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Strategic inter-parliamentary dialogue

Gender-responsive recovery post COVID-19

Hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and organized jointly with UN Women

Violence against women and girls: virtual, 14 April 2021

Context and rationale

The impacts of crises are never gender neutral, and COVID-19 is no exception. Beyond the public health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a full-fledged economic and social crisis. Rampant inequalities have once again been revealed and further exacerbated. A recent report by UN Women¹ outlined that women and girls have felt the economic and social fallout of the pandemic particularly harshly, as they are more vulnerable in hard-hit economic sectors. Lockdown measures and economic pressure have also further amplified violence against women and girls (VAWG) – the shadow pandemic.

Two roadmaps for action continue to be relevant: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (adopted 1995), which is the global blueprint for gender equality; and the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (adopted 2015). It is now more crucial than ever to achieve them both. Without coordinated action to mitigate the gendered impacts of COVID-19, the fragile gender equality gains of the past 25 years risk being lost.

Through coordinated action, parliaments are in a unique position to: contribute to the political will needed to enact gender-responsive legislation; oversee government action and resource allocation; and mobilize society in its gender-responsive recovery.

Ending VAWG is an essential condition for recovery

An estimated 243 million women and girls aged 15 to 49 worldwide have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence by an intimate partner in the last year.² Emerging data show that VAWG has intensified since the outbreak of COVID-19. At the same time, women have lower incomes, fewer opportunities for social contact, and limited access to services and community support, all of which give them fewer exit options. The risks are likely higher for women from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities, migrant and refugee women, and women with disabilities.

Evidence from previous pandemics also reveals increased violence against female health workers, online and offline violence, femicide, harmful practices, and racial and ethnic discrimination. Services for survivors of violence must therefore be part of pandemic responses. Safe access to support services and emergency measures, including legal assistance and judicial remedies, are urgently needed.

¹ UN Women, [From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19 \(Geneva, 2020a\)](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19): www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19.

² UN Women (2020): 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.



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Objectives

The strategic dialogue aimed to:

- Build knowledge and a common understanding among parliamentarians from different countries and genders about the impact of COVID-19 on the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls globally.
- Identify parliamentary legislative, oversight and budgetary actions focused on gender-responsive recovery policies and strategies.
- Identify the best means to carry out gender-responsive legal reforms in and through the work of parliament, including by using the new IPU-UN Women handbook for parliaments on gender-responsive legal reform.
- Support peer to peer exchanges of experience, good practices, lessons learned and advice, so as to establish common strategies for parliamentary action.
- Inspire work in parliament aimed at a more gender-responsive recovery, with due consideration of different national contexts and specific needs.
- Support the implementation of international commitments, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), such as the recently adopted Violence and Harassment Convention (No. 190) on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence, supplemented by Recommendation No. 206 on violence and harassment.
- Contribute, via the Bureau and Forum of Women Parliamentarians and other IPU bodies, to mainstreaming gender equality in the deliberations and decisions of the 142nd IPU Assembly (24–27 May 2021), which was to focus on the impact of the pandemic.
- Contribute a parliamentary perspective to global processes and initiatives, such as the Generation Equality Forum, and *Equality in law for women and girls by 2030*, a UN Women multi-stakeholder strategy.

The second session, on VAWG, was chaired by **Ms. Skevi Koutra-Koukouma** (Cyprus), Member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. It was informed by: **Mr. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk**, UN Women; **Ms. Pramila Patten**, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (via pre-recorded video); **Dr. Dubravka Šimonović**, UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women; and **Ms. Giovanna Lauro**, Vice-President of Programs and Research, Promundo-US.

Seventy participants attended, including **56 parliamentarians**. The session was moderated by **Ms. Paddy Torsney**, IPU Permanent Observer to the United Nations, and Head of the IPU New York Office.

Report

Opening remarks

Ms. Koutra-Koukouma (Cyprus, Member of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians) opened the inter-parliamentary dialogue as the Chair of the meeting by talking about the importance of focusing on the shadow pandemic – VAWG. As COVID-19 loomed, reports of violence against women had risen due to confined living conditions, economic stress, fear about the virus, and the increased use of online platforms. According to UN Women, 245 million women and girls had experienced sexual or physical violence from their partner in 2020. The risks were higher for women in vulnerable groups and marginalized communities. While reported cases had increased, COVID-19 had also impacted the



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provision of essential services and community support to survivors. Acting to address and prevent VAWG had never been more urgent.

As a result, parliaments should step up their efforts to remove all obstacles that prevented the full implementation of measures designed to guarantee the safety of survivors and the accountability of offenders, especially during the crisis and as a post-COVID-19 response. Preventing VAWG and providing redress against it should also be a key part of national COVID-19 response plans.

Listening to survivors and specialized organizations that supported them would be required to achieve those plans. Survivors' needs must be well understood if they were to be fully met. Only then would more women feel safe enough to report violence and seek justice. There was also a need to develop multisectoral collaboration and partnership. Close cooperation between parliamentarians, State agencies and civil society associations was crucial to finding innovative approaches and enhancing implementation. Above all, political will must be galvanized, including from as many men and boy leaders as possible, so as to tackle the root causes of discrimination and the inequalities that fuelled gender-based violence.

The status of VAWG and COVID-19

Overview

In the first section, the two panellists gave presentations on the extent to which VAWG had worsened in the context of COVID-19, and on which forms of VAWG had been the most acute during the pandemic. They explained how the pandemic had increased existing challenges and posed new obstacles to the implementation of laws and policies aimed at ensuring the safety of VAWG survivors and the accountability of offenders. The experts also discussed how COVID-19 had increased sexual and gender-based violence, particularly in the context of conflict, violent extremism, terrorism, displacement and migration. They illustrated the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence. The presentations were followed by a moderated debate among participants.

Mr. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk (Policy Specialist, Ending Violence Against Women Section, UN Women) underscored that VAWG was a long and silent pandemic, and that all types of VAWG had intensified during COVID-19. However, establishing a clear understanding of the magnitude and frequency of VAWG during the pandemic was challenging because data was being collected inconsistently and was fragmented. In general, however, the pandemic had exacerbated VAWG in the following ways:

- Domestic violence had intensified: one in three women were facing sexual violence from their partner.
- Pandemic stress caused by loss of income and work, food insecurity, a lack of access to necessities, and overstretched resources had led to an increase in VAWG.
- Greater internet use meant that more women and girls had been subjected to online violence through e-stalking, Zoom bombing and similar activity.
- School closures during lockdown had increased cases of child marriage.
- Female genital mutilation might have increased, as programmes to tackle it had been put on hold.
- Migrant workers, women with HIV/AIDS, and rural women were currently more at risk of VAWG.

While cases of VAWG increased, resources had been diverted into dealing with the immediate risks of the virus. Resources to support victims were also overstretched, especially in running VAWG helplines and providing access to legal services for those experiencing violence. Efforts to prevent and respond to VAWG must be restarted, especially solutions involving targeted measures that kept women and girls at the forefront of legislative and national activities.



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Ms. Pramila Patten (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict) highlighted in a pre-recorded video that, while the risk of VAWG had not diminished, options for seeking help had decreased. COVID-19 had reduced oversight and monitoring, and resource scarcity had made it challenging to protect and assist the most vulnerable. Many violent actors had taken the opportunity to strike due to impunity and institutional weakness. There were reports of traffickers taking advantage of the pandemic to perpetuate child marriage and survival sex. As the pandemic raced on, conflict-related sexual violence was not operating in a vacuum – it was linked to wider security factors. Armed conflict situations had still made heavy use of sexual violence as a repression and dominance tactic. Women and girls in congested refugee and displacement settings had been hardest hit and more exposed to sexual violence and the risk of trafficking. Given that, past gains must not be rolled back or reversed.

Moderated discussion

Overview

After the first section, the floor was opened for interventions from participants. MPs from around the world commented on the topic, and identified national and global priorities and strategies for parliamentary action. They also addressed the following questions: What do you see as the biggest threat/challenge related to COVID-19 and its impact on ending all forms of VAWG? How is it affecting some groups of women in particular? Has your government or parliament recently taken measures to prevent VAWG during the pandemic? What specific measures have you taken to protect girls and women survivors of violence, and respond to their needs? What other measures have been implemented in your country?

In **Bangladesh**, various laws and policies had been enacted to counter VAWG:

- The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010.
- The Child Marriage Restraint Act 2017.
- The Suppression of Violence against Women and Children Act 2000.
- Hotline 109, connected nationwide with all police stations to take on VAWG cases.

The Government had rolled out initiatives with safety net programmes to promote and protect unemployed women who were vulnerable to abuse. Due to school closures, violence against girls and early marriage had grown; but Parliament had taken a strong stand on cyberbullying, and sexual and domestic violence. Policies and laws that addressed VAWG, and information on accessing VAWG support services had been made public through social media, television, radio messages etc.

In **Bahrain**, measures to protect women and mutual respect between men and women meant that sexual harassment in parliament was not an issue. Women were playing an important role in fighting the pandemic, both as leaders and frontline care and health workers. However, the needs of some women in vulnerable positions, such as sex workers, were not being addressed. The role of NGOs in combating VAWG was also highlighted.

In the **Philippines**, while several laws and policies addressed VAWG, women and children had still suffered during the pandemic. The country had registered 14,000 cases of VAWG between the start of lockdown and November 2020. Moreover, online sexual exploitation of children was growing. Due to high poverty rates, one out of five children were victims of sexual abuse online. Those issues needed stringent countermeasures, and the lower house had introduced amendments to strengthen laws and increase child protection services. MPs had filed a Bill that provided for gender-responsive and inclusive protocols to address the gender-differentiated needs of women during COVID-19. The Bill also included stronger provision against gender-based violence.



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In **Syria**, armed groups and conflict had led to an increase in VAWG. The most serious issue was child marriage, which had also worsened during the pandemic. Legislation was needed, but progress had been impeded by conflict in the country. Some attempts to adopt laws in favour of women had been successful, but even so, women continued to face discrimination. The Syrian Parliament was hoping that NGOs and the international community would cooperate with it to support women, and that economic sanctions on Syria would be lifted, as they were having a negative impact on women.

Turkey had also seen an increase in online violence. In response, the Grand National Assembly had recently established a digital platforms committee tasked with providing guidance on reducing cyberviolence. The committee worked with social media platforms to register and monitor online violence. In addition, the app *Kades* helped women to report acts of violence immediately or prevent them from occurring. Turkey had been criticized for withdrawing from the Istanbul Convention; but national laws related to the Convention remained intact. The country was working on a law that would allow harsher measures to be used in countering VAW.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM) reported that several of its members had developed mobile phone apps to report VAWG, underscoring the importance of technological solutions. PAM was calling on its members to ratify the Istanbul Convention, while the European Women's Lobby had published recommendations and a checklist to ensure gender mainstreaming.

In **Croatia**, parliamentary work to tackle VAWG had focused on holistic solutions, such as gender mainstreaming.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, Parliament had amended the criminal code to increase the penalties for those convicted of VAWG. In 2019, the legislature had also passed a law to better protect children from violence. Following an increase in violence due to the pandemic, the national strategy to fight VAWG had been strengthened in June 2020. The Government had also used committees in the provinces, and task forces made up of MPs, civil society, religious leaders and the police to help with prevention, raising awareness, and prosecution.

During **Tanzania's** one-month lockdown, pregnancy rates had increased, which had prompted the Government to reopen schools. Strong gender-responsive measures were in place to protect women such as:

- Gender budgeting.
- Equality in the workplace in compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Reducing child marriage by lifting the minimum age of marriage permitted in the Marriage Act from 14 to 18.
- Training and mentorship of young women to promote their participation in politics.

In **Azerbaijan**, there were cultural barriers to legislating on family affairs that had led to many unreported cases of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. Raising awareness of VAWG was seen as a cross-sectoral initiative involving NGOs and the private sector. Both were working with State agencies on creating gender-responsive policies, such as social protection. The country also had 24 call centres and consultation hubs to assist potential victims of abuse.

National experiences on the road to eradicating VAWG

Overview

In the second section, panellists delineated promising practices to protect women and girl survivors of violence, and to respond to their needs during the pandemic. They illustrated policy interventions that governments should prioritize to prevent and respond to the increase in online harassment and VAWG. They discussed new initiatives that governments, parliaments and political parties had taken regarding VAW in politics and public life. The experts also talked about the role of men and boys in preventing VAWG. They cited examples of transformative approaches to involving men and boys that had reduced VAWG. The presentations were followed by a moderated debate among participants.



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Dr. Dubravka Šimonović (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women) underscored that there were many and varied problems in relation to VAWG and COVID-19. She had received comments from 175 States showing that the problems they faced were diverse but connected to pre-existing shortcomings. Particularly acute shortcomings included:

- The closure of courts and limited access to justice.
- Reduced access to health services.
- Reduced support for NGOs.
- Insufficient shelter spaces.
- No domestic violence helplines in some States, and helplines without 24/7 coverage in others.
- Protection orders in many States that were not efficient or immediately available.

She also summarized good practices adopted by some countries during the pandemic, such as: opening hotel accommodation for domestic violence victims; creating additional helplines for victims of VAWG; and allowing abuse to be reported at pharmacies.

A global and holistic response to VAWG was needed through ratifying international conventions such as CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as regional instruments such as [the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of women in Africa \(the Maputo Protocol\)](#), [the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(the Istanbul Convention\)](#) and the [Inter-American Convention on the prevention, punishment and eradication of violence against women \(the Belem do Para Convention\)](#). She also shared her latest reports about [online violence against women](#) and [violence against women in politics](#).

Ms. Giovanna Lauro (Vice-President, Programs and Research, Promundo-US) presented her organization's applied research efforts to transform masculinity and engage boys and men to promote gender equality. The responsibility for tackling VAWG should be shared between men and women because men also benefited from gender equality. Promundo focused on working with men and identifying factors in their past that contributed to violence. It worked on breaking the intergenerational transmission of violence by working with school and health systems, and changing how young people approach the issue of gender. There was a need to push for the collection of aggregated and specific data. Key data points that she shared included that:

- Men who witnessed violence during childhood were 2.5 times more likely to use violence in adulthood against a female partner.
- Younger, more educated, urban-based men were more likely to support gender equality, but not always.
- There was more acceptance of equality where there was greater income stability.
- There were high levels of unrecognized trauma among men; and while support for equality was increasing, there was still strong support for the emotionally suppressive "tough it up" version of manhood.
- Gender-equitable men (and their partners) were happier and healthier. Violence created violence, while caregiving created caregiving.

Effective ways to address VAWG among men and boys included:

- Starting early, and engaging boys and girls at home or in school.
- Involving caregivers, particularly male caregivers, in modeling equality and non-violence at home.
- Holding a critical discussion on changing toxic ideas about manhood.
- Listening to women and including their voices at all levels of programming.
- Investing in programmes that questioned gender norms, lasted longer, and had multiple components.



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The single most consistent and impactful intervention was group education, with links to service provision and bystander intervention. Mixed groups, groups of couples, and single-sex groups had been known to work equally well.

Panel discussion

Overview

After the second session, the moderator Ms. Paddy Torsney invited each panellist to share their thoughts on how to address the shadow pandemic. She asked: To prevent and respond to VAWG, what should members of parliament focus on, and what should they do in their core functions of legislation, oversight, budget allocation and representation? What types of measure had governments taken to strengthen services for women who had experienced violence during COVID-19? What partnerships must parliamentarians build to carry out priority policies designed to prevent and respond to VAWG? Which countries could offer illustrations of good practice?

Dr. Dubravka Šimonović (UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women) emphasized that MPs were in a strategic position to ratify and pass legislation. Helpful recommendations on how parliaments could address VAWG included:

- Using international and regional conventions as guides, and referencing [General Recommendation 35](#), which created a roadmap to address VAW.
- Collecting VAWG-related data, including on femicides. Currently many countries tracked data about the victims and perpetrators of homicides, but not about the relationship between the two. That impeded the tracking and comparability of femicide rates globally.
- Making policy modifications to provide for e-protection orders that could be requested online.
- Having more flexibility and a human rights-based approach to address the needs of victims, especially with new forms of online abuse.
- Understanding the link between VAW and other issues.
- Appreciating that the prevention of VAWG needs to be emphasized in and through addressing women's economic empowerment, prioritizing the care economy, addressing gender roles, and promoting women and girls' education.
- Using comparative data to show and understand which laws are being implemented well.

Mr. Khamsavath Chanthavysouk (Policy Specialist, Ending Violence Against Women Section, UN Women) summarized the UN Secretary-General's four calls to action for Member States regarding VAWG:

1. Increase funding to work on VAW prevention and justice.
2. Increase prevention efforts to ensure no one is left behind, and to ensure the effort is more sustainable in the face of new pandemics or crises.
3. Enhance efforts to respond to the needs of survivors, and ensure comprehensive services are available to women, especially those facing multiple disadvantages.
4. Continue to collect data so we can respond appropriately to issues.

MPs must put women at the centre of decision-making and planning.

Ms. Giovanna Lauro (Vice-President, Programs and Research, Promundo-US) reminded the audience that people with unequal views of gender roles were most likely to perpetrate VAWG. MPs must therefore focus on breaking down these perceptions, including by using policies that promoted the equitable division of care work, and the use of comprehensive care policies as a prevention tool. Uruguay was the only country that had implemented a comprehensive care economy plan. Social



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protection programmes were needed to address inequalities, shift gender roles and ultimately reduce VAWG.

Ms. Pramila Patten (Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict) made the following recommendations in a pre-recorded video about how MPs should respond to VAWG:

- Address multiple gaps in legal frameworks, including by passing robust laws that: punish perpetrators of VAWG; criminalize rape and other sexual violence as war crimes; and strengthen prevention by sending the message that crimes are no longer cost free, including by eliminating laws that allow perpetrators to escape punishment by marrying the victim.
- Recognize victims as survivors. Survivor-centric laws were needed to ensure respect, restitution and safety. Specific appropriations were called for to respond to sexual violence in conflict settings – a severely underfunded priority.
- Sexual and reproductive health care must be prioritized. In past crises, more women had died because they lacked access to health care than had died from the actual disease.
- Implement international and regional treaties.
- To address harmful societal norms, partner with civil society, those at the frontline of the crisis, and cultural and religious institutions.

Moderated discussion

Overview

After the second section, the floor was opened for interventions from participants. A moderated session was held about sharing good practices on gender-responsive measures taken in different countries. The following questions were asked: What three priority actions could you take or contribute to, so as to prevent and respond to VAWG? What are the key levers of success in adopting policies and legislation to end VAWG and ensure effective enforcement mechanisms? Who are the key stakeholders, and what are the possible alliance-building strategies in the quest to achieve a world free of VAWG?

In **Fiji**, the Government had recently developed a five-year national plan (2021–2026) covering all levels of government and citizens of Fiji. The programme sought to identify why VAWG occurs, which strategies could prevent it, and how stakeholders could be mobilized. Recognizing that there was no single-fix solution to preventing VAWG, Fiji's comprehensive strategy included:

- Building safe spaces in schools.
- Working to promote positive family dynamics.
- Changing cultural mindsets by teaching boys that strength comes from integrity, not violence.

In **Nicaragua**, political will and commitment was strong, especially due to the important role of women MPs in raising those issues. The country's gender-responsive legal framework included laws on eliminating VAWG, countering cybercrime, and reforming the criminal code to revise the punishment for killing women. Two important non-legislative strategies were:

- Collaborative support networks between institutions such as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Family, Ministry of Health and Department of Communities. They were to work together to shift mindsets on VAWG, promote gender-responsive measures, and create programmes that tackled violence.
- The Government's gender-based and gender-responsive budget.

In **Benin**, violence had increased due to COVID-19 and lockdown, and adolescent pregnancies had also risen. Laws had been enacted to address VAWG. Work was under way to give a voice to victims, make sure they had safe spaces to go to and be heard, and reinforce structures to promote and raise



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awareness of those issues. Working closely with civil society actors, particularly the religious sector, had been observed to be an effective way of raising awareness.

In **Madagascar**, raising awareness of VAWG was seen as important, particularly through focusing on educational institutions. In addition to physical and emotional violence, food insecurity was also a form of violence, especially in light of the looming effect of climate change.

In **Ecuador**, the urban/rural divide was growing; women and girls were suffering increased violence, with decreased access to resources, shelters and justice. More than 30,000 emergency calls on domestic violence had been recorded. Sixty-eight per cent of women in rural areas had suffered violence, and every 36 hours, a woman was raped. Therefore, Ecuador had prioritized creating shelters and prevention policies. MPs were also attempting to decriminalize abortion across the country, but a lack of resources had prevented them from doing so.

In **Italy**, VAWG had been allotted a *code red* processing priority, so that whenever a woman reported violence, the police had to start working on the case within 48 hours. A helpline and mobile app to report VAWG had also been established.

In the **United Kingdom**, concern was particularly focused on how VAWG impacted women and girls with disabilities and LGBT+ women. Those groups were not safe at home, especially with abusive families.

Canada was making changes to its criminal law. Following the United Kingdom's lead, controlling and coercive behaviour in intimate relationships would now be deemed an offence.

In **Mauritius**, a high-level committee had launched a national strategy and action plan in November 2020. It aimed to respond to the country's unique cultural specificities in relation to VAWG. The four-year plan focused on:

- Prioritizing survival needs.
- Changing societal norms and beliefs so that they aligned with gender equality principles.
- Improving legal remedies and services from public institutions.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress.

Women were also being encouraged to come forward and report their aggressors to the authorities.

Main findings and recommendations as presented to the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians³

In the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, and due to confined living conditions, economic stress, and fear about the virus, reported cases of VAWG have increased across countries.

In 2020, 245 million women experienced sexual or physical violence from their partner. The risks were higher for women from vulnerable groups and marginalized communities, adolescent girls, women with disabilities, and women and girls affected by conflict, violent extremism, terrorism, displacement and migration.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic was already exacerbating limited access to justice and shortcomings in protection, essential services and community support to survivors.

³ See IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians, 31st session (virtual), May 2021: www.ipu.org/event/142nd-ipu-assembly#event-sub-page-documents/.



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However, countries were taking measures to provide increased services for survivors as a key part of their national responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. These included:

- Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health care.
- Providing 24/7 helplines and counselling, including online.
- Enhancing efficiency and timely delivery of protection orders.
- Maintaining the functioning of justice for cases of VAWG.

Such efforts helped to prioritize the needs of survivors and ensure their rights and dignity were respected. Efforts also included deploying resources and training sessions to women's rights organizations and first responders, so that women could be protected against violence.

However, greater internet use meant that more women and girls have been subjected to increased online violence, encompassing threats, harassment, misinformation and image-based abuse. While much remains to be done in this area, some parliaments have adopted strong laws that cover widespread and harmful VAWG.

That said, parliaments still need to improve the regulatory frameworks of online platforms and ICT companies. They should call on them to:

- Ensure online accountability, a duty of care, and transparency.
- Erect guardrails to protect women and girls online.
- Provide reporting pathways.

Likewise, the economic downturn and school closures strongly affected girls. This often led to their dropping out of school to help with increased household work. Due to this, child marriages, sexual violence against girls, and teenage pregnancies increased. In this case, prioritizing the continued education of girls and their safe schooling, as well as investing in distance learning programmes, should remain a priority, so that girls can reach their full potential.

Several good practices showcased that the prevention of VAWG must remain a priority and must be emphasized when:

- Promoting income stability and women's economic empowerment.
- Working with boys and men to question gender roles and break the transgenerational transmission of violence.
- Prioritizing gender-sensitive care work policies.
- Partnering with civil society, including religious leaders, to change harmful gender norms.