



Safety for Women

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Safety for Women

- Gender based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment in and out of the workplace is likely to worsen in the context of COVID-19.
- Restrictions have been placed on movement and communication. This has exacerbated some of the GBV risk factors such as changes in living conditions, change in working space, financial tension and household conflicts. Additional GBV risk factors include poor mental health, normalized use of violence, limited economic opportunities and alcohol abuse.
- New forms or different forms of violence are now on the rise such as online violence, sex trolling and sexual harassment.

Potential issues that might arise:

Constraints of the COVID-19 crisis will hinder the effectiveness of GBV prevention measures in place and exacerbate the GBV risk factors:

- Change in workspace/ environment*
- Violent behavior resulting from increased tension, stress and fear of COVID-19 crisis*
- Change in household income leading to conflict and violence*
- Change in/ limited communication channels and increased risk of cyber / online violence*

Examples of Good Practice:

- ✓ Maximize non-contact communication & awareness channels to share information on the risk of GBV at home. (see slide 10) Recognize that home may not be a safe space for some women or children because the perpetrator(s) could be their relatives.
- ✓ Enhance stress and personal financial management interventions and explore through scenarios the possible implications of COVID-19 on women safety.
- ✓ For workers with no internet connection, consider bulk messaging using phones – one-way service or short code, two-way service to encourage response from workers/ persons in need of help. Use this to send regular short messages to all employees to explain:
 - ✓ What GBV is;
 - ✓ How GBV has been or could be worsened by COVID-19;
 - ✓ Scenarios explaining each risk factor and how COVID-19 makes it or could make it worse.
- ✓ To target workers without phones and other community members, consider using outdoor public communication options such as posters, wall murals, flyers and billboards in the farms. Also, consider using radio and other inexpensive and effective ways to reach the workers and their families with women's safety & COVID-19 messaging.

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Potential issues that might arise:

Effectiveness of GBV detection measures in place and in cases where no detection mechanisms exist, there could be an increased number of cases going undetected and unreported.

- A. *Social distancing*
- B. *Limited engagement and communication*

The police, health and legal response mechanisms are currently overwhelmed by the COVID-19 crisis. With this mind, GBV response is likely to be negatively affected.

- A. *Reporting*
- B. *Psychosocial support*
- C. *Safe spaces*

Examples of Good Practice:

- ✓ Start by integrating personal safety discussions in online check ins and workers' safety or toolbox sessions.
 - ✓ In all messaging and communication, include a toll-free hotline to improve response/ reporting rates.
 - ✓ Hold supervisors and line managers responsible for discussing well-being and personal safety regularly with their teams.
 - ✓ Consider pairing employees of same sex for regular catch up and social support.
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- ✓ Reporting channels should be accessible, affordable (preferably toll free) and should include all possible options to enhance the chances of reporting - include online reporting, HR reporting, Code reporting, line / supervisor reporting, and peer to peer reporting.
 - ✓ Engage experts to provide psychosocial support and where possible, maximize internal peer counselling mechanisms.
 - ✓ Ensure that the workspace is always safe through regular check ins and explore safe spaces for relocating survivors of violence with no safe space options.

Safety for Women: Prioritized Framework for Action

Prevention

1. Leadership moments/ leadership communication on women safety at CEO, MD / VP /Director level.
2. Hold a webinar on GBV and COVID-19. Hold sessions at cluster level led by ISS team and target to reach 70% of suppliers.
3. Extend domestic violence learning module to employees and repackage for offline and online engagement.
4. Share key messages for offline and online dissemination to workers and managers.

Detection

1. Prioritize same sex buddy system online and offline.
2. Explore a cost-effective way to send messages to workers and have a reply option for workers to send codes to communicate abuse.

Remediation

1. Have in place toll free reporting lines accessible to everyone. Ensure confidentiality and privacy is maintained.
2. Partner with a service provider with expertise on handling survivors of GBV.
3. Ensure that there are safe space/ shelter options for survivors of violence.

5 Basic steps to implement this framework:

- 1) Appoint dignity champions; team members with the ability to lead and influence the team.
- 2) Assess the GBV risk factors in your context, e.g. change in workspace and change in income.
- 3) Review your existing prevention measures and explore ways to make them more robust.
- 4) Explore your existing wellbeing activities and integrate women safety & COVID-19 awareness activities. Make sure to cover all 3 pillars.
- 5) Implement, monitor and evaluate progress through weekly departmental updates.

Updates on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during COVID-19

1. Argentina

- Calls to emergency services about domestic violence have risen by 25%.

2. Spain

- The emergency number for domestic violence received 18% more calls in the first 2 weeks of lockdown compared to the prior month.

3. Britain

- In the southwest, domestic abuse reports were up 20% after 1 week in lockdown.
- “UK’s largest domestic abuse charity, **Refuge**, has reported a 700% increase in calls to its helpline in a single day, while a separate helpline for perpetrators of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour received 25% more calls after the start of the COVID-19 lockdown.” – **Source:** The Guardian

4. France

- In early April, the French police reported a nationwide spike of about 30% in domestic violence.

5. South Africa

- 148 people have been arrested and charged with crimes relating to GBV.
- 2,000+ complaints of GBV were made in the first 7 days of lockdown.

6. Montenegro

- 20% increase in cases of domestic violence in April 2020 compared to March 2020.

Appendix: Safety for Women

Double click on the links below to open the attachments

Document Title

[How Domestic Abuse Has Risen Worldwide Since Coronavirus](#)

[COVID-19: A Gender Perspective on the Growing Humanitarian Crisis](#)

[COVID-19: Emerging gender data and why it matters](#)

[Issue Brief; COVID-19 and ending violence against women and girls](#)

[Stories; COVID-19 and the link to Violence Against Women and Girls](#)