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UN Women/Dieynaba Niabaly

Policy Brief

8 KEY INTERVENTIONS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Women West and Central Africa Regional Office

The COVID-19 pandemic is impacting women and men differently. Gender inequalities are typically worsened by crises and the coronavirus context is no different as women are hit harder by the effects of COVID-19. Women make up 70% of the world's health sector[1], bear the responsibility of unpaid care work, and are likely to face increased levels of violence against women and girls.

This brief highlights 8 keys interventions to be considered in West and Central Africa by all sectors of society, from governments to international organizations and to civil society organizations in order to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, at the onset, during, and after the public health crisis. It also considers the economic impact of the pandemic and its implications for violence against women and girls in the long-term.

8 KEY INTERVENTIONS

1 Strengthening Multi-Sectoral Response Mechanisms adopting a 'survivor centered approach' is significant for ensuring efficient and timely life-saving care and support for women survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. Ensure and avail the technology and innovation to maintain women's access to essential services. The Government, CSOs, CBOs, Faith based, community leaders and youth play an important role in community awareness and access to services and to ensure that access to essential services for women is a priority and cannot be compromised during COVID-19.

2 Advocacy on Survivor Centered Approach: The survivor-centered approach will help to ensure effective access to information, legal, health, psychological, and livelihoods services, including basic exposure to economic opportunities. The survivor-centered approach applies the human rights-based approach to designing, developing and implementing programming that ensures women survivors' rights, needs, and wishes are first and foremost during the COVID-19 Prevention and Response Process.

3 Access to information and 24x7 Services through HOTLINE/CHAT/SMS Services: To overcome the situations where the abusive spouse and family at home, the victim/survivor lack the privacy to reach the voice hotline, service providers to ensure access to "SMS" and "Chat Services" for effective reporting and prevention. Accordingly, upscale and upgrade the 24x7 GBV hotlines with chat and messaging facilities. Provide onsite and online training and support to organizations operating 24x7 hotline, helpline, shelters, safe houses, quarantine facilities, psycho-social support and livelihoods support services specifically on measures to prevent COVID within shelters and provision of referral and other services using innovation and technology.

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4 Access to Protection & Legal Services: Safety and security of the GBV survivors/victims and family members should not be compromised in any circumstances. The prosecution of GBV offenders is an essential step towards GBV prevention and response. Thus, the law enforcement and justice sectors should prioritize on victim/survivor protection and encourage initiatives towards bringing the perpetrators to justice through innovation and introduction of online court proceedings where needed.

5 Access to Health & Psycho-social Services, which are extremely important and essential in COVID/SGBV cases. A multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted in provision of health and psycho-social services to women through virtual and in cases requiring emergency through physical access including facilitation of transport, safety and timely support adopting a survivor centered approach. Care givers including medical and non-medical staff spending lots of hours caring and treating patients need support to deal with stress they are going through. There is urgent need for support mechanisms for these group of people.

6 Focus on violence at community level-With reported community infections, it is imperative that stakeholders may focus their efforts at community-based mitigation of gender-based violence cases. Amid COVID-19 priorities the government and other stakeholders need to ensure that reporting, enforcement and accountability mechanisms related to S/GBV are effective and offers meaningful solutions to women at community level.

7 Promote Livelihood and Economic Opportunities for GBV Survivors: Integration of survivors in vocational training and livelihood programmes run by shelters, home based work and other accessible institutions/online helps immensely in addressing the immediate needs of the population through manufacture of sanitizers, masks, gloves, aprons and other products as well as contribute to economic

8 Engage and advocate with private sector in supporting the provision of quality life-saving care for effective COVID-19 prevention including making available free and at subsidized prices the protective equipment such as sanitizers, gloves, masks etc. Also advocate with government, development partners and private sector for providing support to GBV survivors through provision of well-equipped shelters, safe houses and referral services.

UN WOMEN RESPONSE IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA REGION

EVAW quick impact assessment: Through our 'Women Count' programme, rapid gender assessment will be roll out in Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and will provide quick results and comparable data on how COVID-19 is affecting provision of support to women (e.g. financial, human resources, nature and mode of support) and the trend in number of reports/calls related to VAWG from police, shelters and/or helplines, etc. In Sierra Leone, UN WOMEN provides technical support in identifying the gendered impact of COVID-19 on Women living with HIV Aids including Gender based violence.



Gender-responsive and locally relevant responses to COVID-19 and violence against women and girls: UN WOMEN leads advocacy to ensure gender data and analyses are integrated into COVID-19 response plans, budgets and action. In Nigeria, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic UN Women is providing technical expertise and assistance to government and key responders to better understand the gendered and intersectional considerations and elements of COVID-19.



Increase of knowledge and awareness-support for community mobilization: With the support of civil society organization, media, UN Women in Central Africa Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, Liberia are contributing to mass media sensitization on COVID-19. In Nigeria and Cameroon, UN WOMEN is providing support to the Ministry of Women Affairs to produce radio broadcasts in local languages on COVID.



Access to essential services: Under Spotlight initiative, MUSKOKA, UBRAF and other related EAW programmes, UN WOMEN works in Cameroon, CAR, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal to provide protective equipment (masks, hydro alcoholic solution, soap, etc.) to vulnerable women/survivors/ WLWHIV. Nigeria is supporting women shelters to prevent and respond to the outbreak and produce guidance and reference for women's victims of violence to access multi-sectoral services. The CO is also working on updating referral pathways and service delivery protocols. In Cameroon, CAR, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal, UN Women is strengthening access to essential and quality services for women survivors of violence during the pandemic by building the capacities of national partners and updating the referral mechanisms.



Promote Livelihood and Economic Opportunities for women/GBV Survivors: UN WOMEN provide support women in producing masks in Cameroon, Niger, and other basic protective equipment to slow down COVID and provide income to women, especially those in vulnerable situations in the informal economy. In Senegal, UN Women has reallocated USD 173,000 from the climate-resilient agriculture programme to purchase rice from participating women producers. The rice purchased will be used for the COVID19 response, which includes the Government providing basic necessities to vulnerable families receiving monthly cash transfers. In Mali, UN Women is procuring goods from women-owned enterprises and cooperatives supported by its programmes to prepare survival kits to be distributed to the most vulnerable (an estimate USD 200,000).

