

ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN: A KEY HUMANITARIAN CONCERN

Sexual violence is a widespread and serious humanitarian concern in South Sudan. Over a decade of conflict and intercommunal violence has led to the normalization of sexual violence among weapon bearers as well as among civilians. It has also reinforced pre-existing and harmful social norms that lead to victim blaming. Stigma, including rejection by family, divorce and isolation from the community are key reasons most victims/survivors fear seeking help. That in turn causes delays in accessing necessary care and exacerbates many long-term consequences for victims/survivors and their families, including children being born as a result of rape. Lack of knowledge and very few safe and accessible services in conflict affected areas additionally complicate survivors' access to life-saving care. The eruption of conflict in Sudan in 2023 which led to a high influx of refugees and returnees also saw an increased number of survivors struggling to access the already limited services available.

THE ICRC'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aims to prevent, reduce, and respond to sexual violence through direct action. We do this by **providing holistic and multidisciplinary care** for victims/survivors, raising awareness among communities to reduce their exposure to risk, **engaging with weapon bearers and authorities** to prevent incidents of sexual violence and by **providing referrals** to services provided by other organizations and authorities. While our primary focus is on addressing sexual violence in the context of armed conflict and other situations of violence, we also address other types of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as part of our protection and assistance mandate. We work in partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IFRC) as well as National Societies.

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES (2024)

PREVENTION



- **253** police officers from South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) participated in training sessions focused on the investigation of sexual violence and international humanitarian law (IHL).
- **594** members of the armed forces and non-state armed groups took part in **20** training sessions addressing sexual violence and IHL.
- **50** staff from the National Prison Service of South Sudan (NPSSS) attended **two** ICRC training sessions on addressing sexual violence in places of detentions.
- Conducted **25** external engagements to address the issue of Form 8 and the negative impact of mandatory reporting, aiming to support and mobilize key representatives from the government, the police and the humanitarian community.

SPOTLIGHT 2024:

ENGAGING WITH AUTHORITIES AND THE POLICE SERVICES ON MANDATORY REPORTING OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Following up on an operational research study conducted in 2019, the ICRC in South Sudan engaged with the police as well as the Ministry of Interior in 2024 highlighting the negative impact of forcing victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to fill Form 8 (a legislative or policy requirement for certain individuals and/or institutions often healthcare to report criminal offences to a designated authority often law enforcement) as a precondition for medical treatment. This practice discourages victims/survivors from accessing care, leads to significant delays, or, even worse, deprives them of medical treatment after rape. In February 2024, South Sudan National Police Services (SSNPS) issued a new order establishing that Form 8 should not be a precondition, nor delay medical care for victims/survivors of sexual violence. Since then, the ICRC has continued to support the SSNPS by disseminating the new order to police, health services, other service providers, and communities through trainings, radio jingles, and communication materials. The director of the Special Protection Unit at the SSNPS was also invited as a panelist at the global conference “Forced to report? Understanding the humanitarian impact of mandatory reporting”, organized by the ICRC and the British Red Cross. The conference, held on 19 June, marked the International Day for the Elimination of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence. A related event was subsequently organized at the ICRC delegation in Juba.

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RISK MITIGATION



- **328** community influencers from **9** different communities in Upper Nile, Unity, Western Bahr El Ghazal and Central Equatoria, including community and religious leaders, teachers and health workers were trained in community outreach on sexual violence.



- **92%** of participants found the training useful or very useful for conducting community outreach on sexual violence. Following the training, **91%** of participants reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable addressing sexual violence within their community.



- Following the trainings, **5035** community members were reached through awareness-raising activities conducted by South Sudan Red Cross (SSRC) volunteers in communities in Upper Nile and Central Equatoria.

- Following awareness-raising activities, **41** victims/survivors of sexual and gender-based violence were referred to services by SSRC volunteers.



- The harmful impact of stigma was highlighted during the annual 16 Days of Activism campaign to combat gender-based violence in November through social media posts, training sessions with journalists, radio and TV interviews, and presentations for humanitarian partners, healthcare staff, and staff from the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare.

SPOTLIGHT 2024:

IMPACT OF RAISING AWARENESS TO PREVENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND TACKLING STIGMA.

In 2024, ICRC continued to work closely with the South Sudan Red Cross to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence and address the negative impact of stigma faced by victims/survivors in conflict affected communities. Awareness efforts included radio programs, football matches, drama performances, focus group discussions, and house visits. Innovative digital tools were introduced to measure the impact of these activities, even in remote communities with limited internet connectivity and electricity. Results showed that in **97%** of the awareness activities, communities expressed concrete commitments to support survivors of sexual violence, and in **89%** of awareness sessions, blame shifted from the victim/survivor towards the perpetrator. These outcomes demonstrate encouraging progress in reducing stigma and promoting accountability through outreach activities on sexual and gender-based violence.

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RESPONSE



- **37** medical staff from various health facilities in Upper Nile and Central Equatoria were trained on clinical management of rape (CMR), and close collaboration with UNICEF was established to ensure availability of PEP kits.



- **127** service providers from health facilities, physical rehabilitation centers, and mental health counselors were trained by the ICRC on the negative impact of stigma and how to better uphold confidentiality.



- **36** victims/survivors of sexual violence received direct support from the ICRC, including protection documentation, mental health and psychological support, cash assistance, and referrals to other organizations.



- **240** SSRC staff and volunteers, directly involved in responding to the needs of victims/survivors, participated in various capacity-building initiatives on sexual and gender-based violence with ICRC's support.

SPOTLIGHT 2024:

PROVIDING A HOLISTIC RESPONSE TO SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN REMOTE AREAS

In a remote part of Ruweng Administrative Area, the ICRC was notified about a massive attack by armed men, including incidents of rape, against several women travelling to the market. Due to lack of confidentiality and stigma, none of the women had sought healthcare at the local clinic and, as a result, had endured months of pain without treatment. After discussing various options with the victims/survivors, the ICRC arranged for the referral to the One Stop Center at Wau Teaching Hospital, 150 km away. A staff member from a local NGO accompanied the victims/survivors, while the ICRC provided cash support to cover for travel costs, food, and accommodation. The ICRC also conducted a training on community outreach on sexual violence for community influencers to help reduce stigma in the remote community. Additionally, sessions were held for various armed groups on the principles of humanity, including the prevention of sexual violence.




REGIONAL RESPONSE: KEY ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT TO THE SUDAN CRISIS



- Assessment on sexual violence situation, the impact of stigma, and the quality of services provided by other humanitarian actors (service reviews) were conducted in **five** areas across Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Western Bahr el Ghazal, and the Ruweng Administrative Area, which are hosting large numbers of refugees and returnees from Sudan.



- Community outreach activities addressing sexual violence were launched in **three** communities in Upper Nile and Western Bahr el Ghazal, targeting refugees and returnees from Sudan. As part of these efforts, **124** community influencers were trained, and SSRC volunteers subsequently reached **962** people through awareness-raising activities community outreach.

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