20

WEMUN Winter Summit

2023.01.30-02.01 | Shanghai

23

United Nations Entity for Gender Equity and The Empowerment of Women

WEMUN

OxfordMUN
by **Oxford**Global

2022

UN Women

Background guide

Table of contents

Introduction

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, the organization was established in 2010 to accelerate progress on women's rights worldwide. UN Women's efforts are based on the fundamental belief that every woman has the right to live a life free from violence, poverty, and discrimination, and that gender equality is a prerequisite to achieving global development.

UN Women stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas to unlock rapid transformation:

- Increasing women's participation and leadership;
- Ending violence against women;
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes;
- Enhancing women's economic empowerment; and
- Making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting.

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is the Executive Director of UN Women and serves as the top-most official of the organization.

History of the Committee

In line with resolution 63/311 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, in January 2006, the secretary general presented report A / 64/588, entitled "Comprehensive Proposal for the Composite Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women" (Comprehensive proposal for the Composite Body on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment). In that report, the UN Secretary-General concluded that, rather than diverting other bodies of the UN system from their responsibility to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the new body should take steps to fix the focus of activities related to gender equality for the entire United Nations system. In addition, Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon estimated that approximately $ 125 million annually would be needed to cover operational costs and start-up costs at the national, regional level, including the headquarters. In addition, an additional $ 375 million was estimated as necessary to address the initial phase, in particular to follow up on national requests for program support.

Finally, after years of negotiations between UN member states, women's groups and civil society, on 2 July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 64/289, thus creating the Entity UN Women which avails itself of the union of multiple resources and mandates, finding its basis in an important work carried out by four bodies that previously constituted very distinct entities of the United Nations System:

- the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW);
- the United Nations International Institute for Research and Education for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW);
- the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues Advancement of Women (OSAGI);
- the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at the time of the founding of this new Entity announced his gratitude towards the "Member States that have allowed this great step forward for the world of women and girls" and added that "UN Women will significantly increase efforts to promote gender

equality; expand opportunities and fight gender discrimination around the world. " On September 14, 2010, it was announced that the former president of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, had been chosen as the head of UN Women. Various countries supported the creation of the body and welcomed Bachelet as director. During the General Debate, on the occasion of the opening of the 65th General Assembly of the United Nations, world leaders commented on the creation of the body and its intentions to "strengthen the presence and role of women" with the same favour with which they greeted Bachelet as the first executive guide.

The provisions contained in resolution 63/311 on the coherence of the entire system, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 2 October 2010, constituted the project of activities of UN Women. Seeking to strengthen the institutional arrangements of the United Nations on gender equality and empowerment, this Resolution supported a reorganization according to which the four distinct United Nations bodies - DAW, INSTRAW, OSAGI, UNIFEM - would henceforth focused exclusively on promoting gender equality, essentially articulated in two main directions:

1) supporting intergovernmental bodies such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in developing international policies, standards and norms;
2) assisting the Member States in the application of these measures, guaranteeing, where necessary, the technical and financial support required, creating efficient collaborations with civil society.

This composite Entity is headed by an under-secretary general. In addition, the Resolution provides that the UN Women's Secretary General is responsible for formulating UN Women's proposals for action. The latter must specify from time to time the scope of the mission and the related organizational plan which must include a procedural charter that regulates the management of the funds and the functioning of the executive committee, allowing the supervision of the organism's operational activity.

Topic A: The impact of Covid-19 on Gender Equality and the rise of domestic violence

Statement of the Problem

One in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, emerging data, and reports from those on the front lines, have shown that all types of violence against women and girls, particularly domestic violence, has intensified. This is the Shadow Pandemic growing amidst the COVID-19 crisis and we need a global collective effort to stop it. As COVID-19 cases continue to strain health services, essential services, such as domestic violence shelters and helplines, have reached capacity. More needs to be done to prioritize addressing violence against women in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Facts:

- -Globally, even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, 1 in 3 women experienced physical or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner
- -Emerging data shows an increase in calls to domestic violence helplines in many countries since the outbreak of COVID-19.
- -Sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women continue to occur on streets, in public spaces and online.
- -Survivors have limited information and awareness about available services and limited access to support services.
- -In some countries, resources and efforts have been diverted from violence against women response to immediate COVID-19 relief.

History of the Problem

One in three women face gender-based violence in their lifetime, mostly by their intimate partner. This staggering statistic, however, dates from before COVID-19 and UN Women has reported on emerging evidence that since the outbreak of COVID-19, violence has significantly increased in countries where the 'stay at home' measure was implemented to control the spread of the virus

(UN Women, 2020). The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that for every 3 months of lockdown, an additional 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence are to be expected (UN Populations Fund, 2020).

The pandemic has painfully exposed the existing (health) inequalities and has further increased them, disproportionately impacting women and girls, particularly those who are already affected by disadvantaged conditions formed by the (social) determinants of health, including, low income, age, race, geographic location, migration status, disability, and health status.

While strong leadership from key decisionmakers is long overdue, now more than ever we need them to up their game, supported by disaggregated data for equity-oriented policies, and powerful awareness-raising campaigns, so that the victims of violence get the care and support they need.

What is gender-based violence?

The European Commission has defined gender-based violence as violence directed against a person because of that person's gender or violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. Violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in physical harm, sexual harm (rape, attempted rape, unwanted touching, sexual exploitation and sexual harassment), psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women. It can include violence against women, domestic violence against women, men or children living in the same domestic unit.

Domestic violence is also called 'intimate partner violence' and includes physical, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse. It also includes threats of violence, coercion, and manipulation. This can take many forms such as sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and so-

called 'honour crimes'.

How is gender-based violence related to health?

Gender-based violence can have devastating short- and long-term impacts on health; it can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health, and may affect their children's health and wellbeing as well. The list of negative health impacts is long, ranging from physical injuries and sexually transmitted infections, to unintended pregnancies and induced abortions, to depression and even suicide in some cases.

Although gender-based violence affects all women, certain groups are more vulnerable and disproportionally affected. For example, those with existing health problems or a disability are more often a target for violence, as well as female asylum seekers, migrant and ethnic minority women, Roma, sex-workers, refugees, trafficked women, and women living in institutions. For example, 34% of women with a health problem or disability have experienced physical or sexual partner violence, compared with 19% of women who do not have a health problem or disability. Women from these vulnerable groups also face barriers when it comes to accessing healthcare services; they either have no money of their own or are not in control of the household budget, they are less likely to have a health insurance, or they simply have no access to the right information on how to access care.

Tackling gender-based violence

"Gender equality is a core principle of the European Union, but it is not yet a reality" is what Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, said when presenting Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 last year. The Commission has outlined three key actions – strengthening legal measures to criminalise gender-based violence, ensuring equal opportunities and salaries in the labour market, and pushing gender-balance on corporate boards and women's

participation in politics. The Commission has also set the ambition to 'integrate a gender perspective in all EU policies and major initiatives'.

Peggy Maguire, Director General at the European Institute of Women's Health, is clear; "this widespread international public health and human rights issue requires a strong leadership response, which rests with the most senior policymakers. Clearly stated objectives to address gender-based violence in national health strategies, policy and programmes will help establish the issue as a priority for health. The importance of prioritising access to mental health care for those who have experienced sexual violence cannot be understated, with a focus on marginalised and vulnerable groups such as the disabled, pregnant women, Roma, Migrants."

Moreover, in the wake of COVID-19, the national response and recovery plans must include services that identify and support (e.g., provide shelter, health care and legal support to) women in immediate need, strong messages from law enforcement for high priority of zero-tolerance against gender-based violence, and sufficient resource allocation to psycho-social support for the victims of violence.

Current Situation

Gender-based violence and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic worsens the situation in multiple ways. Firstly, the incidence of gender-based violence has dramatically increased, mainly because the 'stay at home' measures and of the increased insecurity and stress the pandemic has inflicted on the society.
Secondly, the social and health care professionals who provide life-saving support to women who experience violence, such as the clinical management of rape and psycho-social support, have significantly been reduced because of the overburdening and focus on handling COVID-19 cases.

This change in focus and resource allocation also undermines the efforts to prevent gender-based violence from happening.

Social distancing and restrictions on movement to contain COVID-19 have trapped women and girls at home with their abusers. If victims of violence had legal and social support networks, these were shattered, making it almost impossible to seek immediate support or to escape their situation.

Anti-COVID-19 measures can compound and connect different intersecting forms of discrimination against women and heighten the risk of violence against women belonging to vulnerable and marginalised groups. This includes older women, women and girls with disabilities, migrant women, homeless women and victims of trafficking, among others.
For instance, lockdown and 'stay-at-home' orders exacerbate factors that put older women at particular risk of violence, for example loneliness, anxiety, depression, the financial dependency of caregivers and the dependency of older people on caregivers, as well as alcohol and substance use among caregivers.

The reduction of staff in long-term care facilities due to illness and self-isolation and the suspension of family visits have increased residents' isolation and the already high risk of violence, particularly against women (Šimonović, 2020).

The lack of comparable administrative or prevalence data on gender-based violence makes it difficult to capture the extent of any increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic. Since it began, media and women's organisations have reported a sharp increase in demand for services such as shelters or helplines for women victims of violence. For example, the 1522 helpline run by the Italian government received 5 031 telephone calls between 1 March and 16 April 2020, 73 % more than over the same period in 2019. In Spain, there was a 48 % increase in calls to helplines (Šimonović, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed and exacerbated serious pre-existing gaps in the prevention of violence against women and in adequate available victim support services. An EIGE (2021a) study revealed that counter-pandemic measures introduced from March to September 2020 led to many major challenges for service providers. These include ensuring continuity of service delivery, finding new ways to provide support, meeting a surge in service demand, dealing with the strain on service provider staff, reaching victims, identifying the risk level of victims, and insufficient funding (EIGE, 2021a).

The study highlighted an important gap in crisis preparedness and crisis management planning during the pandemic's first wave. No EU Member State had a gender-sensitive disaster plan in place to address possible surges in violence against women. The COVID-19 outbreak prompted 11 countries to develop a national policy or action plan to address issues arising from an increased level of intimate partner violence, but in only three countries did the plan or policy include specific measures to tackle the issues (EIGE, 2021a).

Nevertheless, some interesting practices to protect women victims of violence were identified in the EIGE study. Eight countries used national legislation to deem support services essential, two countries used digital technology to continue criminal proceedings, and four countries introduced helplines or email/instant messaging services for victims. In addition, 11 countries provided more sheltered accommodation in either public housing or private hotels, but measures focused on removing perpetrators from the home were far less common (EIGE, 2021a).

Many victim support service providers have struggled with insufficient funding and have been forced to adapt to new ways of working, for example offering services remotely. Continuing uncertainty and spikes in COVID-19 cases and reported domestic violence cases have caused further stress. This has made it particularly difficult for service providers to ensure work–life balance for their own employees, and their health and safety. The EIGE study interviews show that

support to cope with these challenges came from non-government service providers rather than from governmental institutions (EIGE, 2021a).

For many women and their children, the lack of immediate, specialised and long-term response to gender-based and domestic violence will have longer-lasting consequences than the COVID-19 pandemic. As the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women recognises, the pandemic of gender-based violence preceded COVID-19 and will most likely outlast it (Šimonović, 2020).

Relevant UN Actions

UN Women focuses on six areas in its COVID-19 response:

- Prevention and awareness-raising
- Access to essential services, including helplines and shelters
- Violence against women in public spaces
- Online and ICT-facilitated violence against women and girls
- Support for rapid assessments and data collection
- The 'duty of care' of the private sector to support employees

During COVID-19, UN Women is working on prevention of violence and access to essential services, such as health, justice and policing, social services, helplines and coordination of these services, to provide support to those who have experienced and/or witnessed violence.
UN Women's response to COVID 19 includes policy advice and programmatic interventions. The response is part of the broader UN wide response. UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka issued a Call to Action to governments and other stakeholders on the need for response to the COVID-19 pandemic that takes gender perspectives into account. Subsequently, UN Women issued a ten-point checklist for Governments to guide a gender-sensitive response. We are working closely with UN partners to ensure a strong gender equality focus, particularly in the social and economic impact of the crisis. The UN Secretary-General has been a vocal proponent of the gender dimensions of this crisis. UN Women has led the development of the UN Policy Brief:

The impact of COVID-19 on Women, launched by the UN Secretary-General. This brief demonstrates how women and girls' lives are changing in the face of COVID-19 and outlines priority measures for the immediate response and longer-term recovery efforts. UN Women has played an integral role in the development of the report Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19.

UN Women is also working within a range of United Nations partners to ensure a strong gender lens on various aspects of the response. UN Women has contributed to a number of issues briefs, such as COVID-19 and Human Rights: We are all in this together. With ILO and UNICEF, UN Women has issued guidance on Family-friendly policies and other good workplace practices in the context of COVID-19: Key steps employers can take. UN Women and UNICEF have partnered to produce the brief: Promoting Positive Gender Roles in Marketing and Advertising. UN Women has created an array of policy guidance to inform its programmes and global advocacy. Notable among these is the policy brief specifically on violence against women COVID-19 and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls. UN Women is also making gender data widely available through a dedicated COVID-19 section in the Women Count Data Hub. UN Women has developed a response framework focusing on five priorities: 1. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is mitigated and reduced 2. Social protection and economic stimulus packages serve women and girls. 3. People support and practice the equal sharing of the burden of care. 4. Women and girls lead and participate in COVID-19 response planning and decision-making 5. Data and coordination mechanisms include gender perspectives.

Proposed Solutions

Support for women, workers and families with caring responsibilities

The large-scale closure of childcare facilities and schools now implemented in an increasing number of OECD countries is likely to cause considerable difficulty for many working parents, and for working mothers in particular, given gender disparities in care responsibilities (see Section 2.2). As has been well-documented (OECD, 2012[19]; OECD, 2017[60]), many women were

already working "double shifts" prior to the crisis; the closure of schools and childcare facilities is only compounding the difficulties many women face in balancing work and family. Moreover, a further complication is that grandparents, who are often relied on as informal care providers, are particularly vulnerable and are required to minimise close contact with others, notably with children. Without family networks to rely on, many working parents will have few options other than caring for their children at home.

Policy options to support women, workers, and families with caring responsibilities:

- Offering public childcare options to working parents in essential services, such as health care, public utilities and emergency services.
- Providing alternative public care arrangements.
- Offering direct financial support to workers who need to take leave.
- Giving financial subsidies to employers who provide workers with paid leave.
- Promoting flexible working arrangements that account for workers' family responsibilities.

Teleworking could provide a partial solution for some working parents, but teleworking full office hours can be very difficult if not impossible in practice, notably for families with young children, couples where only one partner can telework, and single parents. Moreover, not all workers have the option of telework. In general, workers in lower-skilled, lower-paid occupations in particular are less likely to be able to work from home (OECD, 2016[61]). In the specific context of COVID-19, many workers in essential services like public utilities and emergency services may also not be able to opt for teleworking options. And there are also concerns around the impact that mass teleworking might have on women's productivity. Women, on average, have less access, less exposure and less experience with digital technologies than men (OECD, 2019[62]), potentially putting them at a disadvantage when working remotely. Especially when coupled with their greater care responsibilities, women workers are likely to find it particularly difficult to work at full capacity through any period of sustained telework.

Many working parents may need to request leave from work. In the short term, they might be able to use statutory annual leave, although this often remains at the discretion of the employer. In the United Kingdom, for example, workers must provide their employers with notice before they take

leave, and employers can restrict and/or refuse to give leave at certain times. In the United States, at the national level, workers have no statutory entitlement to paid annual leave at all.

Parents' additional rights to take time off in the case of e.g. school/facility closure are often unclear. Almost all OECD countries provide employees with an entitlement to leave in order to care for ill or injured children or other dependents (OECD, 2020[26]). In some countries, parents have a right to leave in case of unforeseen closures (e.g. Poland and the Slovak Republic) or other "unforeseen emergencies" (e.g. Australia and the United Kingdom), which would likely include sudden school closure. Others (e.g. Austria, Germany) have recently clarified that existing emergency leave entitlements will apply in cases of school or childcare facility closure. However, these rights sometimes extend only as far as *unpaid* leave, with the decision to continue payment of salaries typically left to the employer. Many parents may be unable to afford taking unpaid leave for any length of time. Moreover, in some countries (e.g. Austria, Germany and the Slovak Republic), these leaves (or the right to payment during leave) are time-limited, while in others, it is unclear how long these rights would continue to apply.

Some countries have begun implementing emergency measures to help working parents in cases of closure of schools or childcare centres. In several countries where childcare facilities and schools have been closed (e.g. Austria, France, Germany and the Netherlands), some facilities remain open, with a skeleton staff, to look after children of essential service workers, notably in health and social care and teaching. In France, for example, childcare facilities for such families can host up to 10 children, and childminders working out of their homes may exceptionally receive up to 6 rather than 3 children. In the Netherlands, the list of essential occupations also includes public transport, food production, transport and distribution, transportation of fuels, waste management, the media, police and the armed forces and essential public authorities.

Countries are also offering financial support to help with the costs of alternative care arrangements. In Italy affected working parents with children below 12 have the possibility to take 15 days of leave, paid at 50% of the salary or unpaid for parents with children above 12. Alternatively, they can have a voucher of EUR 600 (EUR 1 000 for medical workers) for alternative care arrangements. This possibility is open to both employees and the self-employed.

France has stated that parents impacted by school closure and/or self-isolation will be entitled to paid sick leave if no alternative care or work (e.g. teleworking) arrangements can be found.

Portugal announced that parents with children below the age of 12 who cannot work from home and whose children are affected by school closures receive a benefit of two-thirds of their monthly baseline salary, paid in equal shares through employers and social security. Self-employed workers can claim one-third of their standard take-home pay.

A further measure is financial support to employers who provide workers with paid leave. In Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has announced a subsidy to firms that establish their own paid-leave systems for workers affected by school closures. Employers will be compensated for the continued payment of salaries while workers are on leave up to a limit of JPY 8 330 per person per day.

In the public sector, some countries are also expanding flexible working options to help parents juggle work and care. Ireland, for example, has introduced a host of flexible working opportunities for public sector employees, including teleworking, flexible shifts, staggered shifts, longer opening hours and weekend working. An innovative practice involves requiring employees to work in different roles or organisations on a temporary basis to effectively facilitate the flexible work options while allowing delivery of critical services.

Support for women, workers and families facing job loss

While the COVID-19 crisis will endanger the jobs and livelihoods of many sections of society, women's lower average incomes, lower average wealth, greater caring responsibilities and potential over-exposure to job loss means they are more likely than others to find themselves in vulnerable positions (Section 3). Rising economic insecurity is likely to have a particularly damaging effect on women, especially single mothers, as seen through the last recession in 2008. In this regard, policies that help maintain standards of living in cases of income loss are likely to be especially important for women.

Policy options to support women, workers and families facing job and income loss:

Extending access to unemployment benefit to non-standard workers.

Providing easier access to benefits targeted at low-income families, in particular single parents, who are predominantly female.

Considering one-off payments to affected workers.

Reviewing the content and/or timing of reforms restricting access to unemployment benefits that are already scheduled.

Helping economically insecure workers stay in their homes by suspending evictions and deferring mortgage and utility payments.

Unemployment benefits and related income supports are crucial for cushioning income losses. However, not all job losers have access to such support, which is especially problematic if health insurance is tied to employment or benefit receipt. Recent OECD analysis (2019[63]) shows that, prior to recent and forthcoming emergency reforms, access to income support varies substantially both between countries and within countries, with workers in non-standard forms of employment often significantly less well protected than workers in standard forms of employment.

Existing evidence for OECD countries suggests that working women are not generally any less well-covered by income support measures than working men. Indeed, 2015 data from the OECD Job Quality database suggests that, if anything, working women are often covered slightly better by unemployment insurance than men. However, this does not account for "hidden workers" in the informal economy, which is particularly common among workers in developing and emerging economies. These workers often enjoy little or no job-related social protection, and are particularly vulnerable to job loss.

Support for entrepreneurs and small-business owners

Public policy actions to support the self-employed and entrepreneurs during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic are focussed on providing financial support to increase the chances of

business survival. Surveys among SMEs in several OECD countries confirm that more than 50% of SMEs have already lost significant revenue and risk being out of business in less than three months (OECD, 2020[66]). In this context, a specific challenge that many women face is balancing work with increased responsibilities in the household, including childcare due to school closures. The consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic could be a significant number of business exits and a substantial loss of jobs since about one-quarter of self-employed women and one-third of self-employed men have employees (OECD/European Union, 2019[35]).

Policy options to support entrepreneurs and small-business owners:

Actively inform firms about how to reduce working hours, provide relief for workers, and manage redundancy payments related to temporary lay-offs and sickness Set up dedicated financial facilities to help small businesses address the short-term consequences of the outbreak – including e.g. temporary tax relief, dedicated loan programmes and direct financial support Ensure that the self-employed can access emergency financial measures, especially those who do not qualify for employment insurance.

Introduce mediation measures concerning procurement and payment delays.

Consider more forward-looking support measures to strengthen business resilience, e.g. training or mentoring programmes to help SMEs assess and manage the financial impact of the crisis, go digital or find new markets.

Ensure an inclusive public-private dialogue so that women business owners can voice their concerns and priorities when public policy reforms are being envisaged.

Support for victims of gender-based violence and access to justice

Public policies can help women who are trapped at home with their abusers. The recent high-level OECD conference on intimate partner violence (IPV) illustrated several policy measures that are especially important now to prevent and address an increase in IPV. These include:

Integrating service delivery across various spheres, including mental and physical health, housing, income support, and access to legal and justice resources, and involving multiple stakeholders – the public sector, the non-profit sector, and employers. This is especially important now as resources are constrained and organisations are moving towards more electronic communication – which presents its own challenges when women are trapped at home with abusers and face domestic obstacles to reporting.

Recommitting to collect better data, and regularly, as countries (even under normal circumstances) face serious challenges in gathering administrative and survey data to assess the incidence of violence. It is particularly important to collect and share during times of crisis so that governments and communities can learn from each other.

Adopting a "whole-of-government" approach to end IPV, so that all public agencies are engaged in this issue in a closely co-ordinated manner. For example, through an adequately resourced national strategy with clearly outlined roles and responsibilities, assessment indicators, and a risk-based approach towards emergency responses in times of crises.

Addressing the bottlenecks in justice pathways that continue to block survivors' access to justice. Pushing back on the social acceptance of such violence.

Policy options to support victims of gender-based violence:

Ensuring that service delivery for victims is integrated across relevant spheres – such as health, social services, education, employment, and justice – and that victims needs and safety are considered when moving towards more electronically-based modes of communication during the COVID-19 crisis.

Adopting a "whole-of-government" and risk-based approach to end IPV, so that all public agencies are engaged in this issue in a closely co-ordinated manner, and ensuring that timely access to justice remains intact or is strengthened during this period.

Pushing back on social acceptance of domestic violence, in part by drawing attention to how this issue affects women in confinement.

Gender impact assessments, gender budgeting and mainstreaming gender in (emergency) policy responses

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted immediate fiscal policy responses by governments to support spending needs in the health sector and mitigate economic effects. In addition to ensuring economic stabilisation and adequate support for men and women, where possible a gender lens should be incorporated in the design and implementation of emergency policy responses. To do so, governments benefit from having in place a well-functioning system of gender budgeting and gender impact assessments, ready access to quality sex-disaggregated data and gender indicators in all sectors, and skills and expertise on how to provide a swift response. However, this is often not the case in many countries, and in its absence, emergency responses to the COVID-19 outbreak can inadvertently exacerbate existing systemic gender inequalities.

Policy options to ensure policy responses account for gender:

Integrating gender impact assessment processes and tools in emergency management. This integration requires a well-functioning system of gender mainstreaming, ready access to gender-disaggregated evidence in all sectors, and technical skills.

Gender budgeting can help ensure that a gender perspective is applied to measures included in the fiscal stimulus package, and allow governments to understand the collective impact of the package on gender equality objectives.

Ensuring that all policy and structural adjustments to support sustainable recovery go through robust gender and intersectional analysis.

Stepping up measures to increase the role and numbers of women and women's agencies in decision-making processes, including around prevention and response to COVID-19.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer

How can governments raise awareness on the Shadow Pandemic?

What are the priority research gaps in relation to COVID-19 dynamics and Violence Against - Women?

What role does the educational system have in preventing rape culture and VAW in general?

Sources

- UN Women's Response to Covid-19 (2020) https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Brief-UN-Womens-response-to-COVID-19-en.pdf

AFDB (2015), *Women's Resilience: Integrating Gender in the Response to Ebola*, African Development Bank, Abidjan, https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/AfDB_Women_s_Resilience_-_Integrating_Gender_in_the_Response_to_Ebola.pdf.

Alon, T. et al. (2020), *The Impact of COVID-19 on Gender Equality*, Northwestern University, http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~mdo738/research/COVID19_Gender_March_2020.pdf.

Bandiera, O. et al. (2019), "The Economic Lives of Young Women in the Time of Ebola: Lessons from an Empowerment Program", *Impact Evaluation series*, No. WPS 8760, World Bank Group, Washington D.C., http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/452451551361923106/The-Economic-Lives-of-Young-Women-in-the-Time-of-Ebola-Lessons-from-an-Empowerment-Program.

Boniol, M. et al. (2019), "Gender equity in the health workforce: Analysis of 104 countries", *Health Workforce Working Paper*, No. 1, World Health Organization, http://apps.who.int/bookorders.

Brolin-Ribacke, K. et al. (2016), "Effects of the West Africa Ebola virus disease on health-care utilization: A systematic review", *Frontiers in Public Health*, Vol. 4/OCT, p. 222, http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/FPUBH.2016.00222.

Buratti, A., F. Cesaroni and A. Sentuti (2018), "Does Gender Matter in Strategies Adopted to Face the Economic Crisis? A Comparison Between Men and Women Entrepreneurs Provisional chapter Does Gender Matter in Strategies Adopted to Face the Economic Crisis? A Comparison Between Men and Women Entrepreneurs", in Mura, L. (ed.), *Entrepreneurship - Development Tendencies and Empirical Approach*, InTech, Rijeka, http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.70292.

CDC (2020), *Coronavirus Disease 2019: Pregnancy and Breastfeeding*, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html .

Chzhen, Y. (2014), "Child Poverty and Material Deprivation in the European Union During the Great Recession", *UNICEF Innocenti Office of Research Working Paper*, No. WP-2014-No. 06, UN, New York, https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/content/paper/899c7c48-en .

Davies, S. and B. Bennett (2016), "A gendered human rights analysis of Ebola and Zika: locating gender in global health emergencies", *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, pp. 1041-1060, http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1001312.

Doss, C. et al. (2014), "The Gender Asset and Wealth Gaps", *Development*, Vol. 57/3-4, pp. 400-409, http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/dev.2015.10.

Downs, J. et al. (2014), "Increasing Women in Leadership in Global Health", *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 89/8, pp. 1103-1107, http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000369.

Du, Q. (2020), "Chinese families see surge in domestic violence amid COVID-19 lockdown", *Global Times*, https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1182484.shtml .

ECFJA (2020), *COVID 19 within the approach of domestic violence and child abuse*, https://www.efjca.eu/covid-19-within-the-approach-of-domestic-violence-and-child-abuse .

ECLAC (2019), *Women's autonomy in changing economic scenarios*, https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45037/4/S1900722_en.pdf.

Equal Measures 2030 (2020), *Bending the Curve Towards Gender Equality by 2030*, Equal Measures 2030, https://data.em2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EM2030BendingTheCurveReportMarch2020-1.pdf.

Fasken Institute (2020), *COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS: Canadian Courts Significantly Restrict Services | Knowledge Fasken*, https://www.fasken.com/en/knowledge/2020/03/23-covid-19-canadian-courts-restrict-services/.

FIGO (2020), *COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Statement*, https://www.figo.org/news/covid-19-coronavirus-statement1 .

FWF (2020), *Covid-19 impact and responses: Bangladesh*, https://www.fairwear.org/covid-19-dossier/covid-19-guidance-for-production-countries/covid-19-impact-and-responses-bangladesh/ .

Guan, W. et al. (2020), "Clinical Characteristics of Coronavirus Disease 2019 in China", *New England Journal of Medicine*, p. NEJMoa2002032, http://dx.doi.org/10.1056/NEJMoa2002032.

ILO (2020), *COVID-19 and the world of work: Impact and policy responses*, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_738753.pdf .

ILO (2020), *ILOSTAT Database*, http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/.

ILO (2018), *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global snapshot*, International Labor Organization, Geneva.

ILO (2016), *Decent work for migrant domestic workers: Moving the agenda forward*, International Labor Organization, Geneva.

Islam Ishty, S. (2020), "'Your order has been cancelled': The Coronavirus impact on the RMG sector", *The Financial Express*, https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/views/views/your-order-has-been-cancelled-the-coronavirus-impact-on-the-rmg-sector-1584974682 .

ISSP (2018), *International Social Survey Programme: Work Orientation IV - ISSP 2015*, http://w.issp.org/menu-top/home/ .

La Moncloa (2020), *Igualdad impulsa un Plan de Contingencia contra la violencia de género ante la crisis del COVID-*

19, https://www.lamoncloa.gob.es/serviciosdeprensa/notasprensa/igualdad/Paginas/2020/170320-covid-viogen.aspx .

Le Monde (2020), *Confinement : les violences conjugales en hausse, un dispositif d'alerte mis en place dans les pharmacies*, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/03/27/confinement-un-dispositif-d-alerte-dans-les-pharmacies-pour-les-femmes-violentees_6034583_3224.html.

Menéndez, C. et al. (2015), *Ebola crisis: The unequal impact on women and children's health*, Elsevier Ltd, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(15)70009-4.

Munoz Boudet, A. et al. (2018), "Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition through the Life-cycle: A Global Perspective"*, Policy Research Working Paper*, No. 8360, World Bank, http://econ.worldbank.org.

Nkangu, M., O. Olatunde and S. Yaya (2017), "The perspective of gender on the Ebola virus using a risk management and population health framework: a scoping review", *Infectious Diseases of Poverty*, Vol. 6/1, p. 135, http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s40249-017-0346-7.

OECD (2020), *COVID-19 Policy Brief on Well-being and Inclusiveness*, http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/.

OECD (2020), *Covid-19: SME Policy Responses*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://oe.cd/CovidSME.

OECD (2020), *Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Database*, https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?datasetcode=CRS1.

OECD (2020), *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en.

OECD (2020), *OECD Employment Database*, http://www.oecd.org/employment/emp/onlineoecdemploymentdatabase.htm.

OECD (2020), *OECD Family Database*, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm.

OECD (2020), *OECD Income Distribution Database (IDD)*, http://www.oecd.org/social/income-distribution-database.htm

OECD (2020), "Putting finance to work for gender equality and women's empowerment: The way forward"*, OECD Development Policy Papers*, No. 25, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f0fa4d91-en.

OECD (2020), *Supporting people and companies to deal with the COVID-19 virus: Options for an immediate employment and social-policy response*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://oecd.dam-broadcast.com/pm_7379_119_119686-962r78x4do.pdf .

OECD (2020), *Tackling violence and harassment in textiles, clothing, leather and footwear: Implications of the new ILO Convention No. 190: Background Note to the OECD Garment Forum 2020*, OECD, http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/OECD-Garment-Forum-2020-Session-Note-Tackling-Violence-and-Harassment-in-Textiles-Clothing-Leather-and-Footwear.pdf (accessed on 1 April 2020).

OECD (2020), *Who Cares? Attracting and Retaining Care Workers for the Elderly*, OECD Health Policy Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/92c0ef68-en.

OECD (2019), *Government at a Glance 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/8ccf5c38-en.

OECD (2019), *Health at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/4dd50c09-en.

OECD (2019), *OECD DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance*, OECD, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-recommendation-on-ending-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.htm.

OECD (2019), *OECD Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9ee00155-en.

OECD (2019), *OECD Recommendation Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development*, OECD, Paris, https://www.oecd.org/gov/pcsd/oecd-recommendation-on-policy-coherence-for-sustainable-development.htm.

OECD (2019), *Part-time and Partly Equal: Gender and Work in the Netherlands*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/204235cf-en.

OECD (2019), *Pensions at a Glance 2019: OECD and G20 Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b6d3dcfc-en.

OECD (2019), *SIGI 2019 Global Report: Transforming Challenges into Opportunities*, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/bc56d212-en.

OECD (2019), *The Role of Education and Skills in Bridging the Digital Gender Divide: Evidence from APEC Economies*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://www.oecd.org/sti/education-and-skills-in-bridging-the-digital-gender-divide-evidence-from-apec.pdf.

OECD (2018), *Burkina Faso: SIGI country study*, OECD Publishing, https://www.genderindex.org/burkina-faso-country-study/.

OECD (2018), *Enhancing Social Inclusion in Latin America*, http://www.oecd.org/latin-america/regional-programme/Enhancing-Social-Inclusion-LAC.pdf.

OECD (2017), *Building an Inclusive Mexico: Policies and Good Governance for Gender Equality*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264265493-en.

OECD (2017), "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations: a review of donor support"*, OECD Development Policy Papers*, No. 8, OECD Publishing, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b75a1229-en.

OECD (2017), *Preventing Ageing Unequally*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279087-en.

OECD (2017), *The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en.

OECD (2017), *Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries. The Impact of Legal Frameworks in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264279322-en.

OECD (2016), *Be Flexible! Background brief on how workplace flexibility can help European employees to balance work and family*, http://www.oecd.org/els/family/Be-Flexible-Backgrounder-Workplace-Flexibility.pdf.

OECD/European Union (2019), *The Missing Entrepreneurs 2019: Policies for Inclusive Entrepreneurship*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/3ed84801-en.

OECD/ILO (2019), *Tackling Vulnerability in the Informal Economy*, Development Centre Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/939b7bcd-en.

UN Women (2020), *UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women.*

https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publ

ications/2020/Policy-brief-COVID-19-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf

UN Populations Fund (2020), Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending

Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage,

https://www.unfpa.org/resources/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-

gender-based-violence-female-genital

Topic B: Workplace violence against women

Statement of the Problem

Violence against women in the workplace is one of the most pressing areas of women's issues to address, considering the significant amount of time the average woman will spend in the workplace. For those who go into work, no matter what this looks like for them, violence can come in many forms – it is present in all jobs, all occupations, all sectors of the economy, and all countries[1].

Gender-based violence results from the unequal gender roles and power relations in our society. This is manifest in all walks of life – at home, in education, across institutions – but is compounded by the power hierarchy commonly found in formal workplaces. The unequal gender roles and power relations are rooted in, and reinforced by, social norms perpetuating harmful attitudes and discriminatory behaviours[2]. In many ways, the types of violence against women in the workplace is simply an extension of the violence they are vulnerable to in all aspects of life – though with more structural challenges to escape it.

A few typical types of gender-based violence, as given by UN Women, are domestic violence, which is committed by an intimate partner; femicide, the murder of a woman because she is a woman, which has its own associated risk factors; sexual violence, including harassment and rape; human trafficking, acquisition and exploitation; female genital mutilation; and child marriage. The violence itself may be economic, through making someone financially dependent; psychological, by intimidation or isolation; emotional, by undermining one's sense of self-worth or relationships;

[1] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work-en.pdf
[2] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/handbook-addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work

physical, as in using physical force; or sexual violence, which is forcing someone into a sex act without consent. Violence can also be online, and include cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting, or doxing – which may involve a number of the aforementioned types.

Workplace violence as it is commonly known tends to occur in a few different settings – physical violence, technological violence, as well as stalking (which may take workplace violence from the workplace into one's personal life). As well as this, violence can occur in more broadly work-related settings, such as during work-related events, travel to and from work or in employer-provided accommodation[3].

Amongst all of these settings, there are certain associated factors that signify increased risk for workers. For example, work with third parties, such as doctors with patients, customer service with clients, or shop staff with customers, is often seen as more dangerous. According to the European Public Service Union in 2013, up to 42 per cent of workers working in direct contact with the public, many of whom are women, experience third-party violence.

One of the key features distinguishing workplace violence against women from other locations or types is that workers are often more reluctant to complain and fight for better situations. In general, only 40% of women seek any help after experiencing violence[4]. When it comes from a place or people they are reliant on for economic survival, this may be even less likely. One possible reason contributing to this is an ineffective system of reporting and punishing – mirroring the overall standard of women not reporting sexual harassment under the expectation that justice will not be served, or at least not quickly and without further harm.

[3] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/handbook-addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work
[4] https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women

Moreover, when a woman faces violence in a workplace that is actively or passively hostile to women, her usual methods of recourse in the Human Resources officers or her bosses may be unwilling or actively against any attempts to prevent it from happening again. This is especially possible if the violent incident involves a higher-up directly – which is more likely to be coercive given the inherent power balance. In this case, contract clauses to force arbitration rather than the full legal recourse, or 'gag orders' (coercive confidentiality agreements) may also be utilised against the victim, adding to the psychological harm of their trauma since they are unable to speak out[5].

It is worth also noting that gender-based violence is a term also used for violence against LGBTQI+ people, particularly when they are attacked for perceived slights against gender-based norms. For example, attacks on transgender women is a distinct and important consideration when thinking of violence against women.

Clearly, this is not a problem faced by all women. There are significant lifestyle differences between women who work in a formal workplace, whether this is self-employed or through an employer, and those who do not work. Granting those who wish to work in the workplace the resources and opportunities to do so, as well as ensuring there are not structural obstacles to them being there – such as a culture of violence – is vital.

In another view of the topic – not only does tamping down on workplace violence significantly improve women's quality of life, it also provides numerous benefits for the employer if tackled efficiently. Improved physical and mental health means fewer days taken off on sick leave. Better workplace relations and experiences improves opinions and reputation of the company, allowing them to both attract and retain key workers. Most importantly, worker productivity is substantially improved by providing a safe and responsible working environment for employees[6]. As such, it is in employers' larger interests to tackle issues of violence in the workplace.

---

[5] https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work-en.pdf
[6] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/handbook-addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work

History of the Problem

From a historical basis, women have often been in the informal workplace. For most of agricultural history, physical labour – such as grinding grain, drawing and carrying water, gathering wood, and churning butter - was given to both men and women, with the only respite being around labour[7]. However, this was in a way a form of self-employment, or employment within the family, and is therefore not typically considered in the purview of the workplace. Domestic violence is the key factor to be considered here when it comes to violence women in this period faced in and around work.

The beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the mid-eighteenth century signalled a change in the status of women as workers, particularly in Britain. Many women initially began work in factories, just as the men did – families working together in factories was not uncommon. However, a shift had begun in the locus of work, moving from home to factory. With the home still the centre of family life, but no longer the centre of production, larger differentiations began to form between men and women in the workplace.

In the mid-19th century, this change had been solidified with men being seen as the "good provider", the sole wage earner, and women being expected to manage household tasks. This is partly due to protests against the harsh treatments of women and children in factories – women, notably, held a different position to men in this because of their important role in childbearing. This meant legislation, once more notably in Britain, imposed limits on the working hours of women and prohibitions on them entering certain dangerous occupations, encouraging them more broadly to stay at home while men went out to work.

---

[7] https://www.britannica.com/topic/history-of-work-organization-648000/Women-in-the-workforce

The invention and propagation of labour-saving household electrical devices, such as vacuum cleaners, freed women from some of the day-to-day tasks they were expected to complete in the beginning of 20th century. Moreover, there was an increasing demand for jobs in the growing public education, industrial and commercial fields – particularly for teaching and clerical tasks. While men had traditionally held these roles, employers were now discovering women could do these tasks and be paid less – on the expected basis that a man would need to be providing for his whole family with the payment, whereas a woman would not. Women entering the workforce at this time were often single and without families to support. There were also women working in roles related to traditional household work – such as seamstresses in the burgeoning ready-made clothing industry. By this time, some occupations such as office work and nursing, were seen as traditionally female.

The World Wars saw some of the greatest shifts in women in the workforce. Particularly in World War II, women were required to step up to many of the jobs traditionally held by men, such as manufacturing, when they were enlisted in military service. However, this did not have the lasting effect many hoped for – after the war, women were encouraged to return to housekeeping or traditionally female occupations.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the final shift began once more. Married women began joining the workforce in larger numbers. Additionally, divisions of female and male occupations largely ended, though certain social ideas about them continue into the present idea, which is partly responsible for existing gender pay gaps. This is primarily due to continued improvements in technology, which allowed most tasks that classically required physical exertion, into technology and skill-based jobs, such as operating a bulldozer. This technological rationality allowed for new opportunities and availabilities for women in traditionally male occupations, especially in highly industrialised countries, though this change is occurring with slow progress.

The historical discussion of what it means to be a housewife, and whether this is work, also plays into discussions of what the workplace is to a woman. Amidst debates over whether unpaid household roles, such as cooking, cleaning and childcare, should be considered as 'work', we must consider whether violence at the home, such as domestic violence, should come under workplace violence. As suggested, even when women were doing non-personal economic activities, such as working in the fields to sell later in the market, their centre was the home – similarly to that of men at the time. The argument against this premiss is usually that unpaid roles are more difficult to measure, as is the relation of domestic violence to work women do.

Finding a history of workplace violence is slightly more complicated. For example, in America, the topic rose to prominence only in the 1980s, after a part-time letter carrier killed 14 people, and then proceeded to kill himself[8]. In the 1990s, OSHA and some state-level programs tracked employees facing violence in the workplace, though still without detail.

Current Situation

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated many types of gender-based violence, since mobility was restricted for many and socioeconomic instability has increased. The former trapped some women at home with their abusers and prevented them from contact with necessary support systems. The latter further limited the ability to leave, and lead to increased risk of societal issues such as child marriage and human trafficking[9].

Moreover, it also problematised how we think of preventing and spotting gender-based violence. With fewer women going into a physical workspace, sexual harassment from employees and other physical-based workplace violence were expected to decrease.

---

[8] https://bizfluent.com/about-6361885-history-workplace-violence.html

[9] https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwpqCZBhAbEiwAa7pXeTVAM8xtSZ1WfeIqLLMsOONw1ePaqrLVUVgrVpte1xxFr450dZUCrBoC8xwQAvD_BwE

In contrast to this, we have seen a significant rise in work from home set-ups, and this has extended to women. While this means there are fewer elements of their workplace in day-to-day life, it has its own downsides. Increased internet use allows for an increase in online harassment, which is still regulated less severely than physical harassment in many countries. This is multi-faceted as it can take place anonymously, on public social media, or even on messaging services provided for employees of companies.

Additionally, it puts women into contact with their household unit more, with less of an option of recourse to other people. Though this is not classed as workplace violence in the traditional sense of the word, it is worth considering how the increase in work from home setups across the world means that the violence women face at home due to increased time sent there will have to be reconsidered. Those who will be particularly isolated are older women, especially those with less familiarity with internet usage, as well as those with less reliable internet access. As such they will likely suffer more and should be emphasised in solutions.

One specific element of the current situation to be considered is how leaders and politicians have received much criticism over their handling of the pandemic – particularly relevant here is the criticisms of women leaders. There is a discussion to be had here of to what extent putting oneself forward as a political figure warrants discussion of your policies under freedom of speech – but past that, many women leaders had received threats and faced harassment[10]. This is something that has seen both online and offline. Apart from preventing these leaders from their duties, this disregards their fundamental rights to be treated with dignity.

There are a few relevant ways that UN Women has been attempting to create safety and protection for women against these issues. They created the COVID-19 effect on gender-based violence via

---

[10] https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwpqCZBhAbEiwAa7pXeTVAM8xtSZ1WfeIqLLMsOONw1ePaqrLVUVgrVpte1xxFr450dZUCrBoC8xwQAvD_BwE

Rapid Gender Assessment Surveys (RGA) in 13 countries[11]. They also work to improve access to shelters, women's organisations, justice and policing, social services, helplines, and other essential services across the world[12]. As for information dispersal, they partner with technology companies such as Google to give life-saving information to domestic violence survivors. This is in addition to driving the passage of 28 measures across 20 countries[13].

They also provide recommendations for governmental policy. This includes increasing resources for hotlines and shelters; public awareness campaign, particularly when aimed at men and boys, the likely perpetrators; funding women's organisations; improving women's access to long-term income; and improving accessibility of information and communication channels for those with disabilities, the elderly, and those with IT issues[14].

Relevant UN Actions

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on 18 December 1979[15]. It entered into force in 1981, as the culmination of over 30 years of work by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Its primary focus is bringing women into the forefront of human rights issues, and such can be read as an international bill of women's rights. In article 1, it defines "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex...in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field".

---

[11] https://wrd.unwomen.org/index.php/practice/listing-toolbox/rapid-gender-assessment-surveys-impacts-covid-19-guidance-document
[12] https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwpqCZBhAbEiwAa7pXeTVAM8xtSZ1WfeIqLLMsOONw1ePaqrLVUVgrVpte1xxFr450dZUCrBoC8xwQAvD_BwE
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid
[15] https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women

Furthermore, it serves as an agenda for countries to follow in order to achieve the rights required. It requires States Parties to take "all appropriate measures, including legislation" to guarantee them rights and freedoms as equal with men. Of these guarantees, Article 11 affirms women's rights to non-discrimination in employment, specifically emphasising the plight of rural women whose struggles may need specific policy attention.

Some specific concerns involved in workplace violence against women are addressed too. Article 6 instructs States Parties to suppress the trafficking of women, and the exploitation of their prostitution. Article 11.f instructs the right to protection of health and safety in workplace conditions, though with a focus on adequate maternity leave and care, rather than specifically against violence. Articles 17 and 18 establish a Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, with the intention of it reviewing States Parties reports on the measures they are taking.

Moreover, the Convention emphasises how culture and tradition can restrict rights. States Parties are, in this way, encouraged to work to change patterns of individual conduct to eliminate prejudices that stereotype or imply power imbalances for the genders. For example, Article 10.c focuses on revising educational material to eliminate stereotypes on this basis.

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

The UN General Assembly adopted this Declaration in 1993[16]. It focuses on early education, maintaining respect in relationships, and working with men and boys to prevent violence. This is relevant since prevention is still shown to be the most cost-effective, long-term way to end violence.

---

[16] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/179739?ln=en

Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Initiative

This is a UN Women global initiative that began implementation in 2011[17]. It has worked to prevent and respond to sexual harassment against women and girls in public spaces. It began in the cities of Quito (Ecuador), Cairo (Egypt), New Delhi (India), Port Moresby (Papua New Guinea), and Kigali (Rwanda).

The Spotlight Initiative

The UN and the European Union have been collaborating on this initiative, worth EUR 500 million, since 2017[18]. This is in keeping with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development goal of ending violence against women and girls. It is designed to deploy targeted large-scale investment towards ending violence in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific.

Bloc Positions

This issue is relatively uncontroversial in and of itself. For example, 140 countries have legislation on sexual harassment in the workplace (World Bank 2020), and 189 states have ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Largely the issue is whether countries are willing to prioritise it, and whether they agree with the cultural factors that in many ways can lead to it. The former can be seen primarily in their ratification of relevant treaties. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women had Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Tonga and the Holy See as non-signatory states, and Palau and the U.S. as those who had signed but not ratified.

As for cultural factors – while this is far more difficult to measure, imposition of the law in the modern day can usually track it. For example, Iran (a non-signatory to the aforementioned Convention) has a culture of discrimination against women under Taliban rule, which can be

---

[17] https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/10/safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-global-results-report
[18] https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/spotlight-initiative

tracked through cases of women being arrested or killed for not covering themselves modestly enough[19]. On a similar note, France and five other European countries have a national ban on either the Muslim headscarf or face veil[20]. This idea of reducing bodily autonomy contributes to of a culture of shaming and social inferiority of women.

However, it is worth noting that many underlying factors and the absence of smaller elements of support can lead to violence against women, and therefore it is present in many countries with seemingly robust preventative measures. As a case study, we can take the United Kingdom, which has taken substantial measures, especially through non-state parties such as unions. For example, the United Kingdom Trades Union Congress (TUC) has a Gender Sensitivity Checklist for OSH representatives, ensuring they are sensitive to violence in the workplace[21]. Similarly, the UK National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers designed a campaign to tackle prejudice-related bullying[22].

Despite these elements of progress in unions, a poll carried out by Care International found that found that in the United Kingdom, 36% of 25-34 year-olds responded that responded that "it is sometimes or always acceptable to pinch a colleague's bottom in jest"[23]. Surveys carried out in the UK and eight other countries suggested that an average of one-third of workers, mostly women, experienced domestic violence at some point; about 50% of these reported that they felt their job performance was affected[24]. Moreover, the UK Parliament, while discussing possible measures on the issue, found that in 2018, there was a strong culture of silence in the workplace, created by confidentiality clauses and non-disclosure agreements.

---

[19] https://uk.news.yahoo.com/death-woman-arrested-not-wearing-203620685.html
[20] https://qz.com/1264206/where-are-headscarves-and-face-veils-banned-in-europe/
[21] https://www.tuc.org.uk/resource/gender-checklist-occupational-safety-and-health
[22] https://www.endvawnow.org/es/articles/1964-women-health-and-education-workers-.html
[23] https://www.care.org/newsroom/press/press-releases/new-global-poll-significant-share-men-believe-expecting-intimate
[24] http://dvatworknet.org/research/national-surveys

This example shows what is relevant about bloc positions: no countries have currently managed to tackle violence against women on all fronts. That would include provisions for changing workplace and societal cultures, removing obstacles to speaking out, and involving women's organisations, trade unions and more.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer

These are questions that can lead debate to fruitful areas – though a good resolution would likely go even further.

- What should be considered under workplace violence? Is it workplace violence if it takes occurs in or by some work-related aspect? Does this mean domestic violence should be considered as workplace violence for those who work from home?

- What powers should employers and the government have over monitoring harassment? If this would include cameras in workplaces and monitoring on company-based social media, would such a legislation face other issues?

- How can we prevent a scenario where a woman faces violence in the workplace and is hushed up by higher ups?

- Can the proposed solution work without women having to speak out, if they fear risking their own careers? If not, what protections are necessary to encourage them to speak out?

- How would workplace sexual harassment be looked at differently, considering many judicial systems still fail to gain justice for rape victims across the world?

- How is it possible to prevent both threats of violence, and allegations of violence, from being used as a career-building tool?

- How can resolutions be proposed to not just deal adequately with workplace violence when it occurs, but also to deal with the culture allowing it to happen, to prevent further cases?

Suggestions for Further Reading

The history and purposes of UN women as a United Nations organisation are listed here:

https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2013/07/un-women-the-united-nations-entity-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women/; https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women

For definitions of several key terms, as well as a general idea of what UN Women does as an organisation, this list is useful: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/types-of-violence

The UN handbook on violence and harassment against women in the work world is a good starting point to understand the problem, its effects, as well as to gain a preliminary understanding of what some proposed measures are: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/handbook-addressing-violence-and-harassment-against-women-in-the-world-of-work

For an overview of the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, this UN Women report is helpful: https://www.unwomen.org/en/hq-complex-page/covid-19-rebuilding-for-resilience/gender-based-violence?gclid=CjwKCAjwpqCZBhAbEiwAa7pXeTVAM8xtSZ1WfeIqLLMsOONw1ePaqrLVUVgrVpte1xxFr450dZUCrB0C8xwQAvD_BwE

The UN women provides useful reports on statistics of violence against women and girls: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures

To research the idea of the safe public spaces initiative, try this: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/creating-safe-public-spaces