

**32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Geneva, CICC
10th December 12.00-1.00pm.**

‘Action of combat impunity, improve accountability and promote survivor centred assistance to victims of SGBV’

Event Aims:

1. Drawing on first-hand experience from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) experts who have directly investigated and prosecuted crimes and/or engaged in survivor-centred prevention strategies in the field, this event was designed to elicit practical tools and experiences across humanitarian settings, both conflict and non-conflict. With an interactive question and answer format that invited participation from the audience, different humanitarian and justice sector actors had the opportunity to share lessons learned.
2. More specifically, the event looked at different tools, including: the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict; the Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings; Standard Operating Procedures for Prevention of and Response to SGBV; and initiatives such as Justice Rapid Response deployments; the ‘Safe from the Start’ initiative and the Roadmap for the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. In doing so, participants considered the wider framework and multi-sectoral model. What accountability and justice mean and how to effectively deliver them across humanitarian and crisis situations were be questioned and examined. Also considered were the achievements and challenges of prosecuting SGBV crimes in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and the new Prosecuting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Network created within the International Association of Prosecutors as a forum for exchanging expertise and insights between prosecutors around the world.
3. Baroness Anelay, the UK Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict moderated the event and facilitate discussion between 4 experts: Sara Ferro Ribeiro, expert on violence against women and girls, and co-author of the International Protocol; Andras Vamos-Goldman, Executive Director of Justice Rapid Response; Catherine Andela, UN Regional Emergency Gender-based Violence Adviser; and Michelle Jarvis, Principal Legal Counsel at the ICTY. Canada, Japan, UK and US co-hosted the Event.

Key messages from the Event

4. **Catherine Andela** spoke about the application of GBV guidelines and Standard operating procedures to integrate GBV into humanitarian action. She stressed the need for a holistic service provision and a coordinated approach to make sure that GBV survivors get qualitative assistance and care within a referral path while all service providers know what and how others are doing and work in synergy. Clear guidelines, areas of responsibility and co-ordination mechanism were essential. GBV experts needed to be part of rapid assessment teams who are deployed at the onset of disasters so that gender issues could be mapped effectively from the very beginning.
5. **Sara Ferro Ribeiro** identified gaps that tools, such as the International Protocol, sought to address. She explained that the Protocol was designed to (i) help minimise the potential damage that could be caused by bad investigations and (ii) promote greater accountability.

She described the challenges associated with naming offenders who were unashamed of their crimes (e.g. ISIL) and how actors in the field should not try to do everything. The Protocol should only be seen as one part of a concerted effort to address SGBV in conflict and humanitarian settings.

6. **Andras Vamos-Goldman** explained how Justice Rapid Response's was designed to help deploy experts to "the right place at the right time": having a cultural, legal and linguistic affinity to the place of investigation. He stressed the importance of using the right expertise to carry out investigations in order to show victims that justice was being delivered and that there is 'credible accountability'. Humanitarian workers need a clear understanding of what they could do and what they should not attempt to do and JRR have in the last year developed a mentoring programme for 'First Responders' to help them to determine just that. Support for institutions and all initiatives in this area (such as JRR and PSVI) was essential.
7. **Michelle Jarvis** explained what challenges exist with prosecuting sexual violence crimes and how to integrate a gender perspective into investigations and prosecutions. Michelle referred to the ICTY Office of the Prosecutor's legacy project: the Tribunal had two decades of experience with prosecuting gender based crimes and emphasised the importance of learning from this and the experience of other courts and tribunals. She identified three key lessons: (i) connecting prosecutors working on SV cases with other prosecutors who have worked on similar cases so that they can share their knowledge; (ii) making sure that SV crimes are looked at in the broader context of other conflict-related atrocity and (iii) seeing sexual violence in the broader gender framework.
8. The discussion then moved onto Q&A. **Japan** asked about the reach of projects and effects of mandates specifically set to address the SGBV, such as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and how Governments co-operate, as well as about the relevance of the Resolution on "Sexual and gender-based violence: joint action on prevention and response" about to be adopted at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, **Sweden** asked how we could improve access in humanitarian situations and **Canada** asked about risks to the humanitarian principles (i.e. neutrality). The panel responded by stressing that the international community should try to make better use of the access it already has. Who are the main players that are already active on the ground in humanitarian and disaster situations and how can we better support them? Further work could also be done without jeopardising the humanitarian principles. We also needed to look at improving the way that the donor community was funding activity across the board, as the current system was overly complex.
9. The US and Swedish Ambassadors in Geneva then delivered statements on the **Call to Action**. The US made reference to a strategy they had developed on "responding to sexual violence globally" and "the future she deserves" initiative. SGBV activity will also continue to be a priority for the US administration in the coming year. Sweden is honoured to take up leadership in 2016. Promoting the rights of women remains a top priority for the Swedish government and they want to turn the Call to Action into a "truly global initiative".
10. Baroness Anelay closed the event by asking everyone in the audience to take away one piece of information from the event that could help them to improve accountability in their host State / organisation. Those suggestions are summarised as follows:

- Raising awareness is still really important as ignorance contributes to many of the issues;
- Reporting, expertise, and looking to identify gaps in responses area all key;
- Governments can look to increase accountability in the armed forces including through more investigation and prosecutors, involving extra resources if needs be;
- National societies can increase their contributing to implementation of action plans and integrating an SGBV message into emergency responses.

Conclusion

11. This event resulted in an enthusiastic and stimulating exchange of views on action to improve accountability and the challenges faced with work in humanitarian and conflict settings. The event helped to link PSVI to SGBV work in humanitarian settings, promote the Protocol and focus attention on the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.