Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
Lesson Plan V: Best Practices in Addressing CRSV

Introduction.

1. Post adoption of Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), UN peacekeeping operations have also been increasingly mandated to address all forms of sexual violence in conflict, post conflict and in other situations of concern. At present six peacekeeping Missions are addressing CRSV; to include MINUSCA, MINUSMA, MONUSCO, UNAMID, UNMISS and UNOCI. Over the years of mandate implementation, these Missions have designed and institutionalised innovative protection tools and practices, including those that specifically enhance prevention and response to CRSV. Although originated in specific mission operational context, these tools and practices have common applicability and are more and more being adapted to other mission contexts as well.

Aim.

2. To provide an overview of the best practices in prevention and response to CRSV identified from the Missions mandated to address CRSV.

Scope.

3. The session on procedural aspects pertaining to prevention and response to CRSV comprise:
    a. Part I   : Best Practices at the Strategic Level.
    b. Part II   : Best Practices at Mission Level.
    c. Part III   : Best Practices in Community Engagement.
    d. Part IV   : Best Practices at Military Component Level.

Learning Outcomes.

4. The session intends to bring out the following:
    a. Provide an understanding of the best practices commonly applicable to missions addressing CRSV;
    b. Be able to design and utilise these tools and best practices in specific mission context to prevent and respond to CRSV challenges effectively;
    c. Be able to integrate, coordinate and work in unison for the implementation of the Missions mandate; and,
    d. Be able to design specific standard operating procedures to utilise these best practices in operational activities.

Part I: Best Practices at Strategic Level.

5. **Political Engagements and Eliciting Commitments**. Constructive engagements undertaken by SRSG-SVC with parties to the conflict (including State and non-State actors) have exponentially contributed to:
    a. Ceasing/preventing CRSV;
    b. Fostering accountability and responsiveness;
    c. Enforcing appropriate conduct and discipline;
    d. Upholding the principle of command responsibility;
    e. Imparting training of troops on the categorical prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians;
    f. Vetting security and law enforcement forces taking into account past actions of rape and other forms of sexual violence;
    g. Issuance of command orders to prevent CRSV;
    h. Obtaining pledges to prosecute perpetrators by the military leadership;
    i. Evacuation of women and children under imminent threat of sexual violence to safety; and,
    j. Bringing to justice all perpetrators to end impunity.

    Some of the major examples of political engagements pertaining to peacekeeping operations are:

a. Signing of joint communiqués with Governments of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of South Sudan.
b. Development of a Plan of Action for Côte d'Ivoire.
c. Establishment of framework of cooperation with ICGLR and AU (engagement of Arab League is in progress).
d. Signing of a unilateral communiqué by the SPLA in-Opposition in South Sudan; while similar engagements with Armed Groups operating in DRC are making substantial progress.

6. **Host Nation Responsibility**. National ownership and leadership in prevention and response to CRSV is vital for sustained peace and delivery of service. The international community and the UN presence in the country providing targeted capacity building support in the areas of security, rule of law and justice are crucial to address CRSV comprehensively. UN HQ and UN Action Against Sexual Violence supports the host State in developing a Comprehensive National Strategy to address CRSV through multi-sectoral approach.

Part II: Best Practices at Mission Level (Crosscutting Practices).
7. **Overview**. The tools and best practices identified at the Mission level are crosscutting in nature and provide a comprehensive support to prevention of CRSV.
a. **Advocacy**. Advocacy with all parties to the conflict (host State authorities, armed groups, communities, etc.) regarding key messages on prevention of CRSV by designated Mission leadership, including UN military commanders up to company commanders is crucial for enhanced protection of vulnerable sections of population. Key messages for advocacy usually include;
   i. Cease all CRSV violations;
   ii. Release all CRSV victims;
   iii. Non-applicability of amnesty provisions for CRSV perpetrators; and,
   iv. Informing that violations are being watched, activities recorded, crimes investigated and offenders prosecuted, etc.
b. **Integrated Teams**.
   i. **Joint Protection Team**. Joint Protection Team (JPT) is a mixed UN team comprising the military observers/contingent personnel and civilian liaison personnel/substantive experts as applicable (SWPA, HR/G WPAs, HROs, GA, CPA, CIMIC Officers, Public Information Officers, IPOS, etc.). JPTs engage communities to assess and analyse threats (trends/patterns) and find practical solutions to protection issues. JPTs also improve information-sharing between UN peacekeepers, the host population and its representatives, including women and children; facilitate humanitarian access, as well as enhance planning and coordination of Mission responses.
   ii. **Joint Investigation Team**. Joint Investigation Team (JIT) carries out investigations of IHL, IHRL and other violations including CRSV, conducted by experts (WPAs, HROs, CPA, and IPOs). UN military observers and Company Commanders may be part of a JIT in specific cases. UN military units may be required to provide security and logistics support for the JIT. Employing JIT helps to bring perpetrators to justice, foster accountability and end impunity.
   iii. **Operational Planning Team**. Operational Planning Team (OPT) complements operational level joint planning and coordination involving multiple actors to address specific issues, including prevention and response to CRSV (e.g. MONUSCO).
c. **Protection Sites**. COBs and/or areas adjacent to the COBs provide incidental protection (perceived safety and security in the shadow of the UN Deployments) and therefore have attracted many vulnerable sections to congregate and establish camps in and around UN deployments (e.g. UNMISS has 10 such camps; in MONUSCO, threatened civilians congregate around COBs at night time and carry out daily chores away from the COBs – called 'pendulum displacement').
d. **Safe Haven/Safe Corridors**. IDPs/Refugees are most vulnerable during movement and while in temporary camps. Provision of area security cover or protected corridors in UN designated

areas to ensure safe passage of displaced population and protection of camps/safe areas where refugee or IDPs have congregated have provided improved protection.

e. **Community Liaison Assistants (CLA)**. CLAs are a useful tool for establishing an effective interface with the communities. In addition to providing liaison and engagement with local communities, CLAs activate Community Alert Networks (CAN), and provides early-warning to the COB on protection related threats and incidents. They also participate in JPT missions and monitor impact of protection activities. Female CLAs can enhance communication with the women and girls of the community. Usually, two CLAs are provided by the Mission's Civil Affairs Component for each COB (e.g. MONUSCO and UNMISS).

f. **Call Centre**. 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).

g. **Weapon Reduction Programmes**. Societies that have a culture of possessing weapons are more prone to means of violence, including SV. Measures to confiscate/reduce the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in communities are crucial to curb SV.

h. **Quick Impact Projects (QIPs)**. Security oriented and women centric QIPs can enhance incidental protection (e.g. provision of water points, stoves, fuel efficient locally adapted technology, alternative income generating options for women, solar powered lights and cookers, women's vocational training centres, etc.).

i. **Community Welfare Programmes**. Providing medical assistance (particularly to the women and girls who have suffered sexual and other abuses) through female medics and doctors, including deployment of mobile health clinics in remote/insecure areas, self-employment generating opportunities, guidance and training to join national police forces, recreational facilities, self-defence measures (un-armed combat), etc. can enhance safety and security for women and girls.

j. **Public Information and Perception Management**. Targeted delivery of key messages through the Mission radio service and other public information mediums can deter/prevent CRSV, alert communities, improve reporting, help to inform service delivery, shape attitudes and behaviours and promote reconciliation and rapprochement.

k. **Early-warning**. CRSV is preventable and punishable based on national and international laws. Gendered early-warning indicators can be helpful to all protection actors to discern potential threats that can trigger rapid preventive/pre-emptive responses.

l. **Special Units**. Special protection units (fully staffed by female security personnel) designed, trained (in investigation and prosecution) and deployed to address sexual violence from a law and order perspective and to provide assistance to CRSV survivors have been useful (e.g. UNMISS and UNOCI).

Part III: Best Practices in Community Engagement.

8. **Overview**. UN peacekeepers must establish close liaison and rapport with the local communities and break the barriers to cross cultural communication. Engagement with local communities, particularly women and children is vital for understanding concerns, analysing threats and designing appropriate security responses. Consultation with vulnerable sections of the society/community can facilitate institution of self-protection measures, early-warning and community restraining measures, as well as in improving confidential reporting to end impunity. Some of the best practices in community engagement are explained in the following paragraphs.

a. **Engagement of Key Leaders**. Engagement with local community leaders (including political, traditional/customary, religious, youth and women) and representatives of women's groups/NGOs can provide early-warning on potential/impending SV, information on the prevailing/emerging security situation, especially concerning security threats facing local women in general, and in the context of special events, such as elections. They can play a positive role in shaping attitudes and behaviours of respective groups/communities and help to find middle ground and reconcilement.

b. **Involvement of Women in Designing Protection Measures**. Involvement of women in designing prevention and response initiatives supported through gender-balanced team of

community stakeholders can help to enhance operational responsiveness of UN peacekeepers and host security and law enforcement agencies (e.g. planning of patrol routes, timings, etc.) as well as improving confidential communication between sexual violence survivors/local women leaders/stakeholders, and the protection actors.

c. **Self-Protection Measures**. Support to the communities to design self-protection programmes and initiatives and organizing themselves to address the security concerns have been found useful in many Missions. Setting up of community defence committees/schemes composed of responsible men and women of the communities to analyse security concerns and establish community defence schemes, such as day and night community watch teams, community night patrols, etc. to prevent/deter sexual violence or provide early-warning to the community and the nearby COB. In addition, organizing unarmed protection groups (by volunteer men/youth); training on self-defence for women and girls; and training on response measures in cases of emergency, including attacks on women/girls, can improve community responses to CRSV.

d. **Community Alert Networks (CAN)**. 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).

e. **Local Alarm Schemes**. Establishment of local alarm schemes by communities in vulnerable areas/approaches can alert both the communities as well as the UN peacekeepers deployed in proximity and help to respond immediately (e.g. Physical barriers, drum beats, church bells, banging of utensils, yelling, mobile phone/radio calls, etc.).

f. **Encourage Reporting of CRSV**. Emphasis on ethical reporting and confidentiality, provision of safe and secure environment, supporting accountable and responsible State security, law enforcement and judicial institutions, community awareness etc. can improve reporting on CRSV.

g. **Social Standards**. It is essential to reinvigorate social restraining standards disrupted by conflict, and to strengthen traditional centres of power that exert a positive influence on attitudes and behaviour.

h. **Religion/Faith-Based Networks**. Religious organizations often have the moral authority to act as a conduit for information and social mobilization. Religious entities play a vital role in maintaining high standards of morality and shape attitudes and behaviour positively, reducing the criminal mind set.

i. **Conflict-mitigation**. Constructive engagement of traditional chiefs, non-partisan community groups, faith-based organizations and NGOs through negotiation and mediation with emphasis on local ownership can systematically promote reconciliation/rapprochement and help in conflict-mitigation.

Part IV: Best Practices at UN Military Component Level.

9. **Overview**. UN Military component play a significant role in prevention and response to CRSV. The operational design encompassing following best practices have been found effective and useful in prevention and response to CRSV.

a. **Hotspot Mapping**. Hotspot mapping can help in identifying vulnerable areas/populations as well as assist in instituting timely and credible response mechanisms to prevent/contain or neutralise CRSV threats.

b. **Presence and Posture**. Enduring, visible and credible presence in vulnerable areas, deployment of mobile elements to enhance operational reach (including in remote and inaccessible areas) and deterrent proactive posture can display UN resolve and prevent CRSV.

c. **Pre-emptive Operations**. In most cases, CRSV is preventable with rapid pre-emptive deployments, undertaken by mobile forces. Deploying even a limited capability to the right place at the right time is likely to have a deterring effect and can prevent violations (e.g. area domination, inter-positioning, searches, movement control, etc.).

d. **Proactive Operations**. Military commanders must seize initiative, anticipate evolving operational challenges and employ military resources in time and space to deter and prevent CRSV incidents, by dominating, posturing and influencing/controlling the courses of events.

e. **Temporary/Mobile Operating Bases (TOB/MOB) and detachments.** Deployment and redeployment of highly mobile and versatile manoeuvre elements, TOBs/MOBs, mobile OPs/CPs and patrols as well as UNMO and MLO teams can be effective to address vulnerable areas/hot-spots away from static deployments.

f. **Operating in Unconventional Manner (space, time, mode and duration)**.

    i. UN military patrols/detachments/units operating in unconventional[1] spaces (such as fields, water points, markets, rural areas, or in proximity to villages, camps, forests, and the routes frequented by the local community, etc.) can effectively prevent CRSV.

    ii. Conducting operations during identified vulnerable times, such as night hours (also in unlit areas); bad weather etc. can prevent CRSV.

    iii. Enduring/sustained credible presence in vulnerable areas can be an effective preventive measure.

    iv. Helicopter borne patrols/UNMO-MLO Teams can significantly enhance presence and visibility in a wider area more frequently thereby reassuring the vulnerable sections of the population and deter perpetrators of CRSV.

g. **Mixed Teams**. Deploying mixed teams comprising male and female peacekeepers can enhance community interaction/engagement, particularly with women and children. More representation of female peacekeepers in frontline duties as well as in positions of command, staff, observers, liaison officers, medics, interpreters, CLAs, etc. can be helpful and project positive role-models for women and girls in local communities;

h. **Escorts/Protection Support**. Provision of armed escorts to accompany women/girls while engaging in daily routine/economic activities, (such as firewood/water/food collection; farming; visits to markets/schools/religious places; etc.) and to access humanitarian aid (between home and delivery points) is crucial to prevent CRSV. Commanders must anticipate and avert predictable risks (e.g. "firewood rape").

i. **Deployment of Force Reserves/QRF/QRTs**. The Force Reserves and Special Forces (SF) as well as Quick Reaction Forces and Teams (QRF/QRT) at Force, unit and sub-unit levels respectively must be employed rapidly to prevent/contain/neutralise emerging threats. The QRF/QRTs once deployed can readjust and redeploy to other areas depending on changes in threat manifestation. Operational readiness, mental mobility and strategic/air mobility is crucial.

j. **Modern Technology**. Utilisation of ground sensor radars, tactical Unarmed Aerial Systems (UAS), satellite imageries, aerial photography, area/individual night-vision devices, communication monitors and electronic monitors etc. are beneficial in surveillance and monitoring activities of alleged perpetrators of CRSV and early-warning of impending threats.

k. **Proficiency in Language**. Peacekeepers proficiency in basic conversational skills of host national/local/vernacular languages is vital for effective communication with communities and parties to the conflict. Communication skills are crucial for outreach and engagement. Use of language assistants, interpreters and CLAs has proved helpful in communicating effectively.

l. **Movement Control/Modifying Mobility Patterns**. Depending on the threat and vulnerabilities analysis, modification of mobility patterns of vulnerable population can enhance security. Coordinated movements for subsistence activities, protected movement of children to the schools, entry and exit controls in the villages and markets, etc. are some of the measures to enhance security.

m. **Role modelling**. Usually, all UN peacekeepers are held at a high moral esteem by the local population and would like to emulate them as role models. It is imperative therefore to maintain high standards of conduct and discipline, including zero tolerance to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) that can adversely impact other actors such as host military

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[1] In Sudan, "firewood patrols" accompanied IDP women and girls leaving their camps or settlements to collect grass and firewood to prevent "firewood Rape" which were rampant.

and police, as well as armed groups. In addition, for the local women and children, presence and functions of female peacekeepers are reassuring and motivating factors.

n. **Women's Help Desks**. Women's help desk in UN bases can promote increased reporting and help discern security concerns and threat perspectives. Safe spaces for confidential exchanges/communication and service delivery - meeting rooms, separate medical aid room, etc. need to be provided.

Takeaways.

10. Following are the key takeaways on best practices to Address CRSV.

 a. Advocacy and political engagement of the parties to the conflict, including armed groups is crucial to prevent CRSV and bring to justice those responsible for it.

 b. Community engagement is central to prevention and response to CRSV.

 c. Engagement of key leaders, including women in the society is vital to understand security concerns and to help design appropriate responses.

 d. Engagement of women and girls, security oriented QIPs, gendered early-warning indicators, deployment of special units, enduring presence in vulnerable areas, escorting vulnerable sections of population for routine activities, deploying mixed teams and establishment of women's help desks etc. have been particularly useful to prevent CRSV.

 e. Protection tools, such as JPT, JIT, CLA, CAN, etc. are time tested and are universally applicable.

Conclusion.

11. UN peacekeepers must be able to discern potential, impending and ongoing CRSV threats and incidents and be able to pre-empt, prevent, deter or neutralise them in a timely and effective manner. Acquiring timely and accurate early-warning/information on threats, establishing an effective preventive framework, maintaining high operational readiness to respond to operational challenges and provision of assistance/services to survivors are the bedrock of prevention and response to CRSV. Missions implement WPS, PoC and RoL mandates in a comprehensive and integrated manner and hence liaison and coordination with all relevant components and partners are crucial. Although many best practices and tools are adaptable to many mission settings, it is also important to devise new and innovative approaches to enhance and prevention and response to CRSV.