

Best Practices in CRSV Monitoring and Early Warning

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Question

What is best practice in monitoring conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)? To what extent do these approaches enable collection of systematic, timely and comparable data on CRSV? What is best practice in CRSV early warning (anticipating spikes in, or increased risk of CRSV)?

Contents

1. Summary
2. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)
3. Best practice in monitoring CRSV
4. Best practice in CRSV early warning
5. References

The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

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1. Summary

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is a major problem, which has significant negative impacts on victims/survivors, wider society and peace prospects. There is growing international recognition of the need to combat it. CRSV monitoring and early warning are vital in this regard, enabling effective responses and preventive measures. Various factors, notably social stigma, mean that CRSV is vastly under-reported. Best practices to promote CRSV monitoring and early warning include: having appropriate staff (including specialist personnel); engaging with local communities to promote reporting of cases and of warning signals; following principles such as ensuring confidentiality, informed consent and respect for victims/survivors; using standardised data collection templates to facilitate information sharing and analysis; assessing CRSV risks in context against a prepared matrix of early warning indicators; carrying out awareness-raising and advocacy on CRSV; and, where risks are identified, raising the alarm in affected communities.

This review looks at best practices in monitoring conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and in CRSV early warning. It draws largely on grey literature, in particular reports of development organisations such as the United Nations. Much of the literature focuses on peacekeeping missions: far less was found with regard to the role of other actors (e.g. NGOs) in CRSV monitoring and early warning. [Note: there is substantial academic literature on the *problem* of CRSV rather than on best practices to combat it.] In addition, the review found no in-depth evidence (e.g. evaluations) on the experience of applying CRSV monitoring and early warning practices in specific contexts. Given the subject, the available literature does refer to women and girls, but was largely disability-blind.

Key findings of the review are as follows:

- **Nature, scale and impact of CRSV** – CRSV encompasses a wide range of forms of sexual violence, which are geographically, temporally or causally linked to conflict (see full definition in Section 2). Even though it is vastly under-reported, available figures show that CRSV is a massive problem. The impact of CRSV can be devastating, both on victims/survivors and their families/communities, and both in the short-to-medium term and long-term. It includes negative effects on physical and mental well-being, as well as economic effects and undermining prospects for reconciliation and peacebuilding.
- **Recognition of need to combat CRSV** – Over the past two decades there has been growing international focus on combatting CRSV, seen in particular through a series of UN Security Council resolutions, as well as in increased academic research on CRSV.
- **Importance of CRSV monitoring and early warning, and challenges** – CRSV monitoring paves the way for interventions to support victims/survivors and to investigate and prosecute perpetrators, which in turn can be a deterrent to others. Early warning helps identify risks and vulnerable groups, thereby allowing preventive measures to be put in place. However, factors such as the social stigma surrounding CRSV, fear of reprisals, lack of services for victims/survivors (so they have little incentive to report cases) and difficulty in accessing justice, all contribute to under-reporting of CRSV.
- **Best practice: staffing of peace missions** – As explained, the literature focuses on the role of peacekeeping missions. While everyone in such missions is responsible for monitoring CRSV, it is also important to have specialist personnel (e.g. Women’s Protection Advisers) to advise on implementation of the CRSV mandate, and to include women in

peacekeeper teams (either all female, or mixed teams) as these can have greater accessibility to women in communities. Finally, all personnel should be sensitised and capacity building undertaken about CRSV.

- **Best practice: community engagement** – Given the social stigma and other barriers to reporting CRSV cases, community engagement is vital for overcoming these and encouraging victims/survivors to come forward. Again, this needs dedicated personnel (e.g. community liaison assistants) to bridge communication gaps between missions and local communities. It is also important to engage with all groups in society (especially vulnerable/marginalised groups). Local leaders (e.g. community/political/religious) and local NGOs/CSOs should be mobilised to join anti-CRSV efforts. Finally, there should be appropriate facilities (e.g. women’s helpdesks) for people to report CRSV cases.
- **Best practice: guiding principles** – Peace missions/others with a CRSV mandate have to follow the basic principles for any kind of humanitarian/development intervention (e.g. do no harm) alongside others which are more specific to CRSV: ensuring the safety of victims/survivors; confidentiality and informed consent; treating victims/survivors with respect; non-discrimination; and objectivity and impartiality. All personnel should respect the CRSV mandate of their mission, and know the standards relevant to sexual violence.
- **Best practice: collection, sharing and analysis of CRSV information** – use of standardised templates can ensure that all necessary CRSV information is collected (and data that shouldn’t be is not collected), and facilitates sharing between different agencies/organisations. Sharing information with other agencies, after taking out all confidential data, is important so they too can design effective responses. Analysis of CRSV data is critical to being able to use it for prevention and early warning. The Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) for CRSV, set up under UNSC Resolution 1960, has helped improve analysis and inform decision-making on CRSV.
- **Best practice: CRSV early warning matrix of indicators** – CRSV can be preventable, and the UN has prepared a matrix of early warning indicators to support this. The matrix focuses on changes in the operating environment, but stresses that the indicators listed have to be looked at in each specific context to assess the risk of CRSV. The matrix is divided into indicators of potential CRSV, impending CRSV and ongoing sexual violence.
- **Best practice: awareness-raising and advocacy** – this is important both for CRSV monitoring (to encourage people to come forward and report cases) and for early warning (so people report indicators of CRSV, and so they can be warned about CRSV risks). Key messages to convey include: what CRSV is and that it is wrong; removing the stigma around CRSV; encourage reporting of cases, and of early warning signals. Awareness raising activities can include public information campaigns and capacity building of NGOs.
- **Best practice: raising the alarm** – once potential/impending CRSV risks have been identified, warnings should be issued to affected communities/vulnerable groups, along with carrying out other preventive measures (e.g. increased patrols by peacekeepers). Methods for raising the alarm include call centres and community alert networks.
- **Overlap between monitoring and early warning approaches** – As seen, many of the best practices described are common to monitoring and early warning, notably community engagement, and staffing. A further approach that can be hugely beneficial to both is use of technology, e.g. mobile phone apps, satellite imagery. These are described in a separate K4D helpdesk report (No. 1174: forthcoming).

2. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV)

Definition, scale and impact

Nordas and Cohen (2021: 194) claim that there is no consensus definition of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) but existing definitions vary along two dimensions: which forms of violence should be included, and what should be considered conflict-related. The United Nations (UN) defines conflict-related sexual violence as:

Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, 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 conflict. That link may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator, who is often affiliated with a state or non-state armed group, which includes terrorist entities; the profile of the victim, who is frequently an actual or perceived member of a political, ethnic or religious minority group or targeted on the basis 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 a ceasefire agreement. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation when committed in situations of conflict (UN, 2020: 5).

A UN guide for field missions on responding and preventing CRSV notes that, in order to be considered conflict-related, sexual violence must have a temporal link, geographic link and/or causal link to conflict (UN, 2020: 6). With regard to temporal link, this includes periods of instability that escalate into armed conflict, and the aftermath of conflict. Geographic links can include areas not directly where conflict occurs, but which are impacted by conflict.

It is difficult to get accurate figures about the scale of CRSV because it tends to be vastly under-reported (see below). Nonetheless, figures that are available show that it is a massive problem:

- A 2017 survey in South Sudan found that 28% of women interviewed in Juba and 33% of women interviewed in Rumbek had experienced rape, attempted rape, or other forms of sexual assault by a non-partner. For men, those numbers were 9% and 6% respectively (CIVIC, 2020: 12).
- In the Central African Republic (CAR), Doctors Without Borders and the Gender Based Violence Information Management System collectively recorded 6,225 cases of SGBV in 2018, meaning that, on average, 17 cases of SGBV occurred each day (CIVIC, 2020: 12).
- An estimated 20,000 to 50,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the early 1990s (UN Women, 2013: 15).
- The vast majority of Tutsi women in Rwanda's 1994 genocide were likely exposed to some form of sexual violence; of those, it is estimated that a quarter to a half million survived rape (UN Women, 2013: 15).
- Approximately 50,000 to 64,000 of women who were internally displaced during Sierra Leone's conflict reported histories of war-related assault (UN Women, 2013: 15).

The impact of CRSV can be devastating, both in the short to medium-term and in the long-term, and both on survivors and wider society. Physical effects can include injuries, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy and long-term health complications, often

aggravated by lack of medical facilities (Germano, 2018). Effects on mental health can include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, crippling anxiety, and so on, even leading to suicide (Rowley et al, 2016). The impact of CRSV is 'exacerbated by social and religious taboos' (UN Women, 2012: 9).

It is particularly devastating in traditional societies where women's status is often linked to marriage and motherhood, as the consequences of rape (including irreparable fistula and infertility) may permanently exclude victims from community life. Being raped or labelled a 'rebel wife' or 'child of the enemy' can result in lifelong social ostracism and neglect (UN Women, 2012: 11).

While most victims of CRSV are women and girls, men and boys can also be targeted. 'After rape, men and boys are likely to experience similar mental health impacts to those faced by women and girls and they will need to navigate the same, or maybe even greater, levels of stigma and shame' (Rowley et al, 2016: 3). The trauma caused by CRSV affects not just survivors, but their families and the wider community in which they live. Rape carried out in public and in front of family/community members can be particularly difficult to recover from (UN Women, 2012: 11). In cases where victims are ostracised by their own family/community, this can make them vulnerable to exploitation, including sexual exploitation (Germano, 2018: 22).

There are also economic impacts of CRSV, as survivors are often unable to work (out of shame, or fear, or because of physical health effects). In addition to reducing women's labour force participation, sexual violence inhibits girls' school attendance (UN Women, 2012: 11). CRSV can lead to a normalisation of sexual violence, which can continue even after conflict is over (UN Women, 2012). Furthermore, it 'significantly exacerbates situations of armed conflict and impedes the restoration of international peace and security' (UN DPO et al, 2020: 4). Germano (2018: 22) argues that the consequences of CRSV are so devastating that 'some scholars speak of generational or inter-generational effects'.

Growing international focus on combatting CRSV

A UN policy paper on preventing and responding to CRSV (UN DPO et al, 2020: 3) notes that:

CRSV is a serious violation of international human rights law, international humanitarian law, international criminal law and refugee law. It involves an assault on the rights to physical and psychological integrity, dignity, sexual autonomy and gender equality. It regularly amounts to a form of torture under international human rights law and international criminal law.

Growing international recognition of CRSV and its devastating consequences, and of the need to tackle it, is reflected in a series of UN Security Council resolutions related to women, peace and security (see Box 1).

The increased focus on CRSV over the past two decades is also reflected in academic research. 'Once an obscure and marginalized topic of study, conflict-related sexual violence is increasingly studied by a wide range of scholars using multiple epistemologies, methodologies, and data types and sources' (Nordas & Cohen, 2021: 195). From fewer than five peer-reviewed publications on CRSV per year from 2001 to 2006, there were over 100 publications on the topic in 2019 alone (Nordas & Cohen, 2021: 195).

Box 1: UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions most relevant to CRSV (CIVIC, 2020: 9; UN, 2020: 23-25):

- UNSC Resolution 1325 (passed in 2000) - recognised the importance of women's participation in peace efforts and called on the UN to incorporate gender perspectives into their protection efforts.
- UNSC Resolution 1820 (2008) - recognised CRSV as a threat to international peace and security and asked the UN to develop appropriate training programmes for peacekeepers to enable them to better recognise, prevent, and respond to sexual violence. It also encouraged troop and police contributing countries to heighten their personnel's awareness and responsiveness to protection of civilians, including by protecting women and children from sexual violence.
- UNSC Resolution 1888 (2009) - explicitly identified the protection of women and children from sexual violence as a responsibility of peacekeeping missions. To help missions fulfil this role, it established the mandate of dedicated Women Protection Advisors (WPAs) in peacekeeping missions. It strengthened the institutional architecture to combat CRSV, e.g. through the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.
- UNSC Resolution 1960 (2010) – reiterated the need for action to combat CRSV, and requested the Secretary-General to establish monitoring, analysis, and reporting arrangements on CRSV. It led to the creation of the Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) to provide a UN-wide information gathering and analysis mechanism on CRSV.
- UNSC Resolution 2106 (2013) - recognised that sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations disproportionately affects women and girls, while also affecting men and boys and others traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence. It reiterated demands from previous resolutions such as including CRSV in all peace efforts and called on all actors to increase efforts to end CRSV and combat impunity.
- UNSC Resolution 2242 (2015) - recognised that sexual and gender-based violence is part of the strategic objectives and ideologies of certain terrorist groups and used as a tactic of terrorism.
- UNSCR 2331 (2016) - recognised that human trafficking, including for the purpose of sexual slavery, can exacerbate conflict and foster insecurity and instability. It stressed again that SGBV can be used as a tactic by violent extremist/terrorist groups, and affirmed that victims/survivors of trafficking and sexual violence should be classified as victims/survivors of terrorism.
- UNSCR 2467 (2019) - explicitly recognised the need for a survivor-centred approach in preventing and responding to CRSV. It acknowledged structural gender inequality and discrimination as root causes of sexual violence. Highlighting that the response to victims/survivors should be multidimensional, it called for effective justice and accountability, including the provision of reparations for survivors as well as livelihood support for their families, including children born of sexual violence.

Monitoring and early warning

One of the biggest challenges with regard to combatting CRSV is actually identifying the problem, and understanding its full scale and precise nature. 'Sexual violence is often less visible

than other types of harm perpetrated against civilians—a dead body is easier to identify than a survivor of rape’ (CIVIC, 2020: 1).

Due to underreporting, CRSV is often invisible, and the extent of its perpetration difficult to ascertain, even when it is widespread. The specific circumstances in which it takes places and the identity and motives of perpetrators are often hard to identify. This makes prevention efforts complex and challenging. The lack of CRSV reports does not mean incidents do not occur (UN, 2020: 18).

A number of factors are responsible for CRSV being significantly under-reported:

Sexual violence often goes unreported because of entrenched gender inequalities, the fear of reprisal due to confidentiality issues, and the societal stigma attached to CRSV and SGBV. Where medical services are unavailable, there is little motivation for survivors to come forward, and many violations occur in areas that are too remote or inaccessible for protection actors to investigate and record them (CIVIC, 2020: 12).

Reluctance to report CRSV means that the negative effects can be exacerbated for victims/survivors: ‘The culture of silence around sexual violence hinders victims/survivors from accessing medical care, including sexual and reproductive health services, and psychological support as well as from claiming their rights for redress and reparation’ (UN, 2020: 17).

Monitoring CRSV and early warning of CRSV are therefore vital to address the issue. Monitoring paves the way for interventions to support victims/survivors of CRSV and for investigation and prosecution of those responsible for perpetrating these crimes. These actions in turn can have a significant deterrent effect on others (Nordas, 2013). Early warning entails identifying risks and vulnerable groups, thereby allowing protective measures to be put in place to prevent CRSV. ‘Better access to reporting mechanisms for victims and witnesses, as well as increased monitoring of situations where sexual violence is likely to occur, should also contribute to prevention’ (Nordas, 2013: 3).

The remainder of this report looks at best practices in CRSV monitoring and early warning. Note that these practices are not exclusive to one or the other: some practices, e.g. community engagement, will be relevant to both monitoring and early warning.

3. Best practice in monitoring CRSV

Monitoring CRSV requires both ‘supply side’ and ‘demand side’ measures. ‘Supply’ side refers to peace missions/government agencies responsible for collecting information about CRSV cases. These should be set up in such a way as to ensure all relevant information is collected and used: one, to address the specific needs of individual victims/survivors, and two, to tackle the wider problem. ‘Demand’ side refers to victims/survivors of CRSV, and entails measures to raise awareness, allay concerns and encourage them to report cases.

Staffing of peace missions

In (post-) conflict situations, UN-mandated peace missions typically have responsibility for (among other roles) combatting CRSV, which includes both monitoring and prevention. All components (military, police and civilian) contribute to CRSV monitoring and reporting ‘within the

limits of their respective roles and responsibilities' (UN, 2020: 74). Best practice for staffing such missions includes the following:

Specialist personnel

A study on preventing CRSV through UN peacekeeping stresses that 'addressing CRSV is the collective responsibility of all components of a peacekeeping mission' (CIVIC, 2020: 13). Nonetheless, as called for in UN Security Council resolutions above, there is a need for peace missions to include specialists in gender, CRSV, human rights, protection and so on, who can play a key role in collecting and analysing information of CRSV (CIVIC, 2020: 13). Key personnel are Women Protection Advisors, Gender Affairs Officers, Force Gender Advisors and Protection of Civilian Advisors.

Senior/Women's Protection Advisors (S/WPAs) 'are responsible for advising senior Mission leadership and Mission components on the implementation of the CRSV mandate, on mainstreaming it across Mission activities, and on specific actions to be taken to address CRSV issues. S/WPAs provide specific and tailored guidance to civilian and uniformed components' (UN, 2020: 43). They could, for example, advise military components of missions on how to conduct gender-sensitive monitoring of alleged perpetrators and groups in vulnerable situations, how to record and share information on allegations of CRSV, and how to facilitate access for and support the deployment of national law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute CRSV incidents (UN, 2020: 44).

Women peacekeepers

It is important to have both men and women in peacekeeping missions. While 'female peacekeepers are not inherently any more knowledgeable about CRSV or more likely to prevent it than their male counterparts', they can have better access to women in communities and female victims/survivors will often feel more comfortable talking to other women (CIVIC, 2020: 13). 'Therefore, having female peacekeepers deployed in community engagement roles alongside their male counterparts can help ensure peacekeeping missions are able to access information on CRSV from both men and women' (CIVIC, 2020: 13). As one peacekeeper in the DRC explained, 'We need to interact with both men and women, and to be able to do this we need, among ourselves, more women' (cited in CIVIC, 2020: 16).

Female engagement teams (FETs) which are all-female units, or mixed engagement teams with a higher proportion of female troops than other patrols, have been deployed by different UN missions. The CIVIC study on combatting CRSV through UN peacekeeping found that such teams allow greater interaction between peacekeepers and women in communities, and can be particularly important in remote areas with few or no civilian staff to engage with local people on CRSV (CIVIC, 2020: 16). However, UN and Mission officials said they preferred mixed to all-female teams because the former are better equipped to interview both men and women. In addition, as one MONUSCO official notes: 'having all-female teams perpetuates the idea that gender is only about women rather than about understanding the perspectives of all segments of society' (CIVIC, 2020: 17). The CIVIC study reported that use of FETs or mixed engagement teams did improve the ability of Missions to engage with women and potentially learn about CRSV experiences (CIVIC, 2020: 17). However it also found that in some cases FETs were just 'window dressing' and concluded that: 'To be useful, sector and battalion commanders have to

recognize their value, and the Missions need to strategically deploy them' (CIVIC, 2020: 17). They also need to make good use of the reports that such teams produce (see below).

Sensitisation and capacity building of personnel

While the presence of female personnel is important, gender parity alone is not enough. 'Gender balance is not synonymous with gender capacity' (UN Women, 2012: 39). 'Missions also need to ensure that the personnel responsible for collecting information—whether male or female— have a basic understanding of the warning signs of CRSV and prioritize collecting sex-disaggregated information on threats and information related to sexual violence' (CIVIC, 2020: 13). 'Enhancing a mission's capacity to better serve the entire population requires not only the presence of female personnel, but gender training and capacity building for all peacekeepers' (UN Women, 2012: 39). Respondents questioned in the CIVIC study 'stressed the need for all peacekeepers to be better-trained, empowered, and responsible for effectively engaging civilians on gendered threats' (CIVIC, 2020: 17).

Sensitisation of all personnel on CRSV is part of CRSV mainstreaming, defined as (UN 2020, 47):

the process of spreading awareness on CRSV and ensuring the systematic implementation of the mandate of Field Missions to prevent and respond to CRSV at the strategic, tactical, and operations levels, and across all functions. CRSV mainstreaming aims to spread knowledge and respect of guiding principles on CRSV by all Mission personnel.

Community engagement

As explained above, there is a lot of stigma associated with CRSV which contributes to a culture of silence and to under-reporting. In order to overcome this stigma, and encourage reporting of incidents, missions need to engage with local communities. 'UN peacekeepers must establish close liaison and rapport with local communities and break the barriers to cross cultural communication. Engaging with local communities... is vital for understanding concerns, analysing threats and designing appropriate security responses' (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 3). Some community engagement measures are outlined below, while awareness-raising and advocacy on CRSV is discussed in Section 4 on CRSV early warning.

Dedicated personnel

UN missions include the post of community liaison officers (CLAs), specifically conceived to bridge the communication, culture and confidence gaps between local communities and peacekeepers through their knowledge of local languages and norms. As such, CLAs (UN, 2020: 60):

have the potential to become a critical tool to support community engagement on CRSV. CLAs may, for instance, be a vehicle to sensitize communities on CRSV, share information about GBV multi-sectoral services for victims/survivors, and provide information on the Mission mandate and actions to prevent and respond to CRSV.

Inclusivity

In engaging with local communities, it is important that all groups are reached, in particular vulnerable and marginalised groups. Unfortunately, in many societies this includes women – the primary targets of CRSV. Additional efforts must therefore be made to ensure their participation, such as: holding separate meetings with men and with women where it appears mixed meeting could discourage reporting; holding meetings at times and in locations which make it easy for women to attend; building the capacity of women to take part in (joint) meetings; and hiring women to fill key community engagement positions such as CLAs and language assistants (CIVIC, 2020: 18). The CIVIC study found that, while the missions assessed were aware of the need to promote women’s participation in engagement, ‘they do not seem to be systematically or uniformly analysing or addressing barriers to effective women’s participation in protection and security forums’ – it called on them to carry out such analysis and adjust their practices as needed (CIVIC, 2020: 18).

Another group that will often need specific measures to promote their engagement on CRSV are men and boys. While less common than women and girls, men and boys can also be victims/survivors of CRSV. However, they are ‘regularly overlooked by a variety of actors mandated to address CRSV’. In addition, ‘men may be reluctant to discuss personal experiences of CRSV or CRSV perpetrated against other men or boys in their communities when women are present’ (CIVIC, 2020: 18). Hence engagement with communities needs to be tailored to ensure CRSV perpetrated against men and boys is recorded.

Local interlocutors

There are two stakeholders in local communities with whom it can be especially useful to engage: local leaders and NGOs/women’s organisations. Local leaders can include community, traditional, religious, political, etc. leaders. Their position gives them influence, such that they ‘can play a positive role in shaping attitudes and behaviours of respective groups/communities’ (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 3) – particularly important given the social stigma around CRSV. They can also encourage reporting of CRSV.

NGOs, in particular women-led and women-focused civil society organisations, can also provide information on CRSV threats and incidents, and encourage victims/survivors to report incidents. Hence it is important that missions engage with such groups. The CIVIC study found that, in some cases, Missions supported such groups to carry out this role through projects, e.g. trainings, income generating activities, and capacity building to monitor threats and cases (CIVIC, 2020: 18). For example, ‘in Kalemie—the capital of the DRC’s Tanganyika province—all of the women-focused civil society organizations that CIVIC reached out to were in contact with MONUSCO’s local Human Rights Officers and felt that MONUSCO’s presence and activities provided instrumental support to their human rights monitoring work’ (CIVIC, 2020: 18).

Appropriate facilities

In order to encourage victims/survivors or others around them to report cases of CRSV, it is important to provide a safe and secure environment for this. One approach can be women’s help desks, e.g. in UN bases. These can promote increased reporting by providing ‘safe spaces for confidential exchanges/communication and service delivery – meeting rooms, separate medical aid room, etc.’ (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 5).

Guiding principles

There are a number of guiding principles which must be followed by development actors in general, e.g. do no harm, with others which are more relevant specifically to CRSV monitoring. Peace missions and others involved in monitoring CRSV must ensure that the following principles are applied at all times in their actions and in their handling of CRSV victims/survivors (UN Women, 2013: 78; UN, 2020: 67-68; UN DPO et al, 2020: 5):

- Safety – The security of CRSV victims/survivors, their families and communities, witnesses, and others who have assisted them/are sources of information, must be a primary concern. People who report CRSV can be at risk of further violence from the perpetrator(s) or from others in their communities. Hence, security measures should be in place to protect the identities of all victims/survivors.
- Confidentiality – Related to the above, protocols to secure personally identifiable information and data must be established and enforced. This relates to the safe recording, storage and handling of information, and includes compliance by all mission personnel. Maintaining confidentiality means not disclosing any information to any party at any time without the informed consent of the victims/survivors. The only time confidentiality can be breached is when there is imminent risk to the victim/survivor or others.
- Informed consent – When conducting interviews with victims/survivors of CRSV, witnesses and other cooperating persons, the interviewees' informed consent to use and/or share the information provided must be obtained. This means explaining the principle of confidentiality, the intended use of the information and how the information will be protected. It should be explained what information will be kept completely confidential, such as the identity and personal details of the interviewee, what information may be included in a report or shared with and what categories of actors' information will be shared. Each step of the process and the possible outcomes should be carefully explained to the victim/survivor.
- Respect – Victims/survivors are the primary actors in CRSV, and those involved in CRSV monitoring should respect and value their experiences, ideas, decisions and actions so as not to increase their feelings of helplessness and shame, and cause them further harm.
- Non-discrimination – All victims/survivors should be treated in the same way (with respect, etc.) without discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, race, colour, language, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, status or social class.
- Impartiality and objectivity – Mission personnel/others with a mandate to monitor CRSV should gather information and document violations of CRSV by all parties to conflict with equal thoroughness and avoid any possible perceptions of bias of siding with one party over another. They should always maintain an objective attitude and appearance. When gathering information, all facts should be considered objectively, without prejudice or bias.
- Respect the mandate – Mission/other authority personnel need to fully understand and respect the Mission mandate and its implementation requirements, including specific requirements for monitoring and reporting.

- Know the standards – Mission personnel/others responsible for monitoring CRSV must have full familiarity with international human rights and international humanitarian law standards relevant to sexual violence, and applicability in the respective country.

Note that the above principles must be followed alongside the provision of services to victims/survivors, e.g. medical treatment.

Collection, sharing and analysis of CRSV information

Standardised templates

As noted above, responsibility for collecting information on CRSV can rest with diverse structures and personnel within UN/other field missions/other agencies (e.g. national police). There can be similarly diverse sources of CRSV information: victims/survivors, witnesses, cooperating persons such as civil society, community leaders, journalists, NGOs, government authorities, and service providers (UN, 2020: 74). Given the diversity of those collecting information and the diversity of sources, it is useful to develop standardised templates of requisite information in CRSV cases. Standardised templates outline what information should be included in mission reports, and thus can ensure that key information on CRSV is included (CIVIC, 2020: 19).

Table 1 below lists all the information that should be collected in CRSV cases, as well as information that should not be sought.

Table 1: CRSV information that should and should not be collected

This table has been removed due to copyright reasons. The full table can be viewed at <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020.08-UN-CRSV-Handbook.pdf> p.75

Source: UN, 2020 : 75.

The Civic Centre study stresses that CRSV information collected should be at minimum sex- and age-disaggregated. Noting that much of the data analysis is carried out by officers and analysts at mission headquarters: 'They rely heavily on information reported from staff in field locations to carry out analysis, and they cannot include a gender dimension in the analysis if they don't receive adequate data' (CIVIC, 2020: 19). In order to ensure that CRSV is more regularly included in internal reporting by peacekeeping troops, various innovative initiatives make use of pocket cards or similar tools:

For example, protection and gender-focused staff in MONUSCO and MINUSCA have created pocket cards for troops explaining how to identify and react to potential cases of CRSV in a simple and condensed format that can be carried at all times (CIVIC, 2020: 20).

However, as well as creating pocket cards it is important to ensure they are distributed to troops and consistently used – which can be much harder (CIVIC, 2020: 20).

Technology can be very useful in monitoring CRSV. Examples of technology/devices that could help in monitoring are: mobile phone apps, ground sensor radars, tactical Unarmed Aerial

Systems (UAS), satellite images, aerial photography, area/individual night-vision devices, communication monitors and electronic monitors (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 5). Obviously, these can also be used to identify impending threats, and thus for early warning. A separate K4D report¹ looks at the different types of technology that are being used in this regard.

Sharing of information

CRSV information should be shared in a timely manner with relevant personnel, e.g. the nearest WPA or CRSV focal person in UN missions (UN, 2020: 75). The UN guide on CRSV for field missions stresses that: 'Immediate sharing of information is crucial to enable timely and adequate verification and follow-up of incidents, including through the referral systems'. Hence, for military and police components in such missions 'such information sharing should be done with the same sense of urgency as reporting to their chains of command' (UN, 2020: 75).

UN field missions will typically have civilian, military and police components. The UN guide highlights that these must 'work together at strategic, tactical, and operational levels and share information to ensure the most complete understanding of the protection needs of civilians to prevent and respond to CRSV' (UN, 2020: 47).

Information-sharing can help stakeholders overcome their individual limitations and more accurately identify actual hotspots of sexual violence. It can also help prevent situations where multiple organizations collect data on CRSV from the same people, which can frustrate and retraumatise survivors (CIVIC, 2020: 19).

Sharing CRSV information between peacekeepers and UN agencies will be relatively straightforward if they use standardised templates. It can also be very useful to share data with other protection actors, e.g. NGOs/other agencies in the Protection cluster, or the GBV sub-cluster. Information sharing in relevant cluster meetings can help ensure that those other actors/organisations 'have timely data to design effective responses' (CIVIC, 2020: 21). However, the challenge here can be that (CIVIC, 2020: 23):

actors use different templates and methodologies for collecting data because they have different institutional information needs and requirements. For example, NGOs often focus on the wider category of SGBV and collect a significant amount of data on categories of SGBV that might not be a priority for peacekeeping missions, such as the denial of resources based on gender. On the other hand, they might not collect information on the perpetrators of an attack, which is valuable for peacekeepers trying to profile perpetrators and determine how to prevent attacks.

In addition, where different agencies use different terminology, combining data can be difficult. In order to address these issues, efforts are being made to create common SGBV data templates, but these are not always fully operational and are sometimes used by only a few organisations (CIVIC, 2020: 23).

¹ K4D Helpdesk Report 1174 (forthcoming) looks at the use of digital technology to prevent sexual violence in non-conflict settings and the applicability of these to conflict situations, as well as digital technology solutions for CRSV monitoring and early warning.

While it is appropriate for different components to share CRSV information, the UN guide notes that details that could identify the victims/survivors, witnesses or other sources, should be filtered out.

Analysis of information

Data collection on CRSV alone will not lead to improved responses to CRSV. It is important to analyse the data looking, for example, at trends in incidents of CRSV, profile of perpetrators, profile of victims, nature of cases, and the wider context. ‘Such analysis can equip mission leadership with the right evidence to make proactive decisions and prioritise interventions that effectively combat CRSV’ (CIVIC, 2020: 21). Box 2 gives a list of the types of questions that could be examined in CRSV analysis.

UN Security Resolution 1960 called for the setting up of Monitoring, Analysis and Reporting Arrangements (MARA) on CRSV. MARA is designed to collect, verify and analyse data from a variety of sources that, in addition to informing measures to combat CRSV, is used to prepare the Secretary-General’s annual report on CRSV and UN Security Council action (CIVIC, 2020: 22). A key entity in MARA implementation is the MARA Working Group, which comprises a number of UN agencies, to be determined at country level: ‘Membership should be based on expertise and capacity on GBV programming; monitoring, verification and reporting of human rights violations; gender analysis; and other security/protection expertise’ (UN, 2020: 71). With regard to its role, ‘The MARA Working Group reviews information; monitors and verifies incidents of sexual violence; analyses data, trends and patterns; prepares reports; and builds capacity to strengthen MARA’ (UN, 2020: 70).

The CIVIC study looking at the experience of a number of UN peacekeeping missions in Africa in relation to CRSV, found that the MARA process had become ‘one of the most valuable tools these Missions have for sharing and analysing information and trends related to CRSV’ (CIVIC, 2020: 22). A key factor in its success was widening the membership of the MARA Working Group to include all three components (police, military, civilian) of UN missions, as well as relevant UN agencies (e.g. UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, UN OCHA) and even participation by field offices. Another has been sharing information in a dynamic way (CIVIC, 2020: 22):

Stakeholders in the DRC reported, for example, that the SWPAs and Human Rights Officers organized incidents into categories of CRSV and conducted analysis on the locations and perpetrators of violence rather than simply presenting case numbers. This approach drove real conversation around the dynamics of CRSV and allowed participating entities to begin thinking about and coordinating responses to the violence. One UN agency official told CIVIC, “Now the things that the MARA working group is doing are amazing. ...It is really [about] information analysis on early warning”.

However, the CIVIC study cautions that, while MARA can help inform decision-making, it cannot be relied on as a primary early warning tool on CRSV. This is because it only occurs once per month, and because ‘the framework for the MARA requires more detailed investigation and verification of cases, which cannot be carried out for every alert and can cause delays in reporting’ (CIVIC, 2020: 24).

Box 2: Key questions when analysing CRSV information to identify trends and patterns (UN, 2020: 78-79):

Profile of victims/survivors: what are the common characteristics regarding who they are and why they are targeted?

Incidents of sexual violence:

- Have there been increases/decreases in the number of verified incidents of CRSV compared to the previous reporting period? What could be the reasons?
- What types of CRSV are committed?
- Has any particular type of sexual violence increased/decreased in comparison to the previous reporting period? Why?
- In which geographic areas is CRSV committed? Are there new areas where it has been committed?
- What could be the reasons?
- Is there a particular context in which CRSV is perpetrated (such as detention, displacement, political repression)?
- Is there a common feature in the way CRSV is perpetrated (such as a mode of attack, a particular time of attack)? Has there been a repetition of similar events and escalation in their seriousness?

Profile of perpetrators:

- What are the common features in who they are and how they operate?
- What are the factors triggering their behaviour? Are they driven by ethnic, religious, ideological, or other specific motives?
- Are there signs that perpetrators may be following a plan?
- How is the command and control of the armed group and/or armed forces involved (e.g., have they ordered the attacks; do they have knowledge of them; do they have or not have de facto control over combatants under their responsibility)?

To consider contextual factors that contribute to CRSV:

- What are the relevant cultural, historical, political, and socio-economic factors that contribute to CRSV?
- What are the root causes of violations, including the motivation of perpetrators?
- Are there other forms of gender-based discriminations and GBV happening in the country?
- Are there links with the identified incident or pattern of CRSV?
- Were there pre-existing forms for GBV in the country before the conflict? If so, have they been exacerbated?

4. Best practice in CRSV early warning

CRSV early warning entails two aspects: one, collecting information that can be analysed to identify potential/impending sexual violence; and two, sharing warnings with vulnerable communities/groups and carrying out other preventive measures. Clearly, many of the best practices for monitoring CRSV (e.g. specialised personnel, community engagement) will be applicable for CRSV early warning as well. A number of additional measures are described below.

CRSV early warning matrix of indicators

Based on the understanding that CRSV does not occur in isolation, and that it is preventable, the UN has developed a matrix of early warning indicators for CRSV. The indicators in the matrix are divided into signals of potential CRSV, impending CRSV and ongoing CRSV. The aim is (UN Action, 2011: 1):

The indicators should prompt an analysis of **changes in the operating environment**, for instance in the mobility patterns of women and girls (e.g., absence from schools or market-places), in the conduct of armed groups (e.g., pillage or proximity to civilian centers), or in terms of escalated political rhetoric (e.g., ethnic/gender-based propaganda). This analysis can inform 'hotspot mapping' of the location and timing of violations, as well as helping to identify when seemingly isolated incidents may point to a larger pattern.

Guidance on use of the matrix stresses that the absence of the factors listed does not necessarily indicate the absence of CRSV/risk of CRSV; conversely, the existence of listed factors does not necessarily always lead to sexual violence. 'The intention is for monitors/observers to take into account the cumulative effect of relevant indicators in their overall reading of the environment' (UN Action, 2011: 1). The indicators are grouped under six dimensions: military/security; social/humanitarian; political/legal; economic; media-related and health. Indicative response options are included to facilitate use of the matrix.

There are too many indicators to list them all in this review, but a selection are given below:

Potential risks

- *Military/security* - Parties/armed groups rely on conscription, abduction or other forms of forced recruitment, which increases likelihood of using sexual violence, particularly gang-rape, as a mechanism to enhance group bonding and cohesion (RUF in Sierra Leone, 1999).
- *Social/humanitarian* - Demographic shifts, such as an increase in female-headed households, due to the absence of men from communities, or to an increase in the number of women rejected by husbands and communities (E. DRC); increase in war widows (Sri Lanka); sex-specific displacement/refugee outflows.

Impending risks

- *Political/legal* - Expulsions of/attacks on organizations working on sexual violence; seizure of/interference with their data (Darfur, Sudan; Former Yugoslavia).
- *Media-related* - Public incitement to sexual violence, including by reference to past violations against a community/group to justify future attacks, e.g. propaganda campaigns claiming the opposition is committing rape in order to justify further rapes as a form of retaliation.

Ongoing sexual violence:

- *Health* - Increase in women seeking clandestine abortions (Bosnia, early 1990s); spikes in sale of abortifacient (abortion-inducing) drugs (Colombia); increase in cases of unwanted pregnancy and self-induced abortion.

For the full list of indicators see UN Action (2011).

Awareness-raising and advocacy

As noted in Section 3, community engagement on CRSV is a key approach to promoting reporting of CRSV cases. It is also very relevant for CRSV early warning. Similarly, awareness-raising and advocacy on CRSV with local communities, while included in this section, will have relevance for CRSV monitoring as well.

The goals of awareness-raising and advocacy on CRSV include:

- Ensuring that local communities understand what CRSV is, and condemn its perpetration;
- Removing stigma around CRSV, and reducing the ostracism that can be experienced by victims/survivors;
- Promoting reporting of CRSV cases, including by sharing information about support services for victims/survivors;
- Promoting reporting of early warning signals of CRSV, which can allow preventive measures to be taken.

The UN guide for field missions sums up the role of awareness-raising on CRSV (UN, 2020: 56):

Efforts...should aim to change attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs that normalise CRSV. They should aim to inform the wider public, and especially victims/survivors, about the resources available and make perpetrators aware they are violating domestic and international laws.

A range of activities can be undertaken to raise CRSV awareness, including: public information campaigns (e.g. leaflets, radio messages), community engagement (e.g. through CLAs), holding public meetings, capacity building and support for relevant NGOs (e.g. women's groups, human rights groups). Community engagement with local community/religious/political leaders can be especially useful in promoting culture and behaviour change. Awareness-raising activities will be more effective if undertaken as part of a planned strategy (as opposed to ad hoc interventions).

Raising the alarm

Once potential/impending risks of CRSV have been identified, this should be followed up by warnings to affected communities/vulnerable groups and preventive measures such as increased patrols by peacekeeping troops. Prevention measures fall outside the scope of this review, but early warnings can be issued through public information mechanisms set up to raise awareness of CRSV, as well as through established methods of community engagement (e.g. CLAs). Other means of raising the alarm on CRSV include:

- 'Call centres - Mission call centres established at the national, regional/provincial and local levels act as a distress call (helpline) system and can help in monitoring of evolving situations, as well as in getting early-warning of a potential, impending or ongoing sexual violence (e.g. UNOCI, MONUSCO and MINUSMA)' (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 2).

- 'Community Alert Networks - CAN facilitate wider engagement, exchange of information, early-warning and help to alert the community and protection actors in times of emergencies (e.g. MONUSCO, UNAMID and MINUSMA)' (DPKO & DFS, n.d.: 4).

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