



# 75 Years of Uniting Nations: Overcoming Conflict to Achieve Common Goals

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United Nations Commission on the Status of  
Women

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# Word of Welcome

Dear Delegates,

We hereby welcome you to BIMUN/SINUB 2020 and our committee, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

2020 has not been an easy year. From the conflict between Iran and the USA, the Australian bushfires and the eruption of the Taal volcano to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, the world is in ever more need of global collaboration. Coincidentally, 2020 also marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations.

We are therefore excited to welcome you to this 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the annual Bonn International Model United Nations Conference (BIMUN/SINUB), with as theme: 75 years of Uniting Nations: Overcoming Conflicts to Achieve Common Goals.

Since the founding of the UN, the world has become a safer and more equal place. There still remain many challenges however. Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic threaten the progress made, with nations folding back on themselves, hoarding resources and assigning blame to each other. But crises also offer opportunities to reflect, share best practices and think about how to do better in the future.

We are convinced you will embody this cooperative spirit while debating about our topic: Gender-based domestic violence: a shadow pandemic. While we cannot be physically together, we hope you will still enjoy the conference. We know we will.

Good luck with your preparations!

Best wishes from your chairs,

Sara, Mariana & Nick

# Committee Overview

## History of the Committee

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW), became a full-fledged UN Commission under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 21 June 1946, after having been a Subcommission of the Council on Human Rights for about five months.<sup>1</sup>

From its founding onward, the CSW has dedicated itself to setting standards and drafting international conventions. One of the first main accomplishments of the CSW was introducing inclusive language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for example rejecting the use of “men” as a synonym for humanity.<sup>2</sup> The Commission also defended *inter alia* women’s political rights (Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1952), women’s safety (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979), and equal economic opportunities for women (the ILO’s Convention on Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, 1951).

In 1975, the CSW organised the World Conference of the International Women’s Year, which took place in Mexico City. 1976-1985 became, at the suggestion of the CSW, the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. Three more World Conferences followed: one in Copenhagen in 1980, another one in Nairobi in 1985, followed by the most influential to date: the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, where the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action was unanimously adopted by 189 countries. The Beijing Declaration is the most comprehensive set of commitments to advance women’s rights to date and marked a turning point in the global policy for women’s empowerment. The CSW plays a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration, evaluating the progress made every five years.

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<sup>1</sup> Hannan, Iiyambo and Brautigam 2019

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## Membership

Forty-five Member States of the United Nations serve as members of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) at any one time. The Commission consists of one representative from each of the 45 Member States elected by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution (13 members from Africa, 11 from Asia, 9 from Latin America and Caribbean, 8 from Western Europe and other States and 4 from Eastern Europe). Members are elected for a period of four years mandate.

The current members of the Commission are the following:

Algeria	Armenia	Australia	Bahrain	Bangladesh
Belarus	Brazil	Canada	Chile	China
Colombia	Comoros	Congo	Cuba	Denmark
Ecuador	Equatorial Guinea	Estonia	Germany	Ghana
Haiti	Iraq	Ireland	Israel	Japan
Kenya	Malaysia	Mexico	Mongolia	Namibia
Nicaragua	Niger	Peru	Philippines	Republic of Korea
Russian Federation	Saudi Arabia	Senegal	Somalia	South Africa
Switzerland	Togo	Tunisia	Turkmenistan	United States

It is important to highlight that on April 2017, the United Nations elected **Saudi Arabia** to serve on the **UN Commission on the Status of Women**, a body “*dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.*” The election was by secret ballot and the country elected will serve for a four-year term. Like all other members, it will have one vote when it comes to any resolutions emanating from the

session. Although this has been criticised because of Saudi Arabia’s treatment of women, the UN has justified its decision by saying it matters precisely “because it is inclusive, because it seeks to involve all states in a dialogue about human rights laws and norms, and because it aims to raise standards through engagement and support, as well as through challenge and censure”<sup>3</sup>.

## Mandate and Funding

The CSW is one of the 9 functional commissions of ECOSOC<sup>4</sup>. The goal of a functional commission is to facilitate intergovernmental discussions of major global issues at the highest level. For the CSW of course, these issues have to do with the rights of women.

The mandate of the CSW was expanded by ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6. The main missions of our committee are to monitor and review the progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to ensure support for mainstreaming a gender perspective within the UN system. It is also the task of the CSW to identify emerging issues and trends in the field of women’s rights and to make recommendations to tackle these issues.<sup>5</sup>

Under the current methods of work, established by ECOSOC resolution 2015/6, the CSW annually organises a discussion, including a ministerial segment to ensure visibility at the highest level. During the annual session, one aspect of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is reviewed and another theme is discussed as a priority theme. These themes are decided upon in multi-year programmes of work, which get adopted through resolutions.<sup>6</sup> The themes for 2021-2024 were agreed upon in ECOSOC resolution 2020/15.

The outcome of the discussions on the priority take the form of ‘agreed conclusions’. This document contains all the recommendations and measures to tackle the issues and accelerate the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and is the result of

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<sup>3</sup> UN briefings: Saudi Arabia and the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2017). Available at: <https://www.una.org.uk/news/un-briefings-saudi-arabia-and-un-commission-status-women>.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC). <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/content/subsidiary-bodies-ecosoc>

<sup>5</sup> ECOSOC (1996). Resolutions and Decisions of the Economic and Social Committee. <https://undocs.org/en/E/1996/96>

<sup>6</sup> UN WOMEN. Commission on the Status of Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

negotiations between the Member States, experts and other relevant stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> The outcome of the discussion on the review theme takes the form of a summary, made by the Chair of the Commission in collaboration with the Board.

The CSW greatly values the input of NGO's and therefore encourages them to participate as much as possible in the work of the Commission. NGO's can for example make statements during the annual session and organize panels, side events and interactive discussions.<sup>8</sup>

As a functional commission of ECOSOC, the CSW receives its funding through the contributions of all UN Member States. In the case of campaigns or other initiatives carried out by for example the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA), the funding is voluntary and can come from governments, financial institutions or other organizations.

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<sup>7</sup> ECOSOC (2015) [Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Committee on 8 June 2015. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on the Status of Women.](https://undocs.org/E/RES/2015/6)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

# Domestic Gender–Based Violence: a Shadow Pandemic

## Background

### General historical context

Since the pandemic started in March, the amount of Gender Based Violence (GBV) has gradually increased because of the lockdowns worldwide. Many governments have given statements and are providing solutions to try and better the living situation for many women and girls throughout the world. Examples of this are Canada, that is keeping its domestic violence shelters open and as part of their economic recovery fund, they will give a percentage (\$50 million) to support shelters. In Spain, in the Canary Islands, women can alert pharmacies with the code ‘Mask-19’ and they will contact the police for them. In Colombia, the government has issued a decree to guarantee legal advice, psychosocial support, police and justice services virtually.<sup>9</sup>

GBV is also an economic issue, with broader costs associated with support for the victims, as well as the costs related to criminal justice. “Research indicates that the cost of violence against women could amount to around 2 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP). This is equivalent to 1.5 trillion”<sup>10</sup>. COVID-19 has had a big economic impact worldwide resulting *inter alia* from the sudden closure of businesses. Taking into account the rise in the cases of violence against women and girls, this will not only exacerbate the economic impact of the pandemic, but also will slow down the economic recovery.<sup>11</sup> The most vulnerable group of women, such as women part of an ethnic minority or members of the LGBTQ+ community, have higher risk of violence due to the socio-economic inequalities and escalating financial strain. Women disproportionately work in less stable, or secure employment, with little or no income, and no form of social protection, which not only makes them less protected for an economic recession, but also makes it harder for them to escape their abusers.

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<sup>9</sup> UN WOMEN (2020). COVID and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, p.6

<sup>10</sup> UN WOMEN (2016). The economic costs of violence against women.

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

<sup>11</sup> UN WOMEN (2020)

## Definitions

### **Gender Based Violence (GBV):**

Is violence against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience GBV, but the vast majority of victims are women and girls. “GBV undermines the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, yet it remains shrouded in a culture of silence. Victims of violence can suffer sexual and reproductive health consequences, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, traumatic fistula, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and even death”<sup>12</sup> This problem affects 1 in 3 women in their lifetime. Globally 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to violence (physical, psychological and sexual) by their intimate partner in the past 12 months.<sup>13</sup>

This issue knows no social or economic boundaries and it affects women and girls all over the world, that is why this issue needs to be addressed in both developed and developing countries.

### **COVID-19 Pandemic:**

An ongoing global pandemic of COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease), caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).<sup>14</sup> The outbreak was first identified in the Chinese city of Wuhan in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health emergency in January 2020 and by March 2020 it was declared a pandemic. Authorities worldwide have responded by implementing measures such as lockdown, travel restrictions and facilities closure.

### **Shadow Pandemic:**

Pre-pandemic social and cultural norms, gender inequalities plus economic and social stress caused GBV. This, coupled with movement restrictions and social isolation measures, have led to an exponential increase in GBV. Many women and girls are in ‘lockdown situation’ with their abuser, while also being cut off from normal support services, such as helplines or police support.<sup>15</sup> Increased cases of domestic violence have been reported in more than 9 countries worldwide, requesting emergency shelter or some

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations Population Fund, Gender Based Violence, <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-based-violence>

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Programme Brief: Gender-Based Violence and COVID-19, p.1

<sup>14</sup> World Health Organization (2020). Naming the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the virus that causes it. [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/naming-the-coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-and-the-virus-that-causes-it)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.3

kind of immediate support. The numbers are more likely to keep rising due to the increase of security, health and economic worries, creating tension accompanied by the uncertainty the pandemic has caused. As all these issues are worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Executive Director of UN Women, called attention to this issue and warned the world that “we see a shadow pandemic growing, of violence against women”.<sup>16</sup>

### Most recent developments

Gender-based violence has been shown to increase during global emergencies. During the Ebola crisis in 2013-2016, for example, women were at higher risk of exploitation and sexual violence.<sup>17</sup> In a newly published paper, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health researchers write that early evidence suggests the same for the COVID-19 pandemic.

Early results from China suggested already that domestic violence had dramatically increased since the beginning of lockdown in many societies. For example, a police station in China’s Hubei Province recorded a tripling of domestic violence reports in February 2020 during the COVID-19 quarantine<sup>18</sup>. Other reports suggest that police have been reluctant to detain perpetrators due to COVID-19 outbreaks in prisons.

In other countries, the number of calls to helplines does not increase but rather drops, as women encounter difficulties in reaching out during the lockdown, as they may be watched by their perpetrator or other family members. In Italy and France, helplines and women’s shelters networks reported receiving fewer calls.<sup>19</sup>

According to the paper of Columbia University, women around the world perform three-quarters of unpaid care work, including household disease prevention and care for sick relatives, and there is not a country in the world where men provide an equal

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<sup>16</sup>Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka (2020) <[https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic?gclid=CjwKCAjwzIH7BRAbEiwAoDxxTqEh1jknMjXCebDcB1yZo4XC05zEUJXRCvuGw\\_2w\\_KZPuLqa\\_olWThoC4bYQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic?gclid=CjwKCAjwzIH7BRAbEiwAoDxxTqEh1jknMjXCebDcB1yZo4XC05zEUJXRCvuGw_2w_KZPuLqa_olWThoC4bYQAvD_BwE)>

<sup>17</sup> UNGA A/70/723. *Protecting Humanity from Future Health Crises: Report of the High Level Panel on the Global Response to Health Crises*; UNICEF Helpdesk

<sup>18</sup> CASEY, S., CARINO, G. (2020): *Gender-based violence in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/gender-based-violence-covid-19-pandemic>>.

<sup>19</sup> UN WOMEN (2020) *COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls*. Available at : <https://www.unwomen.org//media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>

share of unpaid care work. In China's Hubei province 90 percent of frontline healthcare workers are women.<sup>20</sup> This is important as healthcare workers are more likely to be physically and verbally attacked, as increased reports in China, Italy and Singapore have shown.<sup>21</sup>

“Recognizing, valuing, supporting women’s roles and giving them a voice in global health governance can go a long way in avoiding unintended consequences, building resilient healthcare systems, and reducing intersectional inequalities and vulnerabilities across gender, race, class, and geography,” writes study first author Neetu John, assistant professor of population and family health.<sup>22</sup>

The researchers argue that it is not too late to include the voices of women in tackling COVID-19. Among their recommendations:

- Governments can incorporate gender considerations into their response.
- Technology can be leveraged to ensure women continue to receive essential services when they need them most. For example, emergency services and victim support can be maintained via text, phone, and online services.
- Telemedicine can be considered an alternative and secure way to provide women and girls access to contraceptives and abortion medication.

## Subtopics

### Data gathering and victim support

Emerging data has showed a deep concern on how COVID-19 is driving its consequences into domestic violence. In fact, it is being compounded by money, health and security stresses, movement restrictions, crowded homes as well as reduced peer support. In many countries, domestic violence reports and emergency calls have [surged upwards of 25%](#) since social distancing measures were undertaken. These data are also likely to

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<sup>20</sup> CASEY, S., CARINO, G. (2020): *Gender-based violence in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/gender-based-violence-covid-19-pandemic>>.

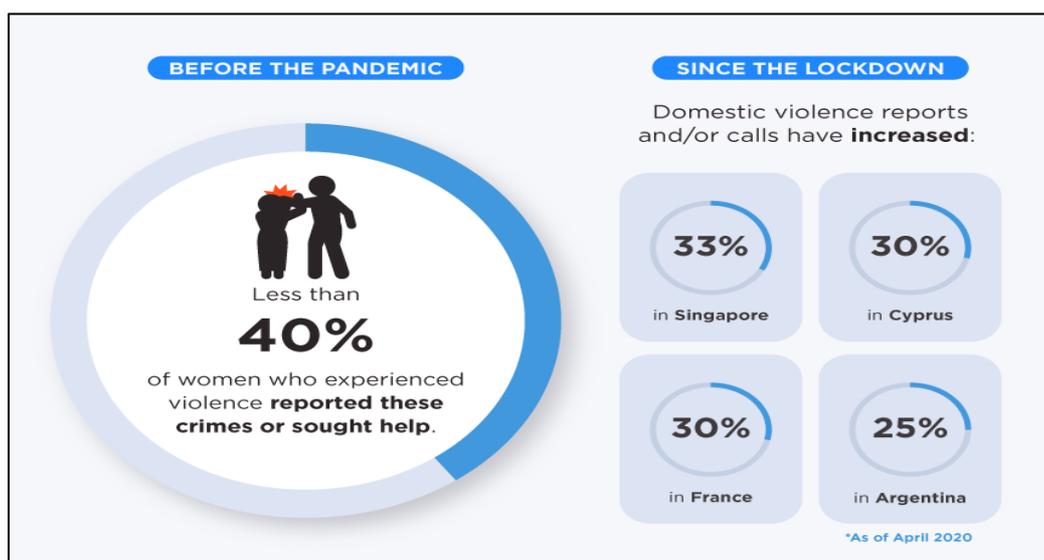
<sup>21</sup> UN WOMEN (2020): *COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls*. Available at: <<https://www.unwomen.org/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>>

<sup>22</sup> CASEY, S., CARINO, G. (2020): *Gender-based violence in the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/gender-based-violence-covid-19-pandemic>>.

reflect only the worst cases. Before the pandemic, it has been analysed that less than 40% of the women who experienced violence looked for help of any sort.

Nowadays, quarantine and movement restrictions further serve to isolate many women who are trapped with their abusers from friends, family or other kind of support.

Furthermore, the closure of non-essential businesses meant that work no longer provided respite for many survivors and therefore, economic insecurity makes it more difficult for them to leave. For those who do manage to reach out, overstretched health, social, judicial and police services are struggling to respond as resources are diverted to deal with the pandemic. Building on a call for an [immediate global ceasefire](#), the UN Secretary-General António Guterres appealed in April 2020 to an [end of all forms of violence](#) everywhere, not only on the battlefield but also at home, and urged governments to address the “horrifying global surge in domestic violence” through prevention and redress measures in their national response plans<sup>23</sup>.



**Image 1.** Percentages of domestic violence reports during COVID-19 lockdown between March and May 2020 (UN WOMEN, 2020).

It is obvious that support services at national levels need to be proactive and coordinated. Police, health and social services should work together in order to identify women at

<sup>23</sup> UN WOMEN (2020): *How COVID-19 impacts women and girls*. Available at: [https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html?gclid=CjwKCAjwj975BRBUEiwA4whRBwyCEiRauRn\\_q2HxfCP0oTmZ254Qg\\_xj\\_eg74za9FHqq8HMmeHqtrxoCvsQQAvD\\_BwE](https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html?gclid=CjwKCAjwj975BRBUEiwA4whRBwyCEiRauRn_q2HxfCP0oTmZ254Qg_xj_eg74za9FHqq8HMmeHqtrxoCvsQQAvD_BwE).

particularly high risks, such as those who have previously faced violence coming from their (ex)partner. Also, working with perpetrators can be effective through online networks and it has already been done this way during the pandemic. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)'s Risk assessment and management is presented as a guide in order to give some solutions for the police to implement a multi-agency approach to make sure no one falls through the cracks<sup>24</sup>.

It encourages family, friends and neighbours to check in with women at risk and raise the alarm if they suspect or have evidence of any kind of violence. With abusers always nearby, lockdown measures can make it tricky to report. Moreover, and linked to solutions already made by some countries, national campaigns have been trying to raise people's awareness of domestic violence, how to spot it, and how to get help. In March 2020, for instance, about a quarter of calls to the domestic violence hotline in Spain came from friends and family.

Over the last months, governments, support services and private companies have worked together to create digital tools that facilitate reporting and provide rooms out of their common place of residence for women fleeing violence. Pharmacists and delivery personnel have been trained to assist the victims<sup>25</sup>. Quick action taken by several countries reflects that violence against women at the home is a problem which crises such as COVID-19 can exacerbate. The most wide-ranging measures to prevent domestic violence are laid out in the Istanbul Convention<sup>26</sup>, which has been signed by all EU Member States and ratified by 34 countries in total. Following this guidance remains the best way to protect women – in crisis times and beyond.

The challenges to collect data on gender-based violence remain huge, however. One problem is the lack of common terminology. Different sectors sometime have differing definitions for categorizing violence.<sup>27</sup> The Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBV IMS), created by a partnership between the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the

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<sup>24</sup> EIGE (2020): *Covid-19 and gender-based violence: Has the pandemic taught us anything?*. Available at: <<https://eige.europa.eu/news/covid-19-and-gender-based-violence-has-pandemic-taught-us-anything>>.

<sup>25</sup> EIGE (2020): *Covid-19 and gender-based violence: Has the pandemic taught us anything?*. Available at: <<https://eige.europa.eu/news/covid-19-and-gender-based-violence-has-pandemic-taught-us-anything>>.

<sup>26</sup> *The Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on violence against women* (2011). Available at: <<https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>>.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibd.*

International Rescue Committee (IRC), provides standardized terminology and gives organizations that work with GBV victims the right tools to safely and effectively collect, store and analyse data.<sup>28</sup> It has already been implemented in over a dozen countries and continues to be rolled out.

One of the main remaining issues that also the GBV IMS cannot remedy, is that much of the data relies on self-reporting of victims. Stigma, shame and fear of reprisals often hold women back in reporting the violence they were victim of.<sup>29</sup> The current pandemic and the lockdown makes it even harder for victims of domestic violence to get the help they need and report their abusers.

### GBV against women healthcare workers

From a global perspective, women make up [70% of the health workforce](#) (WHO, 2019) (doctors, nurses, midwives, etc.) and account for the majority of service staff in health facilities (cleaners, launderers, caterers, etc.). Despite these numbers, women are often not reflected in national or global decision-making on the response to COVID-19. In addition to this, women are still paid much less than their male counterparts and hold fewer leadership positions in the health sector. Masks and other protective equipment designed and sized for men leave women at greater risk of exposure. The needs of women frontline workers must be prioritized; this means ensuring that health care workers as well as caregivers working outside medical centres have access to women-friendly personal protective equipment and menstrual hygiene products and are afforded flexible working arrangements to balance the burden of care.

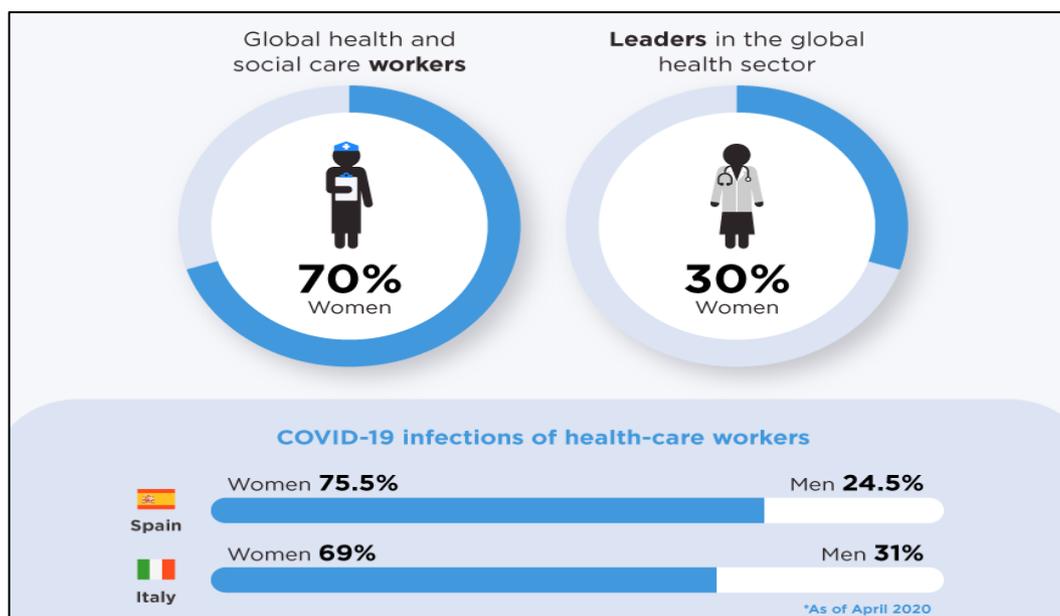
Unfortunately, violence against female health workers and sexual harassment is endemic in the health and social sector—with female health workers experiencing violence at the hands of male colleagues, male patients and members of the community in its whole. For instance, the continued harassment and violence facing health care workers in northern Nigeria leaves populations in critical health service deficits—as the region was reported to have less than 50 midwives in 2018. Furthermore, the continuity of sexual harassment and violence experienced by female health workers has negative consequences on

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.gbvims.com/what-is-gbvims/frequently-asked-questions/>

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Population Fund (2013) *The Role of Data in Addressing Violence against Women and Girls*. Available at < <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/role-data-addressing-violence-against-women-and-girls>>

individuals and a bad impact on the health system itself, including decreases in productivity and reduction in morale and lack of retention of female health workers.<sup>30</sup>



**Image 2.** Percentages of women health workers and COVID-19 infections of health-care workers (UN WOMEN, 2020).

Besides, Gender Based Violence in the health and medical sector has become a social problem in many countries, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. From its inclusion in the political agenda, the development of GBV in the health sector has been studied in a dominant way by integrating it into the broad field of occupational safety and health according to a psychological or epidemiological approach. It has been also accompanied by security speeches and policies coupled with reforms in the health and medical sector, including the introduction of well- treatment policies as certification criteria.

Moreover, it has also been analysed according to a sociological approach. For instance, 25 institutions were surveyed in northern France between 2014 and 2015 and 444 questionnaires were collected from health care workers. This theoretic- and methodological approach to phenomenology helps to shed new light on the phenomenon of gender-based violence. Re-entering the factual into the situational and the contextual ,

<sup>30</sup> PETERMAN, A., POTTS, A., O'DONNELL, M. and others (2020): *Pandemics and violence against women and children*. Available at: <<https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children>>.

the analysis will show that the situations of GBV described by the respondents are not only the manifestation of a trying experience crystallizing in the relationship with users but also an expression of a professional identity and a mean of weighing on the balance of power within the organization.

### Economic factors

Throughout the years, it has been noted that economic stress can trigger Domestic Violence (DV). The current COVID-19 Crisis has shown how economic and social burden combined with movement restrictions and cramped homes are driving a surge in Gender-Based Violence, with emphasis in DV. A slightly similar comparison would be the rise in GBV and DV during the 2008-2009 economic crisis, where people lost their jobs and had big economical strain. Hotlines and support centres became the main way to support women in the position the crisis had put them in. Now, the current pandemic, has had a big impact in the economy, creating tension in already economic stressed households. Adding to this tension the strict movement restrictions in certain countries. Before the pandemic, it was estimated that 1/3 women will experience violence during their lifetimes, a human rights violation that also bears an economic cost of USD 1.5 trillion.<sup>31</sup> Many of these women are now or have been trapped at home with their abusers and are at increased risk of other forms of violence as overloaded healthcare systems and disrupted justice services struggle to respond.

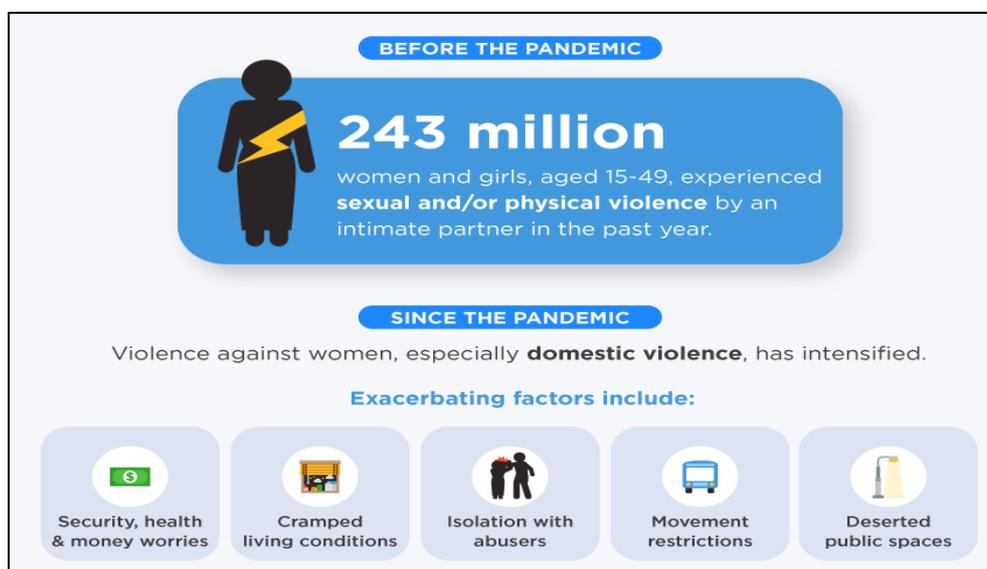
Other important aspect of the economic crisis the pandemic caused, is the shattering of the informal economic sector, affecting specially developing countries. Women who work in the informal economy have jobs like street vendors or are some kind of unpaid workers in family businesses. Since significant parts of society are at home with strict restrictions, this has meant a reduction on income for women in this part of the economy whose income is already unstable. Taking into account they are not formal employees they also cannot receive any kind of monetary support from the governments (in case it is provided or offered). This aspect only adds on the economic stress and possible (if not already existing) GBV – DV.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> UN WOMEN (2020): *Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

<sup>32</sup> UN WOMEN (2020): *How COVID-19 impacts women and girls*. Available at: <https://interactive.unwomen.org/multimedia/explainer/covid19/en/index.html?gclid=CjwKCAjwj975BR>

From another point of view, especially regional, the pandemic's economic impacts are likely to increase sexual exploitation and child marriage, leaving women and girls in fragile economic and refugee conditions.



**Image 3.** Factors that have increased violence against women during COVID-19 (UN WOMEN, 2020).

## Past efforts to address the issue

Since the pandemic started and the data gathering quickly collected the rise in cases of GBV, DV and violence against women in the frontlines, some countries have responded to this problematic with innovative solutions and funding from already existing projects.

Helplines and other means of communication have become the main source of communication for many women around the world. In the United Kingdom, “a popular app called ‘Bright Sky’ provides support and information to survivors, but can be disguised for people worried about partners checking their phones.”<sup>33</sup> In other countries, like Spain, an instant messaging service with a geolocation function, allows victims to get immediate access to psychological support.

[BUEiwA4whRBwyCEiRauRn\\_q2HxfCP0oTmZ254Qg\\_xj\\_eg74za9FHqq8HMmeHqtrxoCvsQQAvD\\_BwE>](https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters).

<sup>33</sup> UN WOMEN (2020): *COVID and Ending Violence Against Women and Girls*. Available at: <https://data.unwomen.org/resources/covid-19-emerging-gender-data-and-why-it-matters>

Countries like South Africa, have been training frontline personnel (policemen, postal workers) to look out and recognize violence signs. They also prioritize service access to women in the informal economy (that don't have any kind social security), as well as young girls and women affected by other diseases like HIV. UN WOMEN has provided some recommendations for actions to be taken by governments, international and national organizations and other UN agencies. These recommendations include:

- Allocate additional resources and include evidence-based measures to address violence against women and girls in COVID-19 national response plans.
- Strengthen services for women who experience violence during COVID-19
- Build capacity of key services to prevent impunity and improve quality of response
- Put women at the center of policy change, solutions and recovery
- Ensure sex-disaggregated data is collected to understand the impact of COVID-19 on violence against women and girls and inform the response

Currently, due to the movement restrictions, many women are not able to report their abusers since they are at home with them without access to a phone or any other communication form. This has meant an important decline in the data gathering and help providing services. The United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSTATS) has a Minimum Set of Gender Indicators that have been implemented to measure the gender equality, women's empowerment and GBV. There are three different tiers of the data collection. The first one is conceptually clear, with international standards methodology and regular data production. The second one differs from the first one by the not so regular data production. And the same happens with the third one, differing from the other two by not producing any kind of data. These scenarios are the results of countries with no help system or unorganized data gathering. The work made by the UNSTATS displays the real functioning of the government gender-based projects, giving an idea of which

nations are really taking actions regarding GBV, women's empowerment and gender equality.

Taking into account this is an ongoing pandemic, there still is not a concrete global response. This is a point that has to be taken into consideration during the debate.

## Stakeholders

Some countries and organisations consider domestic gender-based violence from a dual approach: prevention and remedy. On the one hand, the role of traditional and social media in awareness-raising and the emancipation of women is a key factor that has already helped in some practical cases around the globe. In addition, contribution of education can also take a crucial role on this matter, where we should not lose track of adults who no longer are in a traditional learning environment. These elements are closely linked to prevention. On the other hand, we are also interested in how to help women for whom prevention arrives too late. The role of NGO's and the civil society is something we would like the delegates to address, as well as concrete, practical solutions that can be recommended to the Member States.

Until now, supranational organisations such as UNCSW, UNWOMEN, UN Trust Fund to end Violence against Women, UNFPA (UN population fund, the UN sexual and reproductive health agency), IASC (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, longest-standing and highest-level humanitarian coordination forum of the UN system) or the Council of Europe have already taken some actions in order to prevent and eradicate domestic violence against women and girls. Also, Gender Equality Grouping enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe; Women Against Violence Europe; Amnesty International or European Women's Lobby are some among the international NGO's that have been working in the field of violence against women.

## Questions an Outcome Document should answer

- What did countries get right and what will they need to do better to protect women from violence? What possible long-term solutions should States address to solve this problem?

- How can victims of domestic violence be reached when they are in lockdown situation? How does the COVID-19 pandemic hold victims of domestic violence back to reach out for help and what can be done about it?
- How can civil society and NGO's play a role? What is the role of education on this issue and how can people who are no longer in school be taught?
- How can the traditional media and social media play a role in awareness-raising and emancipation?
- How can data gathering be improved? What are the difficulties of data gathering on domestic violence/GBV? What is the influence of the pandemic and lockdown situations and how can it be countered?

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