

THE FUTURE IS GENDER-INCLUSIVE



VIENNA DISCUSSION FORUM 2020

Global responses in crisis management and recovery

27 November 2020, 10:30am CET – Virtual Conference



Summary of recommendations emanating from the 2020 Vienna Discussion Forum

UNODC and UNIDO, together with the Permanent Missions of Finland, Norway and Sweden in Vienna, hosted the second annual Vienna Discussion Forum, a platform to discuss gender equality in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the context of COVID-19, the event was dedicated to crisis preparedness, response and recovery efforts and the necessity for them to be gender-responsive in order not to perpetuate or exacerbate already existing inequalities. The Forum culminated in the following recommendations:

- **Human Rights and gender considerations have to be part of national and international crisis management plans and risk analysis before the next crisis hits.** Ensuring there is awareness of the specific challenges and needs of all groups of society is essential to save lives and reach inclusive outcomes of the crisis response measures.
- When a crisis hits, national needs and approaches are often prioritized and international cooperation moves towards the background. However, **integrated global and local responses need to go hand in hand to holistically address the manifold of compounding hardships faced by women during a crisis.**
- In responding to a crisis, **women should not be regarded as a homogenous group** - it is paramount to address the priorities and vulnerabilities of women of different backgrounds and identities, i.e. senior, minority and displaced women, or women with disabilities.
- Lack of assessment of how a crisis affects men and women differently can perpetuate its repercussions and deepen inequalities. **Crisis management measures should regularly be assessed against their gendered impact and effectiveness.** Any crisis response - be it a national measure, international humanitarian aid or development work - should have gender equality at its heart and include gender-related expertise, partner organizations, toolkits and trainings.
- Crisis management should not only focus on the urgent needs of women, such as sexual and reproductive health products in cases of natural disasters or forced displacement. **It is essential to carry out surveys, consultations, visits and discussion groups to unveil the full extent of the crisis' socioeconomic impact on women, and design long-term recovery measures accordingly.** These should include i.e. skills upgrading or granting access to credit to support women to rebuild their firms.

- **The digital divide and our systems of communication are important factors to consider.** It is important to guarantee that all people, including those with disabilities or the elderly, can easily access confirmed crisis-related information so that response efforts are effective. Through initiatives such as "Verified", the United Nations is advocating for the spread of accurate information on COVID-19 mitigation measures on social media.
- Women's voices are often overheard - not only as those impacted by a crisis, but also as leaders of crisis management. Women and girls need to be recognized as agents of change that build resilience in communities. **A significant push for more women policy makers is needed** - through its initiative "Women Rise for All", the UN is already putting women leaders at the forefront of its call to action to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Governments should make use of international bodies, such as the mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council, to provide recommendations and share lessons learned on gender-responsive crisis management.** This will help inform national measures that take into account all dimensions, i.e. economic, humanitarian, security, and human rights considerations disproportionately affecting women. Consulting civil society organizations, and promoting the engagement of men in gender equality discussions, is essential in this regard.
- The status quo must be questioned and there has to be a reflection on the inequalities and detrimental practices that have fueled, exacerbated or been deepened by crises. This means **recognizing the linkages between sudden calamities and protracted, underlying crises such as threats to the rule of law or climate change.** Addressing these correlations and their disproportionate impact on women will lay the foundation for more inclusive and sustainable societies of the future.