With the world responding to the COVID-19 virus, it is important to consider response and recovery mechanisms through a gender lens. While women, as caregivers, breadwinners and health care workers, play critical roles in times of crisis, many of the impacts of COVID-19 are affecting women the most, exacerbating pre-existing social and economic inequalities, barriers and discrimination in their homes and communities.

In Nepal, with nine confirmed cases as of 6 April 2020, the government has placed the entire country on lockdown from the 24th March 2020. While the strict measures are required to contain the spread, they will also lead to long-lasting socio-economic consequences for the country. In this context, preparedness, response and recovery efforts can lead to better outcomes if the voices of those most vulnerable are brought into decision-making, defining their roles and specific needs in terms of protection, response and recovery. Considering the gendered impact of COVID-19 globally, UN Women Nepal is coordinating with women’s groups and excluded groups to enhance the gender-responsiveness of all response and recovery efforts.

**Hear the voices of Nepali Women on COVID-19**

Women’s groups have highlighted a range of emerging issues and concerns about immediate, short and medium/long-term impacts of COVID-19 on women’s lives. These issues were raised in online meetings organised by UN Women Nepal with a total of 22 representatives from the Women-Friendly Disaster Management Group (WFDM)\(^1\), the Intergenerational Feminist Group (IFG)\(^2\), and the Women Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Platform (WHDRRP)\(^3\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Health and Wellbeing:</strong></th>
<th>Concerns about pre-existing health complications, access to health services, and maintaining hygiene.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including Domestic Violence:</strong></td>
<td>Food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, economic pressure and return of migrant workers places women at heightened risk of physical and emotional GBV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Care Burden:</strong></td>
<td>The closure of schools exacerbates the unpaid care burden on women and girls. Sharing parenting and household responsibilities should be actively promoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour:</strong></td>
<td>The lockdown has increased the vulnerability of women’s livelihoods, as women often depend on daily wages and lack sufficient savings. Government’s and employers support in provision of alternative livelihoods, including social security measures or paid leave, is crucial.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Sharing:</strong></td>
<td>Messages and information on COVID-19 are yet to reach many excluded and vulnerable groups, including women. There is a need for targeted information sharing in different language and channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shelter Homes/Quarantine Centers:</strong></td>
<td>CSO facilities, hotels and schools have been identified as venues for quarantine and isolation. Additional medical support and supplies are needed to maintain sufficient standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Migrant workers:</strong></td>
<td>Many migrant workers, including women, are unable to return to their families. Targeted support is required for women domestic workers abroad who may not have access to information and are often unrecognized if their migration was through undocumented channels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People Returning from India:</strong></td>
<td>Many Nepalis, including from excluded groups, are stranded at the Indian border. Advocacy with the government is required to provide support, essential supplies and services and to help them return home.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) The Women Friendly Disaster Management (WFDM) Group is a network of women-led organizations, formed immediately after the 2015 earthquake with support from UN Women. WFDM was formed with a vision to engender policies formulated and implemented on DRR, preparedness and response, and its mission is to enhance women’s knowledge, attitude and practice in DRR and preparedness. The WFDM member organisations are present in all seven provinces. WFDM Contact Person: Babita Basnet (basnetbabita7@hotmail.com; 9851075373), Media Advocacy Group (WFDM Secretariat)

\(^2\) The Intergenerational Feminist Thought Leaders’ Group is a network of diverse, inter-generational feminist leaders who have been actively partaking in a series of ‘Thought Workshops’ facilitated by UN Women Nepal since 2017.

\(^3\) The Women Humanitarian and Disaster Risk Reduction Platform was established in May 2019 as a platform of women professionals working in the humanitarian and DRR sectors. The platform meets to share experiences, best practices, and knowledge related to humanitarian and DRR and implement actions through dedicated task forces. As of now, there are about 50 women professionals representing CSOs, NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, academic and research institutes, as well as free lancers/consultants at national and sub-national levels. Contact person: Ms. Shakti Gurung, shaktigrg01@yahoo.com, 9841787759
**KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES, ONGOING ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISATIONS WORKING IN THE PROVINCES**

**Karnali Province**
- **Key issues:** Further caste/class-based discrimination of women; GBV; limited leadership and decision-making opportunities for women and excluded groups
- **Support currently provided:** Access to information (advocacy and capacity development of media)
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (MAG); IFG (BDS, WHR, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, AATWIN, Center for Dalit Women Nepal, Pourakhi Nepal)

**Province 1**
- **Key issues:** Limited space for social distancing; mobility restrictions; Limited access to health care services
- **Support provided:** Shelters for GBV survivors
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (WOREC, MAG, Saathi); IFG (AMKAS Nepal, BDS, WHR, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, Inclusive Forum, Pourakhi Nepal, Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities, Ujyaló, Foundation, AATWIN, Drísti Nepal, Mitini Nepal, HIDR, LOOM Nepal)

**Province 2**
- **Key issues:** Limited access to information in local languages; further caste/class-based discrimination of women; job security and incomes; GBV; limited leadership and decision-making opportunities for women and excluded groups; mobility restrictions
- **Support currently provided:** Access to information (advocacy and capacity development of media)
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (WOREC, MAG); IFG (AMKAS Nepal, BDS, WHR, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, Pourakhi Nepal, Center for Dalit Women Nepal)

**Province 3**
- **Key issues:** Limited space for social distancing; mobility restrictions; Limited access to health care services
- **Support provided:** Access to information (awareness raising); shelters for survivors of GBV and human trafficking; Provision of essential supplies (soaps and hand sanitizer)
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (WOREC, MAG, Saathi); IFG (AMKAS Nepal, BDS, WHR, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, Centre for Dalit Women Nepal, Pourakhi Nepal)

**Province 4**
- **Key issues:** Risk of trafficking; limited space for social distancing; mobility restrictions; Limited access to health care services
- **Support provided:** Access to information (awareness raising); shelters for survivors of GBV and human trafficking; Provision of essential supplies (soaps and hand sanitizer)
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (WOREC, MAG, Saathi); IFG (AMKAS Nepal, BDS, WHR, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, Fatima Foundation, Center for Dalit Women Nepal, Pourakhi Nepal)

**Province 5**
- **Key issues:** Limited access to health care and essential supplies; job security and incomes; limited space for social distancing; mobility restrictions
- **Support provided:** Shelters for survivors of GBV and human trafficking, women and children; access to information; provision of essential supplies; isolation spaces for women; capacity development support for LGs and CSOs
- **Organisations present:** WFDM (WOREC, MAG, Saathi); IFG (AMKAS Nepal, BDS, WHR, Center for Dalit Women Nepal, Didi Bahini, WOREC, FEDO, Tewa, Inclusive Forum, Pourakhi Nepal, Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities, Ujyaló, Foundation, AATWIN, Drísti Nepal, Mitini Nepal, HIDR, LOOM Nepal)

**Notes:**
- Inputs provided by Women Friendly Disaster Management Group.
- WOREC Nepal – Women’s Rehabilitation Center Nepal
- Intergenerational Feminist Group
- MAG – Media Advocacy Group
- Saathi
- Contact Information
In short - Key messages on COVID-19 and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), adopted by the Humanitarian Country Team on 25 March 2020

**Messages available in full [here](#)**

- Identify the different needs, capacities and voices of women, girls, and all persons from excluded groups.
- Support integration of GESI into emergency response policies, plans and processes.
- Collect and analyze disaggregated data.
- Promote leadership and meaningful representation of women and excluded groups in all decision-making processes.
- Ensure dissemination of accessible information on mitigation, preparedness and response.
- Prioritize women’s access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Develop targeted women’s economic empowerment strategies.
- Prioritise services for prevention and response to GBV, including domestic violence.
- Provide priority support to women in the frontlines of the response.

> **The majority of health workers are women and that puts them at highest risk. Most of them are also parents and caregivers to family members. They continue to carry the burden of care.**

PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA
UN WOMEN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**Useful Links**

- [Provincial Factsheets: Nepal](#)
- [The COVID-19 outbreak and gender: Key advocacy points from Asia and the Pacific](#)
- [COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement](#)
- [Coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) situation reports](#)
- [COVID-19, Gender and Data: Resources and Reporting](#)
- [GBVIE Minimum Standards Poster](#)
- [Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls](#)
- [IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#)
- [National Women Commission’s helpline (1145) to report gender-based violence](#)