**Call for submissions: COVID-19 and the increase of domestic violence against women**

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Dubravka Šimonović, is following closely the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women’s right to a life free from violence. As she warned in a recent [statement](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25749&LangID=E) in 27 March 2020, the efforts to deal with the current health crisis may lead to an increase in domestic violence against women.

As initial police and hotline reports suggest, domestic violence has already surged in many countries, as measures imposing isolation compel a number of women to be kept at home under the same roof with perpetrators, thus exacerbating women’s vulnerability to domestic violence, including femicides. The risk is aggravated by fewer police interventions; the closure of courts and limited access to justice; the closure of shelters and services for victims, and reduced access to reproductive health services.

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women wishes to receive all relevant information on the increase of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic from civil society, States, National Human Rights Institutions, international organisations, academia and other stakeholders on the following issues:

1. To what extent has there been an increase of violence against women, especially domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns? Please provide all available data on the increase of violence against women, including domestic violence and femicides, registered since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis.

In Myanmar, the Civil Society Organizations against Violence against Women admitted that there certainly have been a spike in the number of domestic violence cases since the lock down began. But there is no exact data on the increase of VAW during lockdown at the moment. The Government Department of Social Welfare and other Civil Organization are in the process of doing data collection on it.

1. Are helplines run by Government and/or civil society available? Has there been an increase in the number of calls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

There are helplines run by government and civil society organizations and they are available during COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The founder of a leading civil society which run the helpline said that “complaints on domestic violence are always coming to us but after the outbreak of the virus, the complaints increased. We are analyzing the data.” According to “Legal Clinic Myanmar” the number of calls on domestic violence cases increased up to 39 % in May 2020.

1. Can women victims of domestic violence be exempted from restrictive measures to stay at home in isolation if they face domestic violence?

If a woman is facing domestic violence severely during lock down, she is free to ask for help and stay in a safer place. But in Myanmar, women are resilient regarding husband’s abuse and consider abuse by the husband is not a crime. Moreover, the community do not interfere affairs of husband and wife in our culture. The majority of women who suffer domestic violence remain silence and a very few of them take courage to report to the authority.

1. Are shelters open and available? Are there any alternatives to shelters available if they are closed or without sufficient capacity?

Shelters are available and opened for the women experienced domestic violence. In case of emergency at this time, Good Shepherd Shelter is ready to welcome women needing a safe place. In order to protect those who already in the shelter, a place is reserved for the new comers to keep physical distancing and quarantine for 21 days in keeping with the government’s guidelines.

1. Are protection orders available and accessible in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Not available.

1. What are the impacts on women’s access to justice? Are courts open and providing protection and decisions in cases of domestic violence?

Courts are open and making decisions only on the emergency cases such as breaking the restriction measures on lockdown set by the government. It is difficult for women to seek help or to take her case to the court during lockdown period here. The civil societies also are having difficulties to reach out to the victims. The abused women usually first report to the local authority or to the nearest police station. In Myanmar, cases like domestic violence reported by abused women are not usually taken seriously by the local authorities. The local authorities try to settle the cases in their hand and encourage the women not to proceed to the court.

1. What are the impacts of the current restrictive measures and lockdowns on women’s access to health services? Please specify whether services are closed or suspended, particularly those focusing on reproductive health.

The hospitals especially women and children hospitals are open and taking the serious/emergency cases including cases on reproductive health. The Government allows people with serious/emergency cases to go to the hospital for treatment during lockdown period.

1. Please provide examples of obstacles encountered to prevent and combat domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

Due to COVID-19 lockdowns, all our outreach programs and awareness programs had to stop. The lockdown restrictions and social distancing made us unable reach out to vulnerable women/girls suffering at home and they are also in a situation of locked up with the abuser/s in a house and not able to ask for help from neighborhood.

In once emergency incident, a woman who were experiencing abuse by her partner communicated us asking for a safe place. Although we wanted to welcome her in our shelter, she could not come or we could not take her due to the stop of all transportations.

1. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by Governments.

Department of Social Welfare keep helpline available for the abused women/girls and Government’s shelter services are also open during lock down period.

1. Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by NGOs and NHRIs or equality bodies.

Gender Equality Network held panel discussion and information sharing on domestic violence during lockdown on 16th May via zoom broadcasting live on facebook to reach out to people during lockdown period.

Other Women Networks also post pamphlets and posters with full information on social media raising awareness and sharing information on how to seek help when faced with VAW and Domestic Violence.

1. Please send any additional information on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on domestic violence against women not covered by the questions above.

All submissions should be sent to [vaw@ohchr.org](mailto:vaw@ohchr.org) as soon as possible, and will be received until **30 June** **2020**. You are kindly requested to provide your submissions in English, French or Spanish. Kindly indicate if you **do not** wish your submission to be made publicly available.