EQUAL • RESPECTED • PROUD

Generation Equality - Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence
Policy Brief

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains one of the most widespread human rights violations, with 35% of women globally experiencing either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.[1] VAWG is in itself a pandemic and requires urgent action, however it is not always viewed with the same urgency as other pandemics, such as COVID-19. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, all types of violence against women and girls, especially domestic violence, has intensified[2]**.** Broader understandings of violence, encompassing psychological violence as well as its institutional forms, such as economic or state violence, multiply these already extremely high numbers.

Women and girls are subjected to different forms of violence throughout their lives, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence. One of the most common forms of violence is intimate partner violence. Every day 137 women across the world are killed by a member of their own family[3] and the killing of women by intimate partners or family members is rising.[4] In addition, women and girls are subject to harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, child, early and forced marriage, human trafficking, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and online violence and abuse. VAWG is underpinned by unequal power relations and structural barriers to equality that discriminate against all women and girls. It is a manifestation and a driver of the systemic oppression and exclusion of women and girls. All women and girls are at risk of violence but women and girls with multiple identities that are often marginalised are at increased risk and face multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination based on ground of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, caste, ethnicity, relationship status, among others.[5]

We have therefore identified concrete actions centred on the risks and priority needs of women with marginalised intersecting identities for each sub-theme of the Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence ("GBV"), as well as specifically for the context of the pandemic.

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[1] World Health Organisation. 2017. Violence Against Women. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violenceagainst-women

[2] United Nations (9 April, 2020), Policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on women (pages 17-19).

[3] UN Women. 2019. Facts and Figures: Ending Violence against Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/endingviolence-against-women/facts-and-figures

[4] United Nations Office on Drug and crimes. 2019. Global Study on Homicide. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-andanalysis/gsh/Booklet1.pdf

[5] Further references to women and girls acknowledge that this is not a homogenous category and the distinctions identified here are key to understanding experiences and responses to violence.

GBV Prevention

Invest, including in gender transformative education, to tackle the systems of oppression – especially patriarchy, capitalism, racism –, fuelling gender power imbalances and deepening the gender inequalities that cause, perpetuate and condone Gender Based Violence.

In particular:

- Upscale civic education that prioritizes community-based awareness raising and behaviour change campaigns aimed at transforming negative social and cultural practices used to justify GBV as well as focus on power relations analysis and address issues of power imbalances.
- Audit and revise school and tertiary institution curricula to challenge gendered norms and stereotypes that perpetuate GBV for learners at all levels.
- Investing in women's economic rights initiatives to promote economic and financial independence and autonomy of women and girls including for survivors and victims of GBV so as to ensure that they informed choices in forming relationships and have a choice to leave abusive relationships.

GBV Response

Adopt an intersectional discrimination analysis informing international, regional, and national policy making and implementation, so that the specific interests and needs of women and girls in all of their diversities and with multiple identities are recognised and addressed.

Enabling environment including gender responsive laws and policies

Adopt and implement legislation to protect women human rights defenders from violence by state and non-state actors as part of national and international anti VAWG policies and resourcing, with clear indicators to track violations and necessary protection

Enact and enforce comprehensive survivor centred laws, policies, administrative and socio-economic measures that guarantee protection from, punishment for and eradication of all forms of VAWG occurring in both public and private settings. These include:

- Providing adequate resourcing for the implementation and enforcement of anti-VAWG laws, policies and administrative measures including mechanisms to track violations and provide necessary protection for survivors.
- Establish and/or improve timely access to legal, health and psychosocial support for survivors including through one stop centres where all relevant services can be obtained.

Support and strengthen the leadership of WROs and Feminist Movements

Recognise and support the role of women's rights organisations and feminist movements in preventing and responding to violence, including by increasing core, flexible and long-term financial support available to women's rights organisations.

COVID-19 Response

Prioritise and invest in comprehensive services preventing, mitigating, and responding to VAWG and deem them essential. Ensure funding and accessibility of services across sectors, including helplines, shelters, case management, safe spaces, clinical care, mental health and psychosocial support, access to justice services, and sexual and reproductive health services and other support services and reporting mechanisms. In addition, center intersectional feminist analysis in COVID-19 response and recovery so to avoid deepening gender inequalities and vulnerabilities.