national and international levels).</p> <p>Establishment of inclusive and gender-responsive rule of law institutions, including transitional justice processes, and protection mechanisms for victims and witnesses, for survivors themselves, their children (including those born from sexual violence) and affected communities.</p> <p>Investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence, under both international criminal law and domestic legal provisions as applicable; awarding of collective and/or individual reparations to the extent possible.</p> <p>Long-term, unconditional assistance and protection for individuals displaced by conflict and at risk of re-trafficking.</p>
<p>Community</p> <p>Community-level harm mitigation measures include efforts taken locally in the survivors' social environment.</p>	<p>Community-led (and, where appropriate, survivor-led) awareness and support programming for survivors of gender-based violence or mass atrocities, including survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including through sustained engagement with religious leaders and youth.</p> <p>Diverse community-based shelter options, especially for short-term, low-security circumstances.</p> <p>Collective reparations for survivors of atrocities, including conflict-related sexual violence. Measures may include monuments, acknowledgement or apology, and age-appropriate material in educational curricula.</p> <p>Stigma-reducing interventions, particularly with respect to children born of wartime rape and the mothers who bore them.</p> <p>Engagement with traditional and religious leaders to counteract harmful social norms and stigmatisation associated with extremist ideologies and community rejection of rape survivors, through signed agreements and declarations or other sustained measures.</p> <p>Traditional justice measures, including truth-telling and collective reparations for survivor communities. These efforts should not replace or undermine accountability efforts. Where amnesty is provided, it should not be provided for individuals who committed certain grave crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence.</p>
<p>Individual</p> <p>Individual-level harm mitigation measures are aimed at survivors themselves and, in some cases, their immediate family members.</p>	<p>Access to comprehensive survivor-centred care according to individual needs, including following rape, that includes: medical care as needed, access to emergency contraception, safe termination of pregnancy resulting from rape; HIV prevention, awareness and treatment; and short and long-term psychological/mental health care.</p> <p>Forensic assessment of consenting survivors and access to justice, including provision of legal aid, accompaniment and witness protection through legal processes, as needed.</p> <p>Holistic care for survivors or efficient and effective referral mechanisms to enable access to all necessary support services, including shelter and financial assistance to avoid further exposure to exploitation.</p> <p>Livelihood strategies, including provision of training and/or support (e.g. microfinance) to women to increase their economic independence and support their recovery and reintegration after sexual violence.</p> <p>Individual reparations for survivors of atrocities, including conflict-related sexual violence.</p> <p>Legal protection and comprehensive support services for children born of wartime rape, including guarantee of rights related to name, nationality, and education.</p> <p>Access to psychosocial support, shelter, and daily necessities for children born of wartime rape.</p> <p>Access to holistic services for men and boys who have experienced sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.</p> <p>Legal protection and comprehensive support for victims of trafficking, including specialised psychosocial support, shelter, and measures ensuring physical security as needed.</p>

PREVENTING FURTHER IMPACT

Fig. 7

PREVENTING FURTHER IMPACT: THEMATIC ISSUES

This section elaborates on aspects of approaches to prevent further harmful impacts to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their communities.

Survivor support

Once an act of conflict-related sexual violence has occurred, it can have many negative physical, psychological, and socio-economic consequences for survivors. Access to immediate, survivor-centred support services (such as medical care, specialised mental healthcare and psychosocial support, safe shelter, socio-economic re-integration and legal aid) is critical, as it can help minimise the harm a survivor experiences as a result of the violence. It is essential that these support services be delivered in a survivor-centred, trauma-informed manner and that they can be accessed by the full spectrum of potential survivors, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Survivor-centred care must also be intersectional, accessible, and properly resourced.

National systems for healthcare, shelter, and justice have primary responsibility for responding to all forms of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence and trafficking in persons. However, much of this work frequently falls to local civil society organisations, which often provide significant first response and ongoing support, also referring survivors to additional specialised services where available. In some humanitarian crisis settings, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organisations also provide critical assistance. States should ensure that civil society organisations and international entities are able to conduct essential first response and longer-term support work without administrative or political obstruction. Perhaps more importantly, providers at public institutions must be equipped and trained to respond to gender-based violence generally, including with regard to potentially heightened medical, psychological, legal aid, or security

needs of survivors who have experienced gang rape by armed actors, sexual torture, or mutilation in prison, or trafficking or enslavement by terrorist organisations. A survivor-centred approach is critical in all cases.¹⁴³

Trafficking in persons

Survivors of trafficking need specific forms of support, protection, and redress, particularly given their heightened risk for re-trafficking. They need immediate availability and quality support services that must be inclusive and accessible, including access to information on their rights, medical, psychological, social and legal services available to them and how to access them as well as to safe and appropriate accommodation. Reducing the risk of revictimization includes guaranteeing them protection against forcible return. It requires, at a minimum, long-term and unconditional assistance and protection, which includes highly secure shelter arrangements and specific psychosocial support, as well as other immediate needs such as food, sanitation, clothing, and financial assistance.¹⁴⁴

To avoid renewed vulnerability, survivors of trafficking often need identity documents and pathways to regular immigration status if no longer located in their countries of origin. Additionally, because of the close link between the perpetration of trafficking in persons and other severe human rights violations, survivors may be eligible for international protection as refugees or on other humanitarian grounds.¹⁴⁵

Children Born of Wartime Rape

As captured in the Secretary-General's Special Report on women and girls who become pregnant as a result of sexual violence in conflict and children born of sexual violence in conflict (2022),¹⁴⁶ special attention is due to children born as a result of conflict-related sexual violence. Their conception and birth can be particularly fraught when associated

with armed conflict¹⁴⁷ and may be the result of forced pregnancy in the context of ethnic cleansing or political or religious persecution;¹⁴⁸ of rape, including for purposes of replenishing an armed group's forces;¹⁴⁹ or of other forms of sexual violence, including in the context of captivity or of identity and resource-based conflicts.¹⁵⁰ Women and girls often lack access to contraception or services for safe termination of pregnancies, placing them at risk of illness, injury, or death from illicit, unsafe abortion practices.¹⁵¹ Unsafe abortion is a leading cause of maternal mortality in displacement settings.¹⁵² In some instances, women and girls are held captive to ensure abortion is not possible.¹⁵³

Children conceived of sexual violence are often perceived as being affiliated with parties to conflict and are at risk of severe stigma, infanticide, abandonment, or other physical, psychological, and socioeconomic harms.¹⁵⁴ Mothers are often revictimised,¹⁵⁵ and some return to where they were held captive after facing community rejection.¹⁵⁶ These harms may be exacerbated when a child is born of sexual violence perpetrated by a foreign terrorist fighter,¹⁵⁷ and these children may not be recognised as victims of terrorism.

Children and mothers are vulnerable to further perpetration of sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking, often because of stigmatisation and socioeconomic precarity.¹⁵⁸ In countries with discriminatory nationality laws and practices, women may be unable to transfer their nationality to their children, barring them from support services and rendering them stateless.¹⁵⁹ This makes children increasingly vulnerable to radicalization, abduction and recruitment by armed groups and trafficking.¹⁶⁰

Prevention of pregnancy in conflict contexts and prevention of further marginalisation for mothers and children is important not only for individual well-being but community recovery as well.

Accountability

In addition to limiting the future harm a convicted perpetrator can inflict, formal and informal justice mechanisms may offer some survivors a sense of justice, which may improve their well-being. In some contexts, conviction for certain atrocity crimes may render victims eligible for reparations. These reparations may have preventative value, in that they may support physical, psychological, or socioeconomic recovery and enhance survivors' security and reintegration into the community.¹⁶¹ Overall, legal and justice sectors should support all survivors of gender-based violence to access safe and survivor-centred legal services that protect their rights and promote their access to justice.

CROSS-CUTTING
REMINDERS ABOUT
**COMPREHENSIVE,
SURVIVOR-CENTRED
APPROACHES**



It is critical to take a comprehensive, survivor-centred approach to prevention interventions at both policy and programmatic levels. These cross-cutting guidance notes can inform prevention approaches across both parts of Framework.

Comprehensive and multi-level engagement

At local and national levels, pursue a comprehensive, all-of-society approach to normative change around gender and power both in peacetime and during times of conflict and political unrest. This includes engaging men and boys in transforming social and gender norms, as well as youth and religious leaders. It also calls for partnership between state and civil society to ensure the development of effective interventions to prevent occurrence as well as deepening harm to survivors. Finally, cooperation and coordination between states is also essential, due to the cross-border nature of war, displacement, and protection. Ensure all actors (e.g., state actors, humanitarian actors, civil society organisations, international organisations, donor countries, neighbouring governments, and others with influence on conflict parties) work towards coordinated, mutually enforcing efforts.

Engage survivors and communities when designing prevention interventions

Where it is safe and ethical to do so, invite insights from survivors' advocacy groups about how to reduce vulnerability to conflict-related sexual violence and mitigate its impacts. It is critical to consider a diversity of survivors and communities, also accounting for intersectional vulnerabilities such as those arising from race, gender identity, sexual orientation and indigenous identity. Broader community input in the design and implementation of prevention activities is also critical. Community members have deep insight as to who is at risk, where, and why; they are also agents of prevention. Community engagement in the design and delivery of interventions may contribute to the success of programs aimed at preventing gender-based violence in armed conflict settings.¹⁶²

Engage, support, and protect civil society organisations and human rights defenders

Whether they are providing survivor care or documenting human rights abuses, civil society organisations and human rights defenders play a critical role in the prevention of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, before, during, and after periods of armed conflict. Some may provide protection and support to survivors of

conflict-related sexual violence who may be marginalised due to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, immigration status, or other aspect of identity. Others may document gender-related harms experienced by marginalised communities. Their work complements and often relieves the work of national entities and it is particularly critical in emergency periods. They should be supported financially, administratively, and logistically to the extent possible. Further, these service providers and human rights defenders, including women's rights defenders, can be particularly vulnerable to political intimidation and harassment during periods of violence and political unrest. They should be protected to the fullest extent of the law.

Data

In conflicts and humanitarian contexts, including post-conflict contexts where access to services, risk of retaliation, high community stigma and political sensitivities may be in effect, any effort to collect information about conflict-related sexual violence is challenging and potentially dangerous. The rate of case reporting is understood to be markedly lower than the actual magnitude of the violence. Under-reporting can be explained by the stigma and shame faced by survivors if they disclose an incident, as well as risks of retaliation; the chronic lack of available services; or multi-level barriers to accessing services. Collecting and sharing survivor data may pose further risk for survivors, their families, communities as well as service providers. Given these risks, alternate data points can be useful to inform prevention programming, focusing on the risks perceived by women and girls, availability/access to services for survivors, protective factors and measures identified by women and girls in the community, mapping of local version of masculinities, and gender and power analysis.

Disaggregation

To prevent conflict-related sexual violence, it is critical to have clarity about what form of harm is targeted. Not all forms of conflict-related sexual violence have identical drivers or the same risk factors. Similarly, it is essential to calibrate prevention approaches for different kinds of harm, perpetrators, and survivors. For example, interventions to prevent the sexual exploitation of adolescent boys in displacement might be designed and implemented differently than an intervention to address the abduction of young women by violent extremist organisations. It is critical to develop tailored approaches that are gender- and age-sensitive at a minimum. Research is critical to disaggregation.

THE WAY FORWARD

by Pramila Patten

When marking the ten-year anniversary of my mandate in 2019, I convened a Survivors' Hearing at United Nations Headquarters, which included a range of survivors and civil society representatives. At that Hearing, an indigenous woman from Guatemala stated: *"We do not want history to repeat itself. We are working for progress, so our children and grandchildren never have to experience what we suffered"*.

Survivors are the heart of my mandate and I am guided by their voices, their needs, and their hopes for a world where violent conflict and conflict-related sexual violence no longer occurs. This is one of the many reasons why my Office commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict every year on 19th June, as an important opportunity to stand in solidarity with the survivors. Over the years, we have harnessed the International Day to highlight emerging issues and neglected perspectives, such as the plight and rights of children born of wartime rape, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sexual violence survivors. This year, in 2022, the commemoration focuses on the launch of this Framework – a new strategy to prevent the occurrence and recurrence of these crimes, through structural and operational measures to mitigate risk and build resilience.

When we look closely at the number of frameworks and Security Council resolutions on conflict-related sexual violence, it is clear that we are not short on political promises and commitments. However, we are definitely short on concrete action and resources commensurate with the scale of the problem.

Indeed, it is my vision and my hope that the international community will mobilise to take proactive steps to act upon the multi-level approaches outlined in this Framework.

- For Member States to develop implementation and action plans that are context- and needs- specific;
- For donors to provide not only the political will and advocacy for my mandate but also the financial support through predictable, sustained funding;
- For all relevant actors within and beyond the United Nations system to build the capacity of service providers, implementing partners, survivors, and other practitioners, as well as supportive Member States and those affected by conflict;
- For all relevant actors to build our knowledge base about prevention of conflict-related sexual violence at all levels of our collective work, by gathering and sharing evidence of effective prevention measures across different contexts, with input from survivor advocacy groups where appropriate.

Human dignity demands respect for the right to physical integrity, which is universal and non-negotiable. As we work together to confine sexual violence to the past, we must continually strive to give all survivors a better, brighter future, through inclusive and intersectional approaches that leave no one behind.

Under Secretary-General and
Special Representative of the Secretary-General
on Sexual Violence in Conflict
Pramila Patten



CONTRIBUTORS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The idea for this Framework was conceived by Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten, as part of her mandate under Security Council resolution 1888 (2009). Under SRSV Patten's leadership, the UN Action Secretariat served as the primary coordinating body for the Framework's development. Throughout 2021, the UN Action Secretariat gathered inputs and developed the Framework's preliminary content through a core group of member entities (Chaired by UNHCR, including ODA, OSRSV-VAC, UN Women, OSRSV-CAAC, UNOCT, UNODC, DPPA, WHO, UNFPA, OSGEY, UNAIDS, and DPO) with additional feedback and inputs from the wider UN Action network. In 2022, Kim Thuy Seelinger (Center for Human Rights, Gender and Migration at the Institute for Public Health, Washington University in St. Louis) developed the Framework structure and text based on extensive desk research and consultation. Mikaylah Ladue (Princeton University; United States Institute of Peace) provided project coordination and substantial research and drafting support. Danielle Folkerts provided project coordination and research support. In addition to feedback from UN Action members, drafts benefited from input from members of the Missing Peace Initiative Scholars Network, chaired by the United States Institute of Peace, Women in International Security, the Center for Human Rights, Gender and Migration at Washington University in St. Louis, and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo.

Milena Sonnenberg developed the Framework's graphics and overall design.

Several entities within the UN system are involved in the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. This Framework directly benefited from their inputs throughout the drafting process. Relevant entities include:

Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

(Office of the SRSV-SVC): The Special Representative serves as the United Nations' spokesperson and political advocate on conflict-related sexual violence. She chairs the United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Network (UN Action) while the technical implementation of the rule of law aspects of her mandate is supported by the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict (TOE). The Office was established by Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), one in a series of resolutions recognizing the detrimental impact that sexual violence in conflict has on communities and acknowledging that this crime undermines efforts to ensure peace and security and rebuild societies once a conflict has ended. These resolutions signal a change in the way the international community views and deals with conflict-related sexual violence.

United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict

(UN Action): UN Action is a network of now 23 United Nations entities working to end sexual violence during and in the wake of conflict. The network is chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSV-SVC), supported by a Secretariat located in the OSRSV-SVC. It is governed by a Steering Committee consisting of Principals from the 23-member entities. Current members include the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee's Executive Directorate (CTED), the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Trade Centre (ITC), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide (OSAPG),

United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict

(TOE): In accordance with its mandate under Security Council resolution 1888 (2009), the TOE works closely with Governments, United Nations missions and United Nations Country Teams to assist national authorities in establishing institutional safeguards against impunity as part of broader efforts to reinforce the rule of law. The TOE provides support to the investigation of sexual violence crimes, prosecution of perpetrators, adjudication of crimes under civilian and military systems, protection of victims and witnesses and legislative reform efforts. The TOE consists of specialists from the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the SRSV-SVC.

the United Nations Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSV-CAAC), the United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (OSRSV-VAC), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environmental Protection Agency (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Women (UN Women), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

APPENDICES

RELATED GUIDANCE AND FRAMEWORKS

Two relevant prevention frameworks include the *Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes*, which lays out critical risk factors to target for prevention or minimization of harms associated with genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, including conflict-related sexual violence, and *RESPECT Women: Preventing violence against women*, which provides seven inter-related intervention strategies to prevent and respond to violence against women, though not in the context of armed conflict.

While not technically presented as frameworks, substantial guidance exists on the prevention of gender-based violence in the context of humanitarian emergencies, including those which may have direct or indirect links to armed conflict. Humanitarian actors, including United Nations Agencies such as UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, and UNICEF, have long included gender-based violence as a core aspect of their operations in conflict-affected settings. These entities have ample internal operational guidance regarding provision of support and protection for survivors of gender-based violence and for minimising its impacts at the community or societal level, including in the context of armed conflict and other humanitarian crises.

Several of these guidance documents address prevention. For example, UNFPA's *Minimum Standards on the Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies* includes standards to prevent gender-based violence and mitigate its impacts in humanitarian crisis settings. Further, the *Inter-Agency Standing Committee Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming* aims to establish a common understanding of what constitutes prevention and response programming in emergencies, including those related to armed conflict. Similarly, UNHCR issued its *Policy on the Prevention of, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-based Violence* to protect asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons, internally displaced persons and returnees affected by diverse contexts, including those of armed conflict. One recent joint policy focuses directly and exclusively on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence, the *United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and Responding to Conflict-related Sexual Violence*, explicitly highlights the preventative role of United Nations field missions. Released by DPO, DPPA, OHCHR and OSRSG-SVC, the policy provides concrete guidance to institutionalise the approach and role of United Nations field missions in preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence.

Document	Source	Website Link to Material
CONFLICT PREVENTION		
Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes (2014) (A/70/741-S/2016/71)	Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect	https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/our-work/Doc_1_Framework%20of%20Analysis%20for%20Atrocity%20Crimes_EN.pdf
Gender-responsive early warning: Overview and How-To Guide (2012)	UN Women	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/10/WPSourcebook-04F-GenderResponsiveEarlyWarning-en.pdf
SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, GENERALLY		
Effective design and implementation elements in interventions to prevent violence against women and girls (2020)	WhatWorks to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls	https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/373-intervention-report19-02-20/file
Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women (2015)	UN Women	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2015/Prevention_Framework_unwomen_nov2015.pdf
Gender-Based Violence and Covid-19 (2020)	UNDP	https://www.undp.org/publications/gender-based-violence-and-covid-19
Gender-Based Violence Prevention: A Results-Based Evaluation Framework (2021)	InterAction	https://www.interaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/GBV-Prevention-Evaluation-Framework-05-26-21.pdf
If I Disappear: Global Report on Protecting Young People in Civic Space (2021)	OSGEY	https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Global-Report-on-Protecting-Young-People-in-Civic-Space.pdf
Policy on the Prevention, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-based Violence (2020) (UNHCR/HCP/2020/01)	UNHCR	https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/brochures/5fa018914/unhcr-policy-prevention-risk-mitigation-response-gender-based-violence.html
RESPECT Women: Preventing violence against women (2019) (WHO/RHR/18.19)	WHO	https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/RESPECT-Women-Preventing-violence-against-women-en.pdf
Strategic Plan: 2022–2025	UNDP	https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-strategic-plan-2022-2025
Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact Framework (2021)	UN Women and various signatories	https://wpscompact.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/WPS-HA-Compact-Framework-EN-Web.pdf
SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES, SPECIFICALLY		
Clinical management of rape and intimate partner violence survivors: developing protocols for use in humanitarian settings (2020)	WHO/UNFPA/UNHCR	https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240001411
Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming (2019)	Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility	https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/19-200_Minimum_Standards_Report_ENGLISH-Nov.FINAL_.pdf
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery (2015)	Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)	https://gbvguidelines.org/en/implementation-strategy-for-the-revised-guidelines-for-integrating-gender-based-violence-interventions-in-humanitarian-actio
Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines: Providing Care and Case Management Services to Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Humanitarian Settings (2017)	UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, IMC, IRC	https://www.gbvim.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/interagency-GBV-Case-Management-Guidelines_Final_2017_HighResEn.pdf
Minimum Standards on the Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (2015)	UNFPA	https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/GBVIE_Minimum_Standards_Publication.FINAL_ENG_.pdf
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT		
Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence (2021)	UNICEF	https://www.unicef.org/media/103711/file/Introduction-to-Communities-Care-2021.pdf
Handbook for United Nations Field Missions on Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020)	DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/SRSG-SVC	https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020.08-UN-CRSV-Handbook.pdf
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS		
Addressing Vulnerability to Trafficking in Persons Issue Brief (2022)	Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)	https://www.icmpd.org/file/download/57956/file/icat_issue_brief_12_vulnerability_to_tip_published.pdf
Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining Refugee Status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (2019)	UNHCR	https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/publications/legal/5ddfc47/handbook-procedures-criteria-determining-refugee-status-under-1951-convention.html

Document	Source	Website Link to Material
TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS		
International Framework for Action: To Implement the Trafficking in Persons Protocol (2009)	UNODC	https://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Framework_for_Action_TIP.pdf
United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2010) (A/RES/64/293)		https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/un-global-plan-action-combat-trafficking-persons
POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS, GENERALLY		
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)		https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf
The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights (2020)	Secretary-General	https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org/peacebuilding/files/documents/2020_sg_call_to_action_for_hr_the_highest_aspiration.pdf
United Nations Common Agenda		https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

¹ See United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019).

² See United Nations DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/SRSG-SVC, Policy on United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020).

³ Understanding the differential manifestation of sexual violence across conflicts is critical for ensuring the provision of preventative efforts addressing all forms of this violence. The Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (SVAC) dataset is the most established and widely used systematic dataset measuring reports of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors, between the years 1989 and 2019, enabling analysis of patterns of perpetration for each conflict actor. See Dara Kay Cohen and Ragnhild Nordås, "Sexual violence in armed conflict: Introducing the SVAC dataset, 1989–2009", *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 51, No. 3 (2014). The Repertoires of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict (RSVAC) data package analyses the repertoire of sexual violence perpetrated by each armed actor. See Logan Dumaine and others, "Repertoires of conflict-related sexual violence: Introducing the RSVAC data package", *Journal of Peace Research* (2021). For a summary of the core findings from academic literature on the variation of sexual violence in conflict, see Ragnhild Nordås and Dara Kay Cohen, "Conflict-related sexual violence", *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 24 (2021).

⁴ Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Rape During War is Not Inevitable: Variation in Wartime Sexual Violence", in *Understanding and Proving International Sex Crimes*, Morten Bergsmo, Alf Butenschøn Skre and Elisabeth J. Wood, eds. (Beijing, Torkel Posahl Academic EPublisher, 2012); Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War: Variation and Accountability", in *Collective Crimes and International Criminal Justice: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, Alette Smeulers and Elies van Sliedregt, eds. (Antwerp, Intersentia, 2010); Elisabeth Jean Wood, "Sexual Violence during War: Toward an Understanding of Variation", in *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, Ian Shapiro, Stahtis Kalyvas and Tarek Masoud, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵ See, for example, Angela Muvumba Sellström and others, "New Perspectives on Preventing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence", *International Peace Institute* (2021); Jo Spangaro and others, "Mechanisms underpinning interventions to reduce sexual violence in armed conflict: A realist-informed systematic review", *Conflict and Health*, vol. 9, No. 19 (2015).

⁶ See António Guterres, "Meeting the prevention challenge", *UN Chronicle*, vol. 54, No. 3 (2017); A/72/PV.83 and A/72/PV.84; A/72/707-S/2018/43, A/73/890-S/2019/448, A/74/976-S/2020/773, A/76/668-S/2022/66; United Nations, "Secretary-General's remarks to the General Assembly on the Secretary-General's Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace", statement, 5 March 2018.

⁷ A/72/523 (2017), para. 28.

⁸ Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice (1945), Article 1.

⁹ Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security that specifically reference conflict-related sexual violence include 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2467 (2019).

¹⁰ Additionally relevant to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence are Security Council resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017), expressing an intention to consider sanctions for individuals and entities involved in trafficking in persons in areas affected by armed conflict and in sexual violence in conflict.

¹¹ A/RES/70/1.

¹² United Nations Secretary-General, *The Highest Aspiration: A Call to Action for Human Rights* (2020).

¹³ A/75/982.

¹⁴ See United Nations DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/SRSG-SVC, Policy on United Nations Field Missions.

¹⁵ S/2022/272.

¹⁶ S/2020/487.

¹⁷ S/2001/574. In addition, Security Council resolution 1366 (2001), para. 6, provides language on the prevention of conflict, which can aid in understanding the boundary between emergencies and conflict situations: "undertakes to keep situations of potential conflict under close review as part of a conflict prevention strategy and expresses its intention to consider cases of potential conflict brought to its attention by any Member State, or by a State not a Member of the United Nations or by the General Assembly or on the basis of information furnished by the Economic and Social Council"; para. 10, "invites the Secretary-General to refer to the Council information and analyses from within the United Nations system on cases of serious violations of international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law and on potential conflict situations arising, inter alia, from ethnic, religious and territorial disputes, poverty and lack of development and expresses its determination to give serious consideration to such information and analyses regarding situations which it deems to represent a threat to international peace and security"; and para. 11, "expresses its intention to continue to invite the Office of the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator and other relevant United Nations agencies to brief its members on emergency situations which it deems to represent a threat to international peace and security and supports the implementation of protection and assistance activities by relevant United Nations agencies in accordance with their respective mandates".

¹⁸ United Nations Security Council resolutions 1197 (1998), 1265 (1999), 1327 (2000), 1366 (2001), 1625 (2005), 1631 (2005), 1653 (2006), 1674 (2006), 1738 (2006), 2150 (2014), 2172 (2014), 2222 (2015), 2573 (2021); A/60/891; A/RES/55/281, A/RES/57/337; S/PRST/1999/34, S/PRST/2000/25; S/1998/318. Preventative efforts from a conflict perspective are imagined to exist alongside efforts spanning the spectrum of response mechanisms to this violence, including peace processes to secure prevention commitments, confidence-building measures between parties, ceasefire and cessation of hostilities agreements and justice and reconciliation mechanisms to end impunity as a means to enforce accountability and avoid recurrences of serious violations of international law, including those of sexual violence.

¹⁹ United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1327 (2000), 1366 (2001), 1820 (2008), 1889 (2009), 2122 (2013), 2172 (2014), 2242 (2015), 2250 (2015), 2417 (2018), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019); 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/RES/52/231); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (A/RES/34/180); General Recommendation 30 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Women in Conflict Prevention, Conflict and Post Conflict Situations (CEDAW/C/GC/30); S/2015/716; the twenty-third Special Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole (A/S-23/10/Rev.1); UN Women, Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA) Compact (2021).

²⁰ These frameworks include, for example, the United Nations Office of the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Framework for Analysis of Atrocity Crimes (2014) (A/70/741-S/2016/71); UN Women, Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women (2015); UN Women, Gender-responsive early warning: Overview and How-To Guide (2012); UNFPA, Minimum Standards on the Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (2015); DPO/DPPA/OHCHR/SRSG-SVC, Policy on United Nations Field Missions: Preventing and Responding to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (2020); UNHCR, Policy on the Prevention, Risk Mitigation, and Response to Gender-based Violence (2020) (UNHCR/HCP/2020/01); and World Health Organization, RESPECT Women: Preventing violence against women (2019) (WHO/RHR/18.19).

²¹ For information on the responsibility to protect, see A/RES/60/1, paras. 138–140, stating in part that “Each individual State has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. This responsibility entails the prevention of such crimes, including their incitement, through and appropriate and necessary means.”

²² A/71/818.

²³ United Nations, Policy on Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach to United Nations efforts to Prevent and Respond to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (December 2021), p. 3.

²⁴ This definition first appeared in the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence on 20 April 2016 (S/2016/361), para. 2, and has been reaffirmed and referenced in subsequent reports (S/2017/249, S/2018/250, S/2019/280, S/2020/487, S/2021/312 and S/2022/272).

²⁵ The report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence on 23 March 2015 made reference to conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by terrorist organisations (S/2015/203, para. 61). This link was made explicit and further unpacked in the report on 20 April 2016 (S/2016/361, para. 1 and 20), following Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) recognizing that sexual violence can be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups. Security Council resolution 2331 (2016) further recognizes the link between trafficking in persons, sexual violence and terrorism.

²⁶ S/2016/361, S/2017/249, S/2018/250, S/2019/280, S/2020/487, S/2021/312 and S/2022/272.

²⁷ Article 3, Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (15 November 2000) (A/RES/55/25).

²⁸ The link between trafficking and conflict-related sexual violence was affirmed in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) (A/65/592-S/2010/604), referencing conflict-related sexual violence (para. 5). See also, for example, S/2016/92, S/2016/501, S/2016/766, S/2016/949; A/RES/70/291; A/71/384; S/PRST/2015/25.

²⁹ United Nations Security Council resolutions 2242 (2015), 2331 (2016), 2467 (2019); S/2015/203, para.61. See also footnote seven and resolutions 1373 (2001) on counter-terrorism, 2178 (2014) on foreign terrorist fighters, 2388 (2017) on collecting and preserving evidence and 2242 (2015) on women, peace and security.

³⁰ In conversations prior to the adoption of resolution 2331 (2016), six dimensions of sexual violence were identified as used for tactics of terrorism. This includes: (1) sexual violence as part of the political economy of conflict and terrorism, allowing for financing and revenue; (2) sexual violence as a recruitment tool, including through the promise of wives and access to sex slaves; (3) exploitation of modern

communication technologies, allowing for the sale and trade of persons online for sexual violence and exploitation; (4) instrumentalisation of medical professionals to enable sexual violence, including administration of hormone injections to prepare girls for forced marriage and sale; (5) threatened use of sexual violence and abduction to terrorise and forcibly displace targeted minorities, to gain or expand control over contested territories; and (6) destruction of targeted communities, including use of sexual violence to destroy the social fabric of societies.

³¹ United Nations Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), para. 4 notes that “rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or a constitutive act with respect to genocide”. Sexual violence has also been legally acknowledged as a component of ethnic cleansing campaigns including, notably, in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, case No. IT-98-33-T, Prosecutor v. Krstić, judgment of 2 August 2001.

³² See, for example, Security Council resolution 1327 (2000), p. 4, stating “the biggest deterrent to violent conflict is addressing the root causes of conflict”. The Security Council has affirmed the critical need to address root causes in the prevention of armed conflict elsewhere, including resolutions 1366 (2001), 1625 (2005), 1738 (2006), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2417 (2018), 2427 (2018) and 2573 (2021).

³³ See Security Council resolution 2106 (2013), p. 1, “consistent and rigorous prosecution of sexual violence crimes as well as national ownership and responsibility in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in armed conflict are central to deterrence and prevention as is challenging the myths that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon or inevitable consequence of war or a lesser crime” and 2122 (2013), p. 2–3, “address the gaps and strengthen links between the United Nations peace and security in the field, human rights and development work as a means to address root causes of armed conflict and threats to the security of women and girls in the pursuit of international peace and security”.

³⁴ See, for example, A/60/981; Annex to the letter dated 9 October 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia to the United Nations addressed to the Security-General, Concept note for the Security Council on the theme “Maintenance of international peace and security: root causes of conflict — the role of natural resources”, to be held on 16 October 2018 (S/2018/901); A/57.PV.7; A/55/985-S/2001/574; S/2015/730; S/PRST/1999/34.

³⁵ United Nations Office of the Special Advisers on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes.

³⁶ World Health Organization, RESPECT Framework.

³⁷ Maureen Murphy and others, “Socioecological Framework for Drivers of Conflict and Postconflict Violence Against Women and Girls”, Violence Against Women, (2022); Lindsay Stark, Ilana Seff and Chen Reis, “Gender-based violence against adolescent girls in humanitarian settings: a review of the evidence”, Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, vol. 5, No. 3 (2021).

³⁸ For a discussion on the impact of arms on human rights and its relation to conflict and sexual violence, see A/HRC/44/29.

³⁹ Kirsten Johnson and others, “Association of Combatant Status and Sexual Violence With Health and Mental Health Outcomes in Postconflict Liberia”, JAMA, vol. 300, No. 6 (2008); Kirsten Johnson and others, “Association of Sexual Violence and Human Rights Violations With Physical and Mental Health in Territories of the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo”, JAMA, vol. 304, No. 5 (2010).

⁴⁰ Samuel Clowes Huneke, “The Duplicity of Tolerance: Lesbian Experiences in Nazi Berlin”, Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 54, No. 1 (2019); Alon Margalit, “Still a blind spot: The protection of LGBT persons during armed conflict and other situations of violence”, International Review of the Red Cross, vol. 100, No. 907–909 (2018); United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Gay Men under the Nazi Regime”.

⁴¹ Dara Kay Cohen, “The Ties that Bind: How Armed Groups Use Violence to Create Social Cohesion”, Journal of Peace Research, vol. 54, No. 5 (September 2017); Lindsay Harris (Borgen Project), “Why Are Child Soldiers Used in War?”, 7 April 2017.

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¹²¹ A/58/546-S/2003/1053, para. 81, “recruiting and use of child soldiers; killing and maiming of children; rape and other grave sexual violence against children; illicit exploitation of natural resources; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access to children”.

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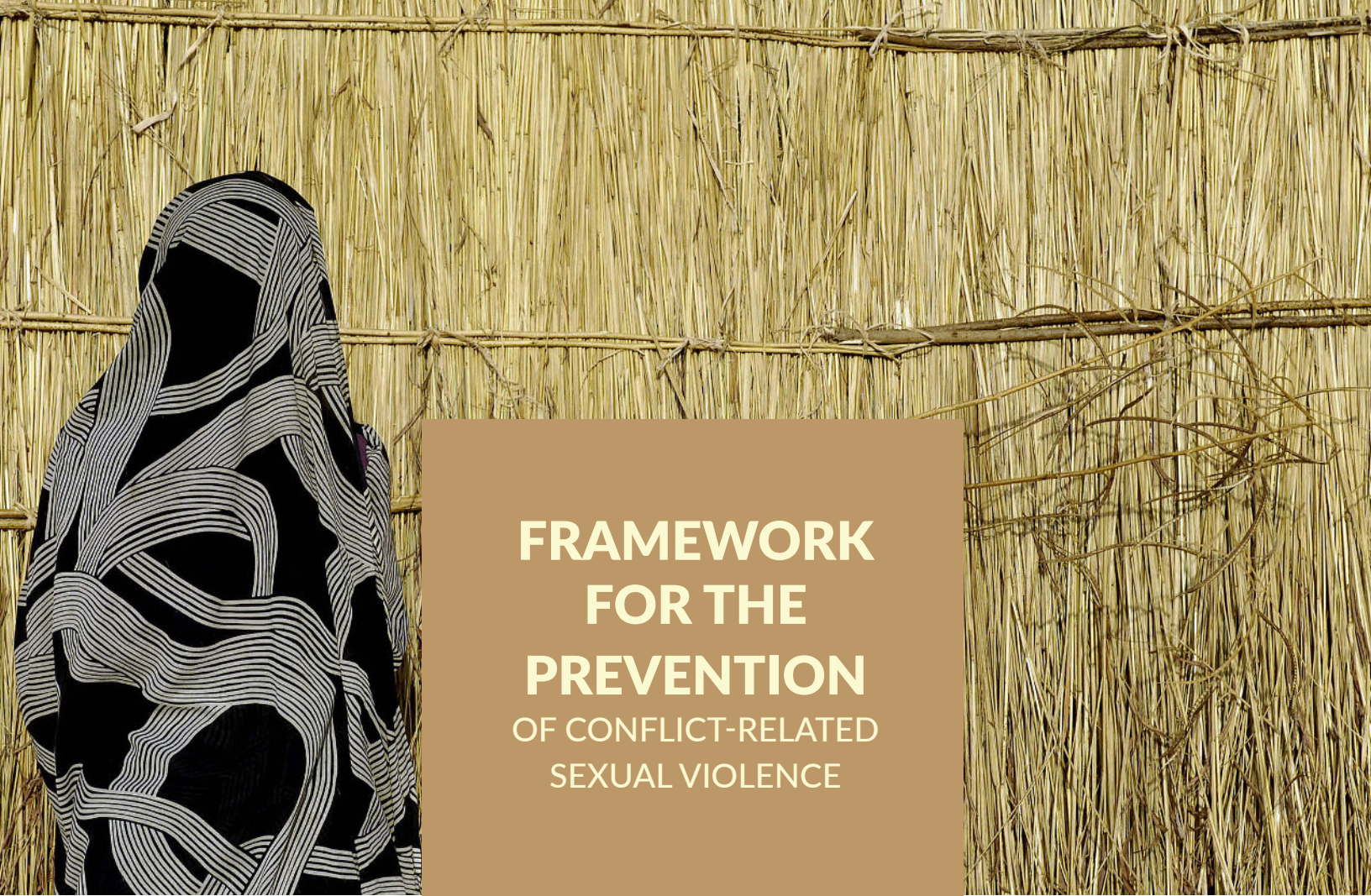
¹⁵⁹ S/2017/249; S/2018/250; S/2021/312; S/2022/77.

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**FRAMEWORK
FOR THE
PREVENTION
OF CONFLICT-RELATED
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

