



Webinars: Psychosocial Support and GBV Sensitization in COVID -19

Emerged Recommendations

Introduction

Public health outbreaks such as COVID-19 produce several negative consequences for the affected population impacting people's social lives, psychological health, and emotional wellbeing which are less visible but equally important to address. Moreover, the vulnerabilities present in members of the target population before the crisis such as belonging to a disadvantaged group, facing discrimination and violence were further exacerbated by the situation. Evidence and experience are showing that during this pandemic women and girls were more at risk of facing all forms of gender-based violence¹.


While taking preventive and precautionary measures in Covid-19 it became clear that many of the steps deemed necessary to control the spread of the disease (e.g. restriction of movement, reduction in community interaction, closure of businesses and services, etc.) were not only increasing risks related to violence against women and girls but also limiting survivors' ability to distance themselves from their abusers as well as reducing their access to external support. Few steps were taken by state and non-state actors to protect the rights of women and girls such as initiation of helplines, training of stakeholders etc. However, a more comprehensive approach and strong measures given the gravity of situation were needed to be adopted.

Rozan and UNFPA initiated response to the unique need of the pandemic in different dimensions not only in understanding the psychosocial aspects in the pandemic but also to improve the response to GBV survivors of violence. Rozan to contribute to this important aspect conducted a sequel of six webinars to address GBV particularly psychosocial health of women survivors of violence in the backdrop of COVID-19. The webinars were strategized to carry out consultation, awareness-raising and advocacy for facilitating the survivors of GBV during pandemic and calamities while aiming to

- a) Understand the gender impact in defining vulnerabilities of women and girls during a public health crisis like COVID-19.
- b) Increase understanding of community and other stakeholders' response in addressing GBV and the importance of necessary protocols for prevention of and response to GBV.
- c) Learn from the response during the COVID 19 to prepare for any future unforeseen pandemic or calamity.

The webinar provided a platform to the experts, practitioners, policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to learn from each others experience about the challenges women and girls were facing during Covid-19 especially those who are facing violence. The discussion during the webinars raised many concerns on the impact of COVID-19 on marginalized populations, need of strengthening the systems to address their vulnerabilities and adopting a holistic multi-sectoral approach to empower the community and enhance its resilience. Key points that emerged can help to reflect on the initiatives that have already been taken in this regards and to build strategic policies in similar situations in future especially for addressing gender based violence against women and girls.

¹<https://www.who.int/health-cluster/about/work/other-collaborations/gender-based-violence/en/>
<http://www.mohr.gov.pk/Detail/ODZhNzY4M2YtYWUwOC00OWFiLWI3ODItMWQ3NzYzYjFhMMDM3>



The recommendation based on the experience sharing of participants can be reviewed in three main streams

- 1) Emotional health and Psychosocial services for the community especially women and girls in the pandemic like COVID-19.
- 2) GBV trends in the pandemic needs of and challenges faced by the GBV survivors in accessing services during the lockdown.
- 3) Vulnerabilities of the marginalized groups including Girl child and women and girls with disabilities.

Emotional Health Needs and Psychosocial Services in COVID-19

The discussion in the first webinar raised the need for increasing Psychosocial support during COVID-19 while enhancing community resilience. The recommendation emerged in the discussion of the expert panellists who provided services in this area included

- Provision of Psychosocial services to the community during pandemics along with other health services.
- Setting up online and virtual platforms such as Hotline, helplines to reach masses. Establishing Tele-medicine, Tele-psychiatry virtual platforms to facilitate clients with psychiatric needs. One example of such service was the Tele-Psychiatry helpline Lahore.
- Enhancing the capacity and scope of already established helplines to address the psychosocial needs of individuals.
- Provision of training and capacity building related to Psychological first aid and Psychosocial needs of survivors to non –specialized staff in health and other sectors. Medical front line staff (such as lady health workers, nurses, ward boys, staff) can be trained in identifying the psycho-social needs of women and girls and referring them to appropriate services.
- Engagement of academia and educational institutes to; raise awareness on dealing with the pandemic while emphasizing the needs of emotional health; helping communities in identifying the individuals with psychosocial needs; and providing psychosocial services voluntarily.
- Increase in the fiscal year health budget for the provision of quality psychosocial services.

Improving response to Gender based Violence in the Pandemic

GBV trends in the pandemic and challenges faced by the GBV survivors in accessing services during lockdown were discussed in two webinars; Trends of Gender-based Violence amidst Covid-19 in Pakistan State and Civil Society Response: Successes and Challenges; and 'Taking Stock and Setting Way Forward: Shelter and Police Response on Gender-based Violence during COVID 19'. The recommendation emerged from the discussion of expert panellists and audience included

- Awareness-raising campaigns, to be aware of the symptoms and prevention of COVID-19 along with information concerning GBV signs and symptoms, and services are available in the area.
- Ensure the availability of psychosocial counsellors, mental health professionals, social workers to address the psycho-social needs of GBV survivors.
- Digital and online mobile applications to provide information regarding; safety measures, services available concerning GBV, an indication of friendly spaces for women, safe journey planner, information about women's rights, cybercrime acts, harassment law and legal procedures.
- Digital media (magazines, blogs, pages, social media platforms) and electronic media (Radio, Television) to disseminate information about prevention and response to GBV cases. The information should be in Urdu, English and local languages to provide women with a better understanding of the messages.
- Building the capacity of existing professional and non-professional staff to deal with GBV cases with gender sensitivity.
- Availability of safe centers, shelters, Darul –Amans for survivors of GBV in every major district, city, province. There should be identified as essential services during any pandemic or other emergency.
- Initiate Hotline, helpline, emergency numbers to facilitate individuals with GBV concerns and refer them to the available resources as per their needs and situation. There should be a strong referral system and updated referral pathways in all the helplines.
- GBV response strategies and intervention also focus the women, who don't have access to mobile phones, or who are not allowed to go out of their homes. Capacity building and training of community health workers on identifying, dealing with and referring the GBV survivors will ensure the accessibility of services at far-reaching areas.
- Initiate platforms to redirect energies and potentials of women and girls to recreational and productive tasks especially those who are not able to continue their jobs or studies. the Punjab government e-commerce certification program for women is a good example in this context.

Improving response to Gender based Violence in the Pandemic

- Building a mutual platform for all the stakeholders, where cases can be reported and discussed among the multi-sectoral team for gender-responsive, age-specific, and locally relevant responses. Government departments such as Social Welfare Department(SWD), Provisional Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Women Welfare Department (WWD) INGOs, NGOs, community stakeholders should have regular online meetings to; share the responsibilities, be aware of their roles in providing these services, and sustainability of the available services. Strong coordination among the departments, institutions, and organizations will provide a window for survivor women and girls to seek legal, medical and other support services.
- Involving women parliamentarian in policy and law-making pertaining to women survivors of violence. A specific quota for their inputs in decisions and resolutions will serve the purpose more.

Providing safe, sensitive and accessible residential services during a pandemic:

- With the increasing risk of GBV during a pandemic, there should be an increased number of shelters services accessible for women and girls in their areas.
- There should be clear SoPs for case management in women shelter.
- The emphasis should be to eradicate barriers hindering women's and girls' access to services, including mobility constraints, limited opening hours, lack of female staff and service providers, safety concerns, child care responsibilities etc.
- There should be scheduled activities for women and girls at the shelter to make their stay constructive and productive and address their psycho-social needs.
- Dignity kits should be provided to women and girls living in centers. Provision of much needed supplies in dignity kits will enable women and girls to use their limited resources to purchase other important items needed in an emergency.
- Relevant government service providers such as the Social welfare department, Health, and Police department should lead all interventions in shelters to prevent and respond to GBV survivor's needs.
- Well structured, updated GBV referral pathways to help the survivor and access to multi-sector teams. Mechanisms such as WhatsApp group, direct numbers, CLOUD shared space, to share reported cases with other shelter homes, Dar-ul-Amans, and government departments including health and police force while ensuring survivors confidentiality and privacy..
- To the extent possible, special social protection programs should support women who are single

Improving response to Gender based Violence in the Pandemic

parents or are the main breadwinners in their families.

- The standards and capacity of shelters to deal with the specific needs arising from pandemics should be inflated. For instance, in COVID 19, when keeping the survivors in quarantine was the major challenge, having larger space in shelters and Darul-Aman. could help in accommodating more survivors. Schools, hotels, wedding halls can also be turned into temporary shelter places to ensure the availability and accessibility of shelter services.

Improving the role of Police in responding GBV:

- Setting up better reporting systems including setting up an online and digital system to report complaints.
- Up-gradation and implementation of gender-sensitive interviewing SOPs in all the police stations to facilitate survivors. There should be a separate complaint desk for women at police stations supervised by Women police personnel to facilitate women survivors.
- Increasing the number of female officials in the police service through strengthening systems of recruiting and retaining women, expanding the female quota and offering special perks.
- Gender awareness and sensitization of police personnel's to have a better response while dealing with survivors of GBV especially domestic violence.
- Establishment of GBV cases database to develop baselines, monitor progress as well as capturing changes in trends before and after the crisis and/or pandemics.
- Analysis and evaluation of legal services that are being provided to the survivors in terms of its cost-benefit analysis and whether these are aligned with the survivor's needs and requirements.
- Initiation of e-courts to resolve cases timely and provide justice without any delay.

Vulnerabilities of the marginalized groups in Pandemics:

In any pandemic, the marginalized population including women, girls, elderly, people with disabilities, minorities became more vulnerable due to their limited access to available resources and services. The challenges faced by girl child and those with disabilities were discussed in two webinars, 'Being a Girl Child during COVID 19.' and 'Promoting The Rights Of Women And Girls With Disabilities During COVID-19. The emerged recommendations stressed the need of raising awareness, evidence-based advocacy and strengthening the system and policies.

- Building strong advocacy and awareness regarding girl child rights and protection, the impact of COVID-19 on them, violence against girls during Covid, especially cyber-harassment and increasing trend of girl child marriages.
- Strengthening of services for girls who experience violence during COVID-19, especially already available resources such as child protection units. However, the services should not be limited only to online mode as many of the survivors may not have access to these mediums.
- Social protection programs including cyber protection act.
- Disruption of girl education is a major challenge in a country where a large number of girls are already having challenges in continuing their education. Special interventions should be planned with the slogan to "send girls back to school".
- Develop policies and plans of actions for women with disabilities. Using the right terminology "Women with Disability" at the policy level instead of a person with a disability (PWD) to address the specific issues women with disabilities are facing.
- Ensuring the long-term initiative and action by government and policymakers instead of making quick-fix efforts at the national level.
- Developing systematic strategies for solving the issues of mobility and lack of access to care by engaging different stakeholders including NGOs, INGOs, and Government institutions working in this sector.
- Improve health-care coverage and affordability for persons with disabilities as part of global practices in health care.
- Improving research and data to monitor, evaluate and strengthen health systems for women and girls with disabilities.
- Highlight challenges faced by women with a disability at a regional and international forum such as National Forum for women with disabilities, Asia pacific women with disability Network, Asia pacific forum on sustainability development.

Vulnerabilities of the marginalized groups in Pandemics:

- The National Action Plan should be developed with the consultations of relevant stakeholders including women and girls with disabilities addressing the barriers they are facing.
- Support mechanism involving women with disabilities to provide psycho-social support to other women with a similar disability as they would be able to have a better understanding of the barriers and challenges they face.
- Surveys to determine the inclusiveness of police station, EHSAS program, and other government initiatives regarding the needs of women with disabilities. The survey will help to identify the shortcomings in the system and later service providers can be provided with feedback to improve the services.

Annexure:

WEBINAR



“Our Role for Women Rights: Taking Action towards Preventing Gender Based Violence during Pandemic”

Wednesday, 30 September, 2020
12:00-2:00 PM (PST)

Guest Speakers



Mrs. Nabila Bano
Executive Director
National Commission on
Human Rights



Mrs. Zahrah Usman
Chief Executive Officer
National Commission on
Human Rights



Mrs. Tarika Hashmiyati
Human Rights Officer
National Commission on
Human Rights



Mrs. Juslinda Harnanto
Human Resource Officer
National Commission on
Human Rights



Mrs. Fauziah Nurrohmah
Senior Manager and e-Change Advisor
National Commission on
Human Rights



Mrs. Azzahra Ibrahim
Human Rights Officer
National Commission on
Human Rights



Event Co-sponsoring: **Malaysia**
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Indonesian Ministry of
Rozan

Webinar

"Promoting the rights of women and girls with Disabilities in Covid 19"
Wednesday, September 23, 2020 | 12:00-2:00 PM (PST)

SPEAKERS



Ms. Abila Akram
Head of National Forum
for Women with Disabilities
Special Cabinet Exchange
Program (SCEP)



Mr. Zulqarnain Asghar
Chief Executive of Pakistan
Medical Council, Association
of Physiotherapists



Mr. Muhammad Hassan Mangi
Executive General of Federal Ministry of
Health Rights



Syed Ali Salman
Senior Advisor
Senior Manager of ROSAN







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Webinar

Taking Stock and Setting Way Forward :

Shelter and Police Response on Gender-based Violence during COVID-19

Wednesday, September 30, 2020 | 12:00-2:00 PM (PKT)

SPEAKERS



Ms. Madhurika Mahapatra
Executive Director
Kazan Press



Ms. Sumati Pattnay
Executive Director, Gender Equality
Kazan Press



Ms. Maria Mahmood
Executive Director, Gender Equality
Kazan Press



Mr. Mohammed Muneer Khan-Munawar
Executive Director, Gender Equality
Kazan Press

Webinar

Being A Girl Child during COVID-19

Thursday, September 3, 2020
2:00 - 4:00 pm PKT

Our Speakers



Ms. Aishwarya Rajesh
Chairperson of National Commission
on Child Rights (NCR)



Mr. Chaitan AJ
Executive Member, Rights Cell
for the Ministry of Human Rights
Government of Pakistan



Ms. Samina Sander
Head of Child Development
of the British Council Pakistan



Ms. Shahira Samad
Senior University of
WOLAN Commissioned Investigator



Ms. Mariam Saaved
Chairperson of
KIDSAFE Countering Trafficking



UNFPA
United Nations Population Fund



KIDSAFE
Countering Trafficking

For more information contact:
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safeguard@unfpa.org



British Council

Webinar

Trends of Gender based Violence amidst Covid-19 in Pakistan
State and Civil Society Response: Successes and Challenges

Thursday, August 27, 2020 | 2:00 - 4:00PM

OUR SPEAKERS



Ms. Ambreen Malik
Secretary for
Women Development Unemployment
Program



Ms. Rukhshanda Naz
Communications and
Marketing Systems Specialist
of women at the Workplace



Ms. Rabees Hadi
Women Rights Activist



Ms. Shaista Junaid
Senior Counselor, Women Counseling Helpline



Ms. Madeeha Waheed
Assistant Program Coordinator
Wahsan



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Population
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Webinar

Community Resilience, Mental Health & COVID 19

Thursday, August 20th

2:00 - 4:00PM

OUR SPEAKERS



Dr. Ali Madeeh Hashmi
Psychiatrist



Dr. Rubeena Kidwai
Clinical Psychologist



Sumbal Gillani
Senior Psychologist
Senior Researcher
Senior Lecturer (2018)



Fouzia Yasmin
Senior Managerial Change
Consulting, Women
Economic Program
Bosman



**Moderator:
Meeraab Lodhi**
Senior Program Officer/Project Lead
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