



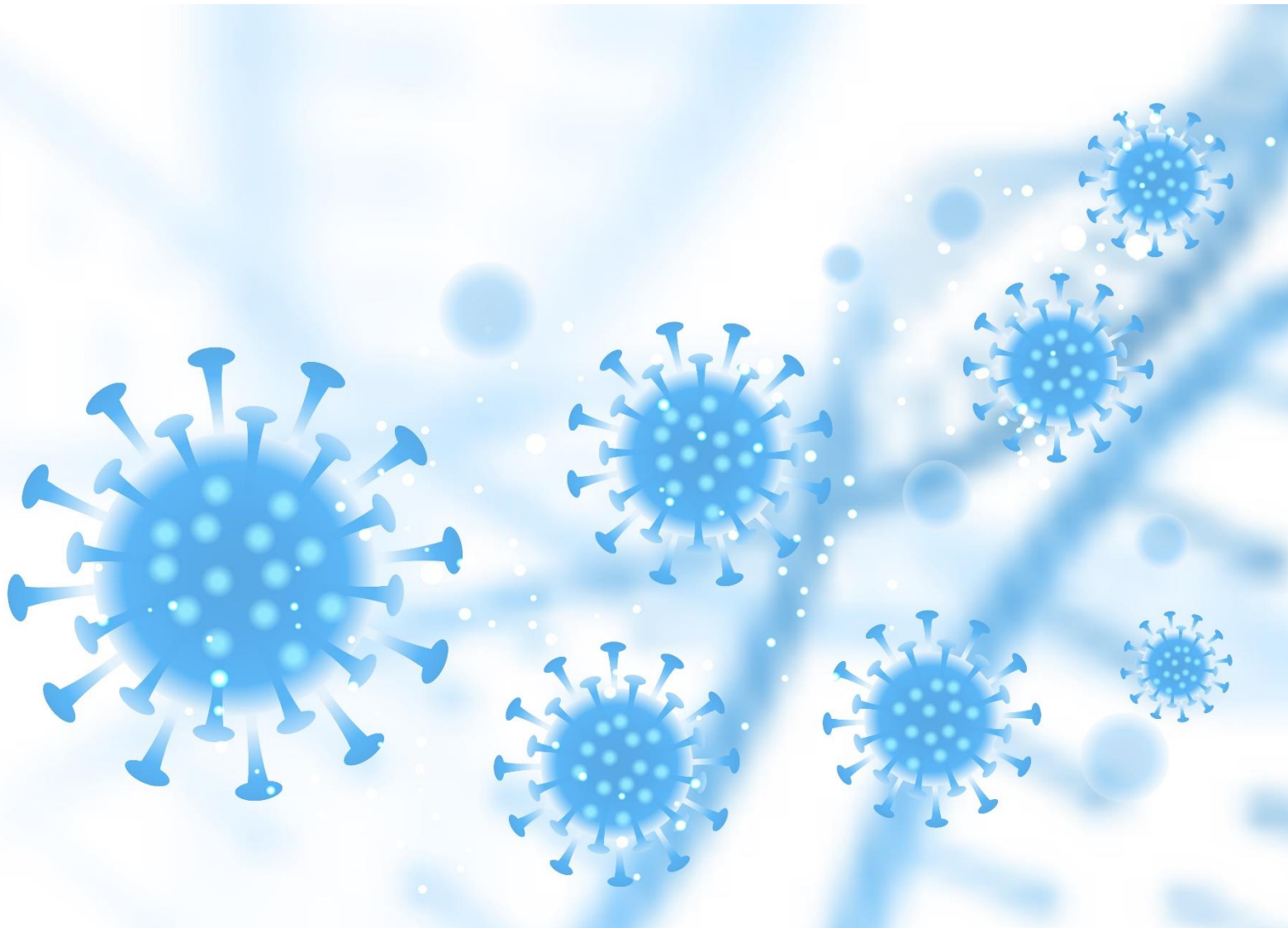
**UNODC**

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime



**COVID-19  
RESPONSE**

# The Impact of COVID-19 on Criminal Justice System Responses to Gender-based Violence Against Women: **A Global Review of Emerging Evidence**



April 2021

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<sup>1</sup> To be referred as “UNODC Expert group meeting” hereinafter.

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## List of Acronyms

ADR	Alternative Dispute Resolution
AIAMP	Ibero-American Association of Public Ministries – Specialized Network on Gender Issues
CCTV	Closed-circuit television
CEDAW	UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEPOL	The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GBVAW	Gender-Based Violence Against Women
GGRT	Global Gender Response Tracker
HRC	Human Rights Committee
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPV	Intimate partner violence
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
OP	Office of the Prosecutor
OxCGRT	Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker
PPE	Personal protective equipment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SOPs	Standard Operations Procedures
SRVAW	UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its causes and consequences
ICTs	Information and communications technologies
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WBG	World Bank Group
WHO	World Health Organisation



## Introduction

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was first identified in December 2019 and quickly spread to many regions of the world in the first months of 2020. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020, and by 11 March 2020, it was declared a pandemic.

Governments all over the world have implemented various measures intended to mitigate the spread of the pandemic and ease the strain on health care systems. Those measures have included lockdowns, movement restrictions and social distancing measures that have been implemented with diverse degrees of strictness and at different moments in time. At the time of writing this report, in November 2020, many countries are experiencing a 'second wave' of the pandemic and most of the restrictive measures are being re-established. Considering the possibility of future similar health emergencies, restrictions with similar impacts on the criminal justice system and other public services could be re-imposed.

The implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures has created - and will continue to create - additional challenges for the criminal justice system in responding to gender-based violence against women (GBVAW).

The UNODC *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) response – Thematic Brief on gender-based violence against women and girls*<sup>2</sup> underlined the following difficulties:

- Resources are being diverted away from the criminal justice system towards more immediate public health measures to deal with COVID-19.
- Police and other law enforcement agencies have less time and human resources to respond to incidents of GBVAW, may lack specific plans on how to respond to such incidents during the emergency and are likely to shift priorities

towards enforcing quarantine, monitoring social distancing and other related measures. In countries with weak rule of law and existing economic constraints, the focus may also shift towards responses to public unrest, looting and other crime that may increase as a result of economic and social consequences of the responses to COVID-19.

- In many countries, judicial proceedings are suspended and/or postponed, which hampers immediate judicial protection (e.g. issuance of emergency or interim measures like protection and restraining orders) and creates a backlog of cases that affects the effectiveness and quality of criminal justice responses to GBVAW in the long run.
- Other services, such as hotlines, crisis centres, shelters, access to a lawyer including through legal aid, and victim protection services may also be scaled back or closed, further reducing access to the few sources of help that women in abusive relationships might have.
- Due to the lockdown policies in place, women and girls may have more difficulties accessing police stations to directly report cases of GBVAW and seek judicial and other forms of protection. They may also find it more difficult to place phone calls to report violence or access hotlines as they live 24/7 with their abusers and have no privacy to make such phone calls.

The purpose of this assessment is to review the impact of COVID-19, and States' responses to the pandemic, on crime prevention and criminal justice responses to GBVAW around the world, considering the first months of the pandemic. The assessment has been undertaken from a qualitative perspective, focusing on emerging evidence and promising practices by crime prevention and criminal justice institutions and professionals. This review does not examine the impact of the pandemic (and related health measures) on prevalence or severity of GBVAW. Furthermore, it is beyond the scope of this review to include an examination or comparison of attrition rates in GBVAW cases.

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<sup>2</sup> UNODC (2020a). *Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) response – UNODC Thematic Brief on gender-based violence against women and girls*.

The assessment report is structured in five parts:

1. Gender-based violence against women and COVID-19 mitigation measures (Chapter 1)
2. Challenges and difficulties in the criminal justice responses to GBVAW in the context of the pandemic (Chapter 2)
3. Measures adopted to counter such challenges and difficulties (Chapter 3)
4. Limitations and obstacles for the implementation of such measures and addressing the challenges that emerged during the pandemic (Chapter 4)
5. Recommendations (Chapter 5)

The Annex includes tables with examples of the measures adopted in different countries and regions, based on available information gathered.

## Methodology

Considering the scope of the assignment, the available time and information sources, the research methodology has combined the use of diverse qualitative research methods in order to obtain the broadest possible overview of the challenges the pandemic is posing on criminal justice responses to GBVAW, and the special measures being implemented to address them.

Throughout this report, references to women and GBVAW include the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination affecting them, in particular those affecting women who are migrants, including undocumented migrants, displaced, asylum seekers, refugees; women who belong to indigenous and ethnic minorities;

women who are sex-workers, domestic workers, lesbian, bisexual, transgender; elderly and disabled women, women from low-income or marginalised groups, including women who use drugs, who are in prison, homeless, etc.

This report does not examine the impact of the pandemic on violence against children. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the vulnerability of children<sup>3</sup> and some aspects of the impact of COVID-19 on criminal justice system responses to GBVAW also affect girls. The international legal framework and systems (e.g. child protection/child justice system) applicable to children are different to the ones applicable to women and adults in general.<sup>4</sup>

While GBVAW is understood in a broad sense,<sup>5</sup> the assessment focuses on specific GBVAW crimes:

- Intimate partner violence (including crimes often called domestic violence, intrafamilial violence, etc. and including within these crimes, those related to physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence, although not all these are considered in legal definitions of domestic violence in all countries).
- Non-partner sexual violence (including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, etc.).
- Gender-based killings of women (also known or criminalised as “femicide” or “feminicide” in some countries).<sup>6</sup>
- Online GBVAW.

The assessment is not exhaustive, but it is illustrative of the most frequent and relevant challenges and measures related to COVID-19

<sup>3</sup> The UN Policy Brief on the Impact of COVID-19 on children (UN Secretary-General / UN Sustainable Development Group, 2020) refers to studies conducted on the impact of the Ebola epidemic on children suggesting that 55 percent of children in focus groups said that they thought violence against children in their community had risen during or after the epidemic. While the epidemiological characteristics of Ebola and COVID-19 vary significantly, the containment and mitigation measures deployed to contain their spread have many similarities. See also: Inter-Agency Working Group on Violence against Children (2020) Agenda for Action. The Inter-Agency Technical Note on COVID-19 and Children Deprived of their Liberty (The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action / UNICEF, 2020) has highlighted these risks and aims at providing detaining authorities with information on how to respond to COVID-19.

<sup>4</sup> UNODC interventions acknowledge the fact girls differ from women in their physical, mental and psychological developmental needs and vulnerabilities. Therefore, a child and gender-sensitive approach and subsequently differentiate treatment should be directed solely at children, defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child as

every human being under the age of 18. Boys and girls should equally benefit from special protection provided by international law, in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children.

<sup>5</sup> Including all forms of violence that cause or may result in death or physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, which causes and consequences are related to gender. See: CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 35 (2017); the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011); the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (1994), among others.

<sup>6</sup> In many Latin-American countries, different forms of gender-based killings of women have been criminalised as “femicide” or “feminicide”. In some jurisdictions, the specific offence is limited to intimate partner killings of women, while other laws are broader and include other perpetrators and circumstances. For more details, see: UNODC (2019). Global Study on Homicide. Gender-related killing of women and girls.



across different countries and legal systems. Information from studies and experts from almost a hundred countries<sup>7</sup> in different regions has been considered in this report, aiming at the widest diversity possible. Although the assessment includes examples from high income countries, it mainly focused on the challenges and responses found in low- and middle-income countries.

The qualitative research methods used include:

- **Online questionnaires** shared among relevant stakeholders, to ensure that the broadest information is gathered efficiently. Two online questionnaires have been used:
  - **Preliminary questionnaire:** addressed to UNODC national focal points and field offices, in order to gather information from the ground that could contribute to improve the Stakeholders questionnaire (shared during the last half of September 2020).
  - **Stakeholders questionnaire:** addressed to criminal justice professionals and experts from civil society and academia, in order to obtain more detailed information (shared between 25 September and 15 October 2020 in English, Spanish and French).<sup>8</sup>
- **Online / phone semi-structured interviews** to relevant stakeholders, to focus on specific issues or experiences (October 2020).
- **Online focus groups** with stakeholders pertaining to specific regions (with a

sample of stakeholders from African countries and Asian countries) during the first weeks of November 2020.<sup>9</sup>

- **Review of pertinent databases**, research and studies available including grey and empirical literature, including studies based on official information from criminal justice agencies.<sup>10</sup> These sources included:
  - The **GBV & COVID-19 Initiatives Document**, compiled by the World Bank Group;<sup>11</sup>
  - The **Global Gender Response Tracker (GGRT)** under the categories of “police and justice responses to address impunity” (96 measures in 65 countries: 31 measures in the Americas, 24 in Europe, 22 in Asia, 10 in Oceania and 9 in Africa);<sup>12</sup>
  - The **Regional report on actions for the prevention and fight against gender violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic** by the *Specialized Network on Gender Issues of the Ibero-American Association of Public Prosecutors (AIAMP)*, based on official information provided by Prosecutors’ Offices in 12 countries in Latin-America and Southwestern Europe; and
  - The **Council of Europe’s database** on measures and practices implemented by Member States during the pandemic to mitigate its impact on women’s rights.<sup>13</sup>

The stakeholders that were consulted included:

contained in a regional report on actions for the prevention and fight against gender violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic published by the Specialized Network on Gender Issues of the Ibero-American Association of Public Ministries (Asociación Ibero-Americana de Ministerios Públicos (AIAMP)) (2020). *Informe regional sobre acciones para la prevención y lucha contra la violencia de género en el Contexto de la pandemia de COVID -19*. Red Especializada en Temas de Género, Sept. 2020).

<sup>11</sup> World Bank Group, Gender-based Violence and COVID Initiatives compiled by the World Bank Group, [available from https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xs5gXy7cBSgRex3Dt5atYJrWeQwspTdKd00ag3x9JkU/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1xs5gXy7cBSgRex3Dt5atYJrWeQwspTdKd00ag3x9JkU/edit?usp=sharing).

<sup>12</sup> However, in some cases those measures include more than a single measure. In some other cases they only constitute political measures, with no impact in practice.

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe, Measures and practices that Council of Europe member states have put in place during the crisis to mitigate its impact on women’s rights, available from <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/promoting-and-protecting-women-s-rights>.

<sup>7</sup> Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Rwanda, San Marino, Serbia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA (New York, Washington State, Washington, DC), West Bank and Gaza, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>8</sup> Referred to as “UNODC Questionnaire”, from here onwards.

<sup>9</sup> Hereinafter, referred to as “UNODC Focus group meeting”.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, official responses by Offices of the Prosecutor from diverse Latin American and Southwestern European countries are

- Policymakers
- Criminal justice practitioners
  - Police
  - Prosecutors
  - Judges and magistrates
  - Lawyers
  - Forensic examiners
  - Legal aid providers
  - Prison's personnel
- United Nations personnel
- National and international civil society organizations (CSOs)
- GBVAW services personnel
- Academics and researchers

It should be highlighted that most of the information gathered in this assessment considers the first six months of the pandemic and, accordingly, considers the measures adopted to counter the challenges imposed by the first health measures adopted to mitigate the spread of the disease. It is expected that, as various countries are experiencing a second wave of the pandemic (October - November 2020), the health measures implemented will vary, as well as their impact on the criminal justice responses to GBVAW. This means that the measures that the criminal justice system could put in place to face second or third lockdowns, for instance, may also be different from those adopted in the early stages of the pandemic.

The tables presented in the Annex include examples of the measures considered in the review. These examples are not meant to be a critical evaluation as to whether these measures are 'promising', as the information available in most cases is limited to the description of the measures, without references to their results in practice. As pointed out in Chapter 3, many of these measures have elements that indicate that they may contribute to ensure or enhance women's access to justice in GBV cases, with a survivor-centred and gender-responsive approach.

Finally, it should be underlined that this report focuses on the criminal justice responses to GBVAW, although its information could also be of interest to other justice branches dealing with these cases, such as civil or family courts.

# 1 Gender-based violence against women and COVID-19 mitigation measures

## 1.1 Health measures adopted and their socio-economic consequences

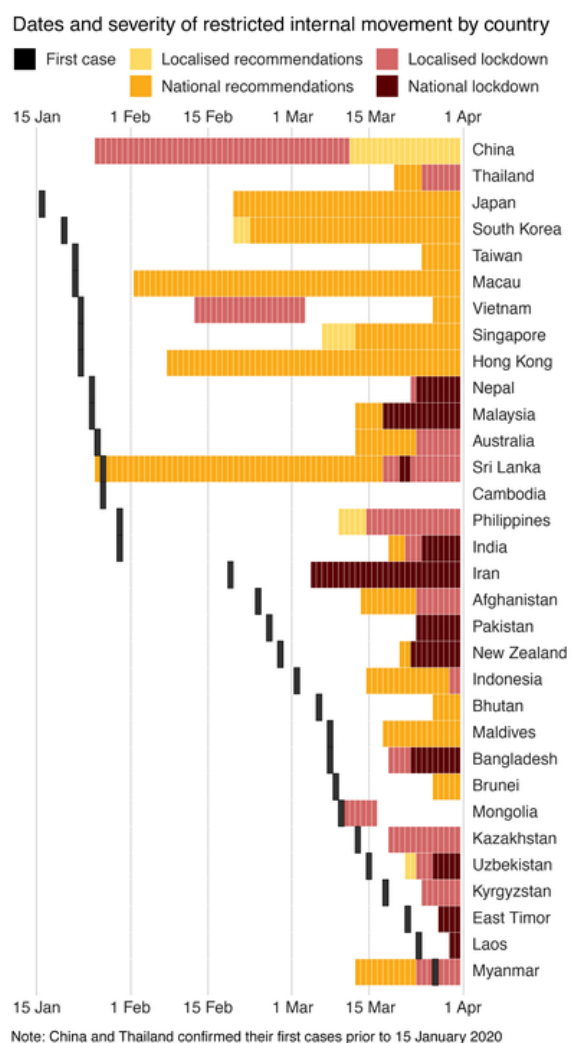


Figure 1. Restriction of internal movement by country in Asia, Australia and New Zealand -15 January to 1 April 2020- (Source: Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker, BBC Research. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-52103747>)

The rapid spread of COVID-19 globally since the first months of 2020 has triggered a wide range of responses from governments. In order to limit the spread of the pandemic and to ease the strain on health care systems, governments have adopted a range of mitigation measures. Such measures have included lockdowns, curfews, closure (or restrictions on opening) of schools and non-essential business, physical distancing measures, restrictions on community gatherings and travel restrictions, among others, with particularities in their characteristics, enforcement and extension among various countries.<sup>14</sup> Some of these measures have inevitably involved severe restrictions to human rights, including freedom of movement, and have been authorised only after a declaration of *State of Alarm, Emergency, Catastrophe or Calamity*, or within the framework of extraordinary circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

The *Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker* (OxCGRT) systematically collects information on several common policy responses that governments have taken to respond to the pandemic on 18 indicators such as school closures and travel restrictions.<sup>16</sup> It classifies the measures in *Containment and closure* (including school and workplace closing, the cancelation of public events, restrictions on group size for gatherings, public transport closing, lockdown and home confinement requirements, restrictions on internal movement or international travel); *Economic response* (for example, new forms of social welfare provision); *Health systems* (for example, emergency investments in healthcare facilities, testing and contact-tracing policies, policies related to face coverage, etc.) and *Other responses* (miscellaneous).

The political, social and economic global impact of the crisis and the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures is yet to be determined, as well as their gendered consequences. The pandemic is estimated to push between 70 to 100

<sup>14</sup> In some cases, Lockdown or confinement measures have been limited to certain areas, cities or regions; while in others they have been imposed in the whole territory. Other limitations have been based on other criteria; for example, in Panama, the confinement measures and their exceptions (times allowed for leaving home) were defined and controlled by time and gender (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> According to the Human Rights Committee (HRC) (2020) Statement on derogations from the Covenant in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, "...a number of States parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have in recent weeks notified the Secretary-General, pursuant to article 4 of the Covenant, of

emergency measures that they have taken or are planning to take with a view to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in derogation from their obligations under the Covenant. It has been brought to the attention of the Committee, however, that several other States parties have resorted to emergency measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in a manner seriously affecting the implementation of their obligations under the Covenant, without formally submitting any notification of derogation from the Covenant..."

<sup>16</sup> Hale et al. (2020)

million individuals into extreme poverty<sup>17</sup> and the number of people in food crises is expected to double, with about 270 million people in low- and middle-income countries expected to face acute food insecurity by the end of 2020.<sup>18</sup> Global working-hour losses projected are equivalent to almost 500 million full-time jobs, affecting mostly lower-middle-income countries.<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, the most affected job sectors, i.e. service sector, hospitality, tourism and the informal sector, are largely staffed with women, who have also borne the brunt of the increase in care burdens and unpaid work,<sup>20</sup> as women, including many migrant women, are disproportionately responsible for caring for the sick, elderly and children, constituting the majority of caregivers in their own homes, in hospitals, care facilities and private households.<sup>21</sup>

In developing countries, seven out of ten workers, most of them women, make a living through informal markets, are not covered by social insurance programmes and therefore cannot earn money if they are confined at home.<sup>22</sup> In addition, remittance flows to low- and middle-income countries are expected to decline by almost 20 per cent, relative to 2019.<sup>23</sup>

## 1.2 Aggravating factors and changing dynamics of GBVAW

CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) underlines that GBVAW is affected and often exacerbated by economic and social factors, including political, economic and social crises, civil unrest, humanitarian emergencies. Globally, intimate partner violence (IPV) rises by 35 percent during armed conflict, and also increases during health crises.<sup>24</sup> Similar significant increases in domestic violence have been reported following earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and many other catastrophic events around the world.<sup>25</sup>

Rising poverty, food insecurity, household tensions, and mental health issues are known to be exacerbating factors of IPV,<sup>26</sup> as well as economic uncertainty, increased substance abuse,<sup>27</sup> changes in family lifestyle, and more stressful and precarious environments. Such factors also affect other forms of GBVAW, i.e. perpetrated by others than family members and intimate partners, including, for example, violence committed at the workplace by male colleagues, supervisors, employers, managers or customers.<sup>28</sup>

The gendered implications of COVID-19 for women's subsistence, workload and access to reproductive health services, among others, are likely to contribute to, or aggravate, GBVAW and its consequences. A report released by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in October 2020, based on interviews of more than 800 women from refugee, displaced and post conflict settings, living in 15 African countries, indicates that 73 per cent of women interviewed reported an increase in intimate partner violence, 51 per cent cited sexual violence and 32 per cent observed a growth in the levels of early and forced marriage during the pandemic.<sup>29</sup>

While an assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on the prevalence or severity of GBVAW or on the number of reported cases is beyond the scope of the present report, the following subsections present key aspects that have emerged concerning quantitative administrative and survey data that require further attention and analysis.

### Domestic and intimate partner violence

Restrictions on movement and the "stay at home" requirements (in order to "stay safe") have been considered gender-blind and counterproductive to GBVAW prevention, in particular in domestic settings, considering that even in "normal" times,

<sup>17</sup> Measured at the international poverty line of people living on less than \$1.90 per day (Source: [World Bank GEP, June 2020](#)).

<sup>18</sup> Anthem (2020, April 16).

<sup>19</sup> Source: [ILO Monitor 6th Edition, September 2020 Update](#).

<sup>20</sup> United Nations (2020). United Nations Comprehensive Response to COVID-19 Saving Lives, Protecting Societies, Recovering Better. September 2020.

<sup>21</sup> Foley & Piper (2020).

<sup>22</sup> United Nations (2020).

<sup>23</sup> Source: World Bank & KNOMAD (2020). COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens, April 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Hanmer & Klugman (2016).

<sup>25</sup> Campbell (2020).

<sup>26</sup> Gibbs et al. (2020).

<sup>27</sup> UNODC (2020a).

<sup>28</sup> See: Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (2020); Rodriguez (2020, December 7).

<sup>29</sup> International Rescue Committee (2020) What Happened? How the Humanitarian Response to COVID-19 Failed to Protect Women and Girls.

the most dangerous place for many women is their own home. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences (SRVAW), Dubravka Šimonović, in her report *Intersection between the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the pandemic of gender-based violence against women, with a focus on domestic violence and the “peace in the home” initiative*, issued in July 2020 and based on more than 270 submissions from all over the world, states that:

“[These health measures] have left thousands of women and girls trapped at home, a place of fear, where psychological, sexual, physical and economic abuse are rampant. For those women who are already in abusive situations, their situation has been exacerbated by the crisis, as they have now been left more exposed to increased control by their abusers (...).”<sup>30</sup>

A similar concern has been expressed by a number of international human rights treaty bodies and special procedures as well as UN agencies and regional organisations<sup>31</sup>. The increased exposure to abusers in the domestic sphere could be similar to that shown in situations such as vacation periods and weekends, in which GBVAW and domestic violence cases tend to increase.<sup>32</sup>

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the number of calls to dedicated hotlines has reportedly increased by up to 770 per cent in some cases,<sup>33</sup> including services run by CSOs.<sup>34</sup> According to the Special Rapporteur’s report, mentioned above, between the 1<sup>st</sup> of March and the 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2020, the helpline run by the Government of Italy (i.e. number 1522) received 5,031 telephone calls, 73 per cent more than in the same period of 2019. Compared to previous periods, in Lebanon and Malaysia, calls to violence helplines doubled, while in Spain, there was a 48 per cent increase.

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović: *Intersection between the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and the pandemic of gender-based violence against women, with a focus on domestic violence and the “peace in the home” initiative* (A/75/144).

<sup>31</sup> See: Website of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR), *The COVID-19 crisis’ impact on violence against women*. Responses by SR VAW, the UN system, regional organisations and civil society and State parties.

<sup>32</sup> “Our attention centres report a one-third increase in domestic violence compared to pre-confinement. This rise is similar to that observed during weekends and holidays in general. We expected

Colombia recorded a 100 per cent increase during a four-week period of the crisis. In South Africa, calls to the National Gender-Based Violence Command Centre tripled during the lockdown.<sup>35</sup> In Tunisia, the Minister of Women, Children and the Elderly indicates that attacks against women have

increased five times compared to March 2019.<sup>36</sup> Current estimates by UNFPA indicate that for every three months of lockdown, an additional 15 million women are expected to be subjected to violence. A recent review by UNODC of the limited available data on incidents reported to criminal justice authorities and helplines found that, where an increase in complaints about gender-based violence against women and domestic violence was recorded, the patterns seem to have returned to pre-lockdown levels after the first phase of restrictive measures.<sup>37</sup>

While some helplines did not record an exponential increase in the number of calls during lockdown, it should be considered that calls to helplines in the context of lockdown or movement restrictions could be very difficult for women who live with their abuser and may lack the privacy or safety for doing such calls. Furthermore, although calls to helplines could be an indicator of the levels of GBVAW, it has to be kept in mind that many women survivors do not contact any service or organisation following the incidents. Global data indicates that less than 40 per cent of the women

such a phenomenon because we know that the long periods of presence of the couple under the same roof generate peaks of violence”. Yosra Frawes, Tunisian Association of Democratic Women (ATFD) at an interview on Nawaat (see Boukhatia, 2020). See also: Sanz-Barbero et al. (2018).

<sup>33</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>34</sup> Boukhatia (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Albania, CSO.

<sup>35</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>36</sup> Boukhatia (2020).

<sup>37</sup> UNODC (2020c). Research brief: What crime and helpline data say about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on reported violence against women and girls.

#### IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Projected cases of gender based violence for every 3 months of global lockdown

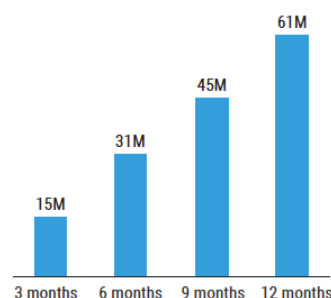


Figure 2. Projected cases of GBV for every three months of global lockdown (Source: UNFPA, with contributions from Avenir Health, Johns Hopkins University (USA) and Victoria University (Australia)).



who experience violence seek help of any sort and less than 10 per cent of those seeking help turned to the police.<sup>38</sup> In Europe, in 66 per cent of cases of violence committed by a partner, and 75 per cent of non-partner violence, the most serious incidents did not come to the attention of any service or organisation (considering reporting the incident to the police, seeking medical assistance or help from a women's shelter or a victim support organisation).<sup>39</sup> Although no similar data is available from other continents, at least during the pandemic, it is reasonable to believe that - given the frequent victim-shaming and victim-blaming attitudes related to GBVAW cases worldwide - in other geographical and cultural contexts the situation could be similar, if not worse.

Additionally, intimate partner violence often involves repeated incidents. Calls to helplines are therefore not necessarily indicative of the actual number of incidents of GBVAW. A much deeper analysis is required, including in-depth surveys, to determine how much of the increase in those helplines calls is a reflection of an *increase in GBVAW*, due to the increase of domestic interaction and stress, and how much corresponds to a *decrease of the dark figure* of such crimes, if, for example, during lockdown women have had no access to other coping activities or informal support, or the intensity of violence has surpassed a certain threshold, consequently making women contact official channels for help.

In some countries, a decrease in physical GBVAW has been associated with the increased control that intimate partners can exert over women as a consequence of movement restriction measures. According to the Office of the Prosecutor of Spain, during confinement, the number of serious attacks against the integrity of women that required hospitalization was reduced, and this could be related to the fact that women have to stay home and reduce their interaction with people beyond their household, decreasing the

incidence of triggering situations related to aggressor's jealousy and lack of control.<sup>40</sup>

## Gender-related killing of women and girls

A recent review by UNODC of available criminal justice data on homicide found that, in some countries there was no notable change in the number of gender-related killings of women and girls during COVID-19 related restrictive measures, while in others there was a decrease.<sup>41</sup>

For example, the Chilean National Prosecutor's Office observed a reduction of intimate partner killings of women during the lockdown period.<sup>42</sup> One explanation for this reduction may lie in the fact that many of these killings occur when the woman leaves or threatens to leave the relationship,<sup>43</sup> a situation that has been impossible during lockdown, and increasingly difficult or unlikely as the economic crisis deepens. Reduced levels of physical violence could be hiding increased levels of psychologic violence (that tends to be less visible and less reported) as aggressors do not need to use physical violence to ensure their power.<sup>44</sup> The higher levels of control from partners could be also reflected in the increased numbers of calls from women requesting to retract their complaints, indicated by the Chilean National Prosecutor's Office in its report to AIAMP.<sup>45</sup>

In Brazil, where the Brazilian Forum of Public Security has gathered information on "femicide" (as defined by the Brazilian legislation) in 12 federal states, data showed a 38.9 per cent increase in the records of femicide in March 2020 compared with 2019, in April 2020 there was a 3.2 per cent growth, but in May 2020 there was a 27.9 per cent drop in the records of feminicides in the states analysed in relation to 2019.<sup>46</sup> This could indicate that there is a change in the dynamics of GBVAW during the pandemic, showing greater levels of control from partners as the economic crisis deepens, and greater

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Affairs (2015). The World's Women 2015, Trends and Statistics.

<sup>39</sup> FRA (2014).

<sup>40</sup> Information provided by the Spain's Office of the Attorney General of the State, through the Office of Violence against Women based in information (AIAMP, 2020). This could also be due to the fact that women did go to the hospitals or health care services for fear of infection.

<sup>41</sup> UNODC (2020c).

<sup>42</sup> Interview with prosecutors of the Specialised Unit on Gender Violence at the National Prosecutor Office. Official data on femicide is gathered in Chile by the Ministry of Women and Gender Equity.

<sup>43</sup> UNODC (2019).

<sup>44</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>45</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>46</sup> Forum Brasileiro de Seguranca Publica (2020), *Violencia Domestica Durante a Pandemia de COVID-19*, third edition, July 2020.



dependency of women towards their abusers, preventing women from leaving abusive partners.

It should be noted that in humanitarian crisis settings and in the majority of contexts where IRC conducted safety audits, the worsening economic conditions were mentioned as a factor contributing to violence within the household and community.<sup>47</sup> In any event, the number of gender-related killings remained significant during the pandemic.<sup>48</sup>

## Sexual violence

A recent review by UNODC of available criminal justice data found that the number of rape and sexual assault cases reported to authorities has decreased during COVID-19-related restrictive measures, suggesting a reduction in reporting violence to criminal justice institutions and/or a possible decrease in the number of incidents during COVID-19. It should be noted that often such a decrease has been followed by an increase of reported sexual violence to previous levels once confinement measures were relaxed.<sup>49</sup> The experience of some criminal justice practitioners confirms that confinement or movement restrictions may decrease - de facto - certain forms of GBVAW, such as physical or sexual violence, committed by people who do not live with their victim.<sup>50</sup>

It is important to note that levels of specific forms of GBVAW are not always captured by administrative data. This is true in particular for sexual violence in the domestic sphere and marital rape, crimes that even in non-emergency times are among the least reported to authorities.<sup>51</sup> As one respondent in Uganda pointed out, this can be inferred from higher levels of unwanted and teenage pregnancies. According to this view, more men being at home in poverty due to unemployment has increased the rate of rape, leading to unwanted and teenage pregnancies.<sup>52</sup> This is consistent with the WHO's indication that access to vital sexual and reproductive health services, including for women subjected to

violence, will likely become more limited as a consequence of the pandemic.<sup>53</sup> In North East Nigeria, although there is a lack of specific data on the impact to COVID-19 on GBVAW, some research indicates an increase of this type of violence in all six geopolitical regions. As a result of multiple obstacles, reports received do not reflect changing dynamics of incidence as, for example, the indications of increase in marital rape incidence.<sup>54</sup>

In addition, there are further risks of gender-based sexual exploitation and abuse of women and girls who desperately look for ways to survive amidst the economic crisis. As the IRC states, in the context of humanitarian crisis settings in Africa, the impact of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns on the ability to meet basic needs also forced women and girls to undertake more risky activities, such as venturing outside of refugee camps in search of firewood to sell, and created additional opportunities for men to sexually exploit women and girls in exchange for food, sanitary pads and other essential items.<sup>55</sup> As indicated by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the potential spread of COVID-19 in refugee and internally displaced people settings may exacerbate the already high risk of sexual violence in such situations, including increased intimate partner violence, potential of trafficking, forced prostitution and sexual exploitation, as quarantine and other physical distancing measures affect economic and livelihood activities and impede basic humanitarian service delivery. Among other cases, UN agencies have already expressed concern over increased risk of trafficking as a consequence of the pandemic, including in locations such as Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh where almost one million Rohingya refugees face acute vulnerability.<sup>56</sup>

## Psychological violence

New manifestations of psychological violence or threats may emerge in the context of the pandemic and related lockdown policies. This

<sup>47</sup> IRC (2020).

<sup>48</sup> UNODC (2020c).

<sup>49</sup> UNODC (2020c).

<sup>50</sup> According to the Spain's Prosecutor's Office (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>51</sup> Mahoney & Williams (1998).

<sup>52</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Uganda, CSO.

<sup>53</sup> WHO (2020c).

<sup>54</sup> According to one respondent to the study of Nagarajan (2020) in Yola, "the husband wants to have sex even when the wife doesn't want to. She is tired with all the stress and he is waiting and bored".

<sup>55</sup> IRC (2020).

<sup>56</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (2020), Implications of COVID-19 for the prevention of and response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

includes women threatened of being thrown out of their homes or having their financial resources and medical aid withdrawn, as indicated by the SRVAW in her report of July 2020.<sup>57</sup> Other stakeholders stressed that some women have been threatened with COVID-19 infection.<sup>58</sup> Likewise, the WHO reported that perpetrators of abuse may use the COVID-19 restrictions to exercise power and control over their partners to further reduce access to services, help, and psychosocial support from both formal and informal networks, as well as restrict access to necessary items such as soap and hand sanitizer or exert control by spreading misinformation about the disease and stigmatize partners.<sup>59</sup>

## Online GBVAW

Online GBVAW is defined as any act of GBVAW that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or that affects women disproportionately.<sup>60</sup> Some reports indicate that online GBVAW seems to also have increased during the pandemic<sup>61</sup> due to the rising levels of internet use worldwide.<sup>62</sup> Increased time online is linked to increased risks of online harms, ranging from hate speech and harassment to sexual violence and threats.<sup>63</sup>

In the United Kingdom, the lockdown caused a surge in the number of people contacting the *Revenge Porn Helpline*, the government-funded service for adults experiencing intimate image abuse, and traffic to the helpline's website nearly doubled in the week of 23 March 2020. In addition, more cases were opened in the following four weeks than in any previous four-week period.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, in Australia, since early March, reports to *eSafety*<sup>65</sup> about online harms have surged. In certain areas, such as image-based abuse, i.e. the sharing of intimate images and

videos without consent, the reporting has almost doubled.<sup>66</sup> Although there is still insufficient information from surveys, in Malawi, some indicate worrying levels of online violence<sup>67</sup>, and in the United Kingdom, 46 per cent of respondents to the Glitch survey, reported experiencing online abuse since the beginning of the pandemic, and 29 per cent of the respondents, who had experienced online abuse in the 12 months preceding the survey, reported it had become worse during COVID-19. 48 per cent of respondents reported suffering from gender-based abuse and 21 per cent of respondents reported suffering from abuse related to their gender identity and sexual orientation.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the EU Agency for Law Enforcement Training (CEPOL)'s report on the impact of COVID-19 on crime patterns, operations and training needs in the area of domestic violence, indicates among new crime patterns in relation to domestic violence, the increase in criminal behaviours associated with gender-based violence through new technologies and social media, as for example in Portugal and Spain.<sup>69</sup>

## Aggravated impact on women affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

Intersectional discrimination affecting some groups of women impacts the ways and forms of gender-based violence they suffer.<sup>70</sup> Women from indigenous, migrant, and rural communities and ethnic minorities, older women, women with disabilities, homeless women, refugee and asylum seekers, women deprived of liberty and victims/survivors of trafficking, among others, are affected to different degrees, or in different ways. Moreover, they face additional or heightened barriers in their access to justice, due to the impact of such multiple forms of discrimination.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, marginalised groups of women are particularly vulnerable, including women who are disproportionately represented in precarious

<sup>57</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>58</sup> UNODC, Expert group meeting, Brazil, judge.

<sup>59</sup> WHO (2020c).

<sup>60</sup> Human Rights Council (2018).

<sup>61</sup> UN General Assembly (2020); UN Women (2020a).

<sup>62</sup> Beech (2020, March 25).

<sup>63</sup> International Finance Corporation – World Bank Group (2020); Glitch UK and End Violence Against Women Coalition (2020).

<sup>64</sup> Price (2020, April 24).

<sup>65</sup> The [Office of the eSafety Commissioner](#) promotes online safety education for Australian young people, educators and parents. It also provides a complaints mechanism for young people who experience serious cyberbullying, and for Australians to report illegal or offensive online content.

<sup>66</sup> Dagg (2020).

<sup>67</sup> Malanga (2020).

<sup>68</sup> Glitch UK and End Violence Against Women Coalition (2020).

<sup>69</sup> CEPOL (2020).

<sup>70</sup> CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 35 (2017).

employments, in the informal sector and in domestic work and other low-paid and temporary jobs.<sup>71</sup> In Bangladesh, for instance, there have been incidences of sex workers being subjected to physical violence and harassment by law enforcement agencies or locals while attempting to leave their homes to earn their livelihoods and feed their families.<sup>72</sup>

Regarding indigenous women, in New South Wales, Australia, frontline aboriginal domestic and family violence specialists have reported an increase in client numbers since the beginning of COVID-19, and half of the survey respondents reported an increase in the complexity of their Indigenous clients' needs since the outbreak of COVID-19.<sup>73</sup> In Canada, the preliminary results of a series of nation-wide, grassroots consultations conducted by the Native Women's Association reveal a deeply concerning spike in the number of indigenous women who say they are facing more violent incidents since the pandemic began, often by an intimate partner.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>72</sup> See, for example: UN Women / Gender in Humanitarian Action (GIHA) Working Group (2020).

<sup>73</sup> Women's Safety NSW (2020).

<sup>74</sup> Wright (2020, May 10).

## 2 Challenges in criminal justice system responses to GBVAW

The measures adopted by countries to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic have been varied and heterogeneous. Their impact on societies has been highly dependent on the local political and social contexts.

criminal justice agencies have been affected by COVID-19 mitigation measures and have had to adjust their activities. This included mandatory closures of public offices, social distancing measures, capacity limitation, shift systems, etc. These measures have affected access to justice in general, and in particular women's access to justice in cases of gender-based violence, adding to the gaps and shortcomings that already existed before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The information reviewed for this report revealed that the main challenges for women's access to justice in cases of GBVAW are concentrated in the areas of reporting, police responses, protection orders, prosecution, legal aid and judicial proceedings. The specific challenges and difficulties related to these areas are presented and briefly analysed in this chapter.

### 2.1 Reporting to criminal justice system agencies

GBVAW crimes are among the most underreported crimes to the criminal justice system globally. UN statistics indicate that less than 10 per cent of women who experience violence and seek help actually report to the police.<sup>75</sup> A survey in European countries showed that, on average, only 14 per cent of women indicated that they had contacted the police as a result of the most serious incident of violence committed by a partner, since the age of 15; and 13 per cent in the case of violence committed by non-partners.<sup>76</sup> Official data also shows that delays in reporting GBVAW are common. In one country, most women reported domestic violence after more than 8 years on average.<sup>77</sup>

The pandemic seems to have aggravated this tendency. Decreased reporting to criminal justice agencies has been identified by experts in most countries, despite the increasing reports of GBVAW to other agencies and services. This could indicate that underreporting has been aggravated despite the surge in the number of calls to emergency helplines in many cases. Decreases in the number of cases reported to criminal justice authorities may reflect additional obstacles for women and girls in reporting incidents of violence and accessing criminal justice institutions.<sup>78</sup>

In Europe, CEPOL reported that the number of domestic violence cases increased in some countries, while in others there was a drop of criminal cases during the pandemic.<sup>79</sup> According to the AIAMP report, based on official information provided by the Prosecutors' Offices in 12 countries in Latin-America and Southwestern Europe, decreased reporting to criminal justice authorities was evident in almost all countries, including for example:<sup>80</sup>

- In one South American country, reports of domestic violence have shown a sharp decline during lockdown, contrary to the increase in the number of calls to emergency helplines. Between March and April, there was a 20 per cent decrease in complaints for crimes committed in the context of domestic violence, which deepened during the first half of April, with a 40 per cent drop, compared with the same months in 2019. In another South American country, domestic violence reports also decreased during the months of lockdown. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was a 91 per cent decrease of complaints but after the launch of a new online reporting tool, the decrease was only of 32 per cent, compared with the same time periods in 2019.
- In Central America, in one country, in the months of March to July of 2020, the number of complaints decreased compared to the same months in 2019. In another Central American country, the

<sup>75</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Affairs (2015), p. 159.

<sup>76</sup> FRA (2014).

<sup>77</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>78</sup> UNODC (2020c).

<sup>79</sup> CEPOL (2020).

<sup>80</sup> AIAMP (2020).

Attorney General's Office reported that complaints of gender violence decreased in the health contingency period between January and July 2020, compared to the same period in 2019.

- In a Southwestern European country, during the first month and a half of the public health emergency, the decrease was dramatic, close to 50 per cent compared to 2019, but since May there has been a progressive increase in complaints.

Similar situations have been described in other diverse geographical and legal contexts, including countries located in Southeast Europe as well as in Northern and Eastern Africa.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless, there seems to be some exceptions to this decreasing trend, at least from the perspective of some criminal justice practitioners.<sup>82</sup> For example, in one Southwestern European country, during lockdown there was a slight upturn in complaints and police interventions regarding GBVAW crimes that, in most cases, led to arrest, judicial disposition and speedy trial of the accused.<sup>83</sup>

### Causes for decreased reporting

The criminal justice agencies and practitioners consulted during the present review identified movement restrictions, including curfews and even total local movement restrictions on certain days or times, as the main reason behind the decreased reporting of GBVAW cases.<sup>84</sup> In addition, closures of public and judicial offices have also contributed to a reduction of complaints.<sup>85</sup>

This was aggravated by the lack of or reduction in public transportation as part of the measures decreed by the authorities, affecting mostly women living far from the urban centres and without access to private transportation.<sup>86</sup> In

addition, the closure of schools has made it more difficult for women to go to the police or prosecutors in order to file a complaint, when they have to look after their children and, due to mobility and social gatherings restrictions, cannot leave them with other people while they are away.<sup>87</sup>

In various countries, the mandatory confinements/quarantine periods declared by the Government, generated in victims/survivors a fear of being sanctioned for traveling to the prosecutor's office or police headquarters.<sup>88</sup> There have been cases of women who were sanctioned for breaking lockdown or restriction of movement rules when going to police stations to report GBVAW cases.<sup>89</sup>

The fear of being infected by COVID-19 has been identified as another reason behind the reduced reporting and access to police and judicial authorities.<sup>90</sup> This fear seems to be cause of a decrease in women's access not only to justice services but also to health services as it seems that the number of women seeking services for maternal and new-born health care has similarly reduced due to fear of infection and subsequent contagion to their family members.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, women may not report their abusive intimate partners for fear that any form of detainment will enhance risk of infection for him, and – consequently – for her and their children.

The same concerns seem to explain the reduced number of women going to Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs). In one West African country, for example, the numbers of those who used the service dropped significantly during the pandemic period in one region, and even when offered to be transported to SARCs, many survivors have felt unable to benefit from services due to fear of contracting COVID-19 at hospital, and did not have access to reporting neither to critical life-saving services including post-exposure prophylaxis, emergency contraception, and psychosocial

<sup>81</sup> UNODC Questionnaire: North-Africa, forensic expert; Southeast Europe, lawyer; East Africa, police. See also AIAMP (2020).

<sup>82</sup> UNODC questionnaire, North America, police; South Asia, police; Southwest Asia, police; Southern Africa, police; Southern Africa, lawyer.

<sup>83</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>84</sup> For example, in some Central American and South American countries (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>85</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge; in one Central American country, suspension of public services also contributed to decrease of complaints (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>86</sup> In some Central American countries (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>87</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>88</sup> For example, in one Central American country (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>89</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer.

<sup>90</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North-Africa, forensic expert; Central America (AIAMP, 2020)

<sup>91</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Global, academic.



support.<sup>92</sup> It should also be noted that even those victims/survivors who manage to go to the hospitals for a forensic exam, and/or to criminal justice agencies offices to report GBVAW cases, due to capacity restrictions, may not be able to be accompanied by a support person or family member and this contributes to further isolate them.

In some countries, another cause for decreased reporting is related to the closing or scaling back of GBVAW services, such as crisis centres, specialised services, shelters and safe accommodation, affecting the optimal functioning of referral systems, as well as cuts in the financial support provided to civil society and women's organizations that operate some of these services.<sup>93</sup> Even without complete lockdown, movement restrictions have affected the ability of staff to work in such services and have increased costs, for instance costs of staff transportation and of physical distancing facilities during in-person appointments, which is compounded by the fear of potential infection, particularly given lack of hygiene materials in many countries. Disruption of staff in these services is another consequence of quarantine periods, in the case of contact with any client confirmed to have COVID-19.<sup>94</sup> Furthermore, shelters have been reluctant to admit people due to fear of the spread of the disease,<sup>95</sup> or encountered serious difficulties to apply health protocols.<sup>96</sup>

The economic impact of the pandemic is another cause of decreased reporting. In one Central American country, for example, the report of the Office of the Prosecutor to AIAMP estimates that economic dependence on the aggressor has been aggravated as most women are informal sector workers, therefore their sources of income have been reduced or have disappeared, and they depend even more on the money that their partner can provide.<sup>97</sup>

Part of the reduction of reporting levels may be the result of a decrease of opportunities to

commit certain GBVAW crimes. In one country, for example, the confinement and mobility restrictions have had a clear impact on the possibility for aggressors to approach victims/survivors with whom they do not live because of a restraining order. As a consequence, complaints for the crimes of breach of sentence / restraining order, that ordinarily constitute approximately 15 per cent of the complaints among GBVAW crimes, have reduced significantly.<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the decrease in calls regarding breaches could be related to victims/survivors believing they are safe from physical violence due to the lockdown measures and to minimising psychological violence.

## 2.2 Police

### Shifting law enforcement priorities

Many countries around the world have relied on police, municipal security actors and even the military to enforce stay at home orders and other COVID-19 public health measures. Police is increasingly responding to other crimes or public unrest, particularly those resulting from the economic and social consequences of the pandemic.<sup>99</sup>

According to the agencies and practitioners consulted during the present review, this shift in priorities for the police has had an impact on the prioritization of GBVAW prevention or interventions in many countries.<sup>100</sup> For example, experts reported that:

- In different countries, the police are responsible to ensure compliance with the confinement and the curfew, or have been deployed to attend roadblocks.<sup>101</sup> They were obliged to apprehend those who do not comply, making them less

<sup>92</sup> Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>93</sup> United Nations (2020); UN General Assembly (2020); WHO (2020c).

<sup>94</sup> Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>95</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South Asia, police; Southern Africa, prosecutor.

<sup>96</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North-Africa, forensic expert.

<sup>97</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>98</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>99</sup> Rogers (2020) underlines that "the risk is that the more elite and wealthy communities will see their position threatened by social unrest, civil disturbances and the attempts of desperate people to take refuge in more successful states and sectors of society".

<sup>100</sup> <sup>100</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020); AIAMP (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, CSO; North America, police; South Asia, policymaker; North-Africa, forensic expert 2; Southeast Europe, lawyer; East Africa, police.

<sup>101</sup> AIAMP (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, lawyer.



available to focus on GBVAW cases<sup>102</sup> or protection measures.<sup>103</sup>

- In other cases, scheduled training for professionals could not take place.<sup>104</sup>

In different contexts, a ‘punitive approach’ to the public health crisis has been adopted. This includes not only legislation allowing to impose severe fines or other punishments for lockdown or curfew violations, but also a spike in excessive use of force by the police, especially through the initial phases of lockdown or restriction measures, even leading to deaths in some countries. According to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet “...there have been numerous reports from different regions that police and other security forces have been using excessive, and at times lethal, force to make people abide by lockdowns and curfews. Such violations have often been committed against people belonging to the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population...”<sup>105</sup>

These police excesses, far from reassuring women victims/survivors of GBVAW to feel safe contacting the police, have the opposite effect, and may even jeopardize progress made in community-police relationship, in addition to with undermining pandemic response efforts. Moreover, reports of the arrest and detention of people for not wearing masks in several countries in different regions of the world<sup>106</sup> raise a number of concerns relating to the disproportionate impact on poor and marginalised women, to the issue of necessity and proportionality, as well as to the increased risk of infection, given that places of deprivation of liberty constitute high-risk environments for those who live and work there, as they are closed spaces and usually densely populated.<sup>107</sup>

## Lack of measures to protect the health of police officers

The implementation of COVID-19 health mitigation and protection measures has proved to be challenging in relation to police interventions in GBVAW situations. The police, as well as other essential service providers that respond to GBVAW, are faced with social distancing recommendations and the need to use personal protective equipment (PPE) in many situations.

However, in many cases, the police institutions were not able to provide frontline officers with sufficient PPE or appropriate forms of PPE.<sup>108</sup> Contagion and death among police officers have been a reality in many countries.<sup>109</sup> As a consequence, police will understandably be more cautious when responding to reports of IPV and having to enter homes out of concern of contracting COVID-19. In order to protect themselves by minimizing interpersonal contact, officers may even circumvent protocols, including mandatory risk assessments, or not respond at all.

In most countries and regions, existing Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) that regulate police responses to GBVAW have not been adjusted to the context of the pandemic, creating uncertainty about the role of the police in the context of movement restriction and physical distancing measures.<sup>110</sup> In GBVAW cases, effective policing responses require officers to build trust with victims/survivors, usually through detailed in-person interviews. This is made much harder by the safety protocols required in the context of the pandemic and the physical distance they put between police and their communities.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>102</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, lawyer; UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer; Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>103</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>104</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, police.

<sup>105</sup> See: OHCHR (2020a) COVID-19: Exceptional measures should not be cover for human rights abuses and violations – Bachelet; Vivek (2020); Ombuor & Bearak (2020, April 16).

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, media reports from diverse countries: Clarke (2020, October 12); Kindzeka (2020, May 14); Bouloutza & Mandrou (2020, September 23); Achuca (2020, April 15); The Star (2020, September 27); Obaji Jr. (2020, September 9); Nasrallah (2020,

October 9); Narai (2020, September 21); Bariyo (2020, September 29); Beer (2020, July 2).

<sup>107</sup> See UNODC (2020b) Position Paper on COVID-19 Preparedness and Responses in Prisons.

<sup>108</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Global, academic; North-Africa, forensic expert 2; East Africa, police.

<sup>109</sup> UNODC Focus group, South Asia, researcher; Central America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>110</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>111</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

## Reduction of personnel / specialised personnel

Reduction of police personnel, including specialised personnel (where it exists) has been a common problem affecting police services.<sup>112</sup> This has been, in part, a direct consequence of the implementation of social distancing measures in police stations and offices, with the application of shift systems or remote work.

The issue has been aggravated in the case of the police due to their increased exposure and interaction with the public and, as a consequence, of cases of COVID-19 contagion among the personnel. In some countries, police stations were closed, due to officials testing positive.<sup>113</sup> In one country, those who were not infected worked on standby duties from home. Obviously, some delays were caused due to the prevalence of COVID-19.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, in some cases, death due to COVID-19 has contributed to reduction of personnel available for GBVAW cases.<sup>115</sup>

The specialization of police personnel was also impacted. Due to the imposition of stay-at-home orders, curfews and other restrictions, planned in-person training for justice institutions, including the police, were placed on hold in some countries, impacting negatively on the specialisation of personnel on GBVAW issues.<sup>116</sup>

## 2.3 Protection orders

Protection orders can impose a range of restraints on the person subject to the order. The most frequent protection orders require, for example, a perpetrator to vacate the residence of the victim/survivor or to stay away from the shared home (barring orders), from specific places (e.g., the woman's workplace or her children's school)

or to refrain from contacting the victim/survivor or person at risk. Some jurisdictions permit additional orders to require, for example, a perpetrator to pay rent for the family home or child support, or to surrender weapons in his possession.<sup>117</sup>

## Issuance or extension of protection orders

Several countries have registered a decrease in protection orders granted, including protection orders granted by family courts.<sup>118</sup> This is related to diverse factors, including women's lack of opportunities to apply for protection orders,<sup>119</sup> the general decrease in GBVAW cases reported and a lack of action by criminal justice authorities responsible for their request or issuance.

In some countries, as some courts ceased their functioning, applications for protection orders were impossible,<sup>120</sup> or the courts on duty only issued protection measures when the risk to the life or integrity of the victim/survivor was imminent.<sup>121</sup> In other countries, experts observed a decrease in the requests of protection orders made by women,<sup>122</sup> or by prosecutors, as well as delays in court decisions on protection order applications.<sup>123</sup> In one European country, despite their reduction in absolute terms, protection orders granted increased in relative terms, considering that the total number of GBVAW complaints filed was reduced during the first trimester of 2020.<sup>124</sup>

In many countries, protection orders have not been automatically extended or women have not had the access required to renew existing ones during lockdown or movement restriction periods.<sup>125</sup> In one country, for instance, there was no automatic extension of the protection orders in the early times of the lockdown implementation, and only later some protection orders were extended.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>112</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, CSO; North America, victim's unit; North-Africa, forensic expert 2; East Africa, police; Southern Africa, lawyer; Southeast Europe, lawyer.

<sup>113</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, Judge.

<sup>114</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, police.

<sup>115</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>116</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>117</sup> Human Rights Council (2018), para. 61.

<sup>118</sup> In one South-American country, the number of protection measures decreed by family courts decreased during the months of March, April and May 2020, compared to the same months of the previous year (13.5%, 56.6% and 54.8% decrease, respectively) (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>119</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer; West Africa, CSO; West Africa, academia; North-Africa, forensic expert (2).

<sup>120</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, CSO.

<sup>121</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Central America, International organisation.

<sup>122</sup> South America, UNODC Questionnaire, judge 1.

<sup>123</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>124</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>125</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, CSO; North America, lawyer; East-Africa, CSO; Southeast Europe, lawyer; Central America, International organisation; South America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>126</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer.

## Enforcement of protection orders

The implementation of protection orders, ranging from serving the order to the abuser to responding to complaints of violation, has been difficult during the lockdown periods. In various countries they have not been properly enforced or even not enforced at all,<sup>127</sup> often due to reductions in police personnel.

According to the Prosecutor's Office in one South American country, the main problem was monitoring compliance with the measures granted, given the lack or reduction of economic and human resources available to the police.<sup>128</sup> In a Central American country, the police was responsible to monitor compliance but, due to the health emergency, the number of personnel and the resources that could be dedicated to these investigations had decreased, making it difficult for the police to respond to all courts' requests.<sup>129</sup> In another country, due to shifted priorities towards enforcement of health measures, the police personnel available to enforce protection measures had been reduced.<sup>130</sup>

The implementation of protection orders has also been hampered by deficiencies in the inter-institutional coordination for their request and monitoring,<sup>131</sup> as well as a lack of remote monitoring processes of protection measures.<sup>132</sup>

## Inadequacy of protection measures

The COVID-19 mitigation measures in place in most countries have changed not only the dynamics of GBVAW but also have made 'traditional' protection measures and interventions inadequate in many cases.<sup>133</sup> In particular, the eviction of the aggressors from the family home (barring orders) has simply not been carried out in some cases,<sup>134</sup> with the motivation that, under lockdown or movement restriction

measures, the aggressor did not have alternative places to go to.

Access to shelters and safe accommodations for women has experienced significant limitations due to the pandemic. These include their closure to new users, denying access to many women and their children, or requesting a negative COVID-19 test from the woman and their children prior to admission, delaying their admission.<sup>135</sup>

## 2.4 Investigation and prosecution

Investigation agencies and prosecution services have experienced difficulties due to the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation measures. Most of them are quite similar to those outlined in connection with police, although there are some additional specific challenges.

### Withdrawal of complaints

In some countries, an increasing number of withdrawals was observed in cases of GBVAW, especially domestic violence, with increasing calls from women requesting to retract their complaints.<sup>136</sup> This tendency could be related to similar causes as those leading to a reduction in the reporting of cases: pressure on the victim/survivor by family members or to the increasing economic constraints women are experiencing because of job losses and the economic crisis due to the pandemic.

### Reduction of personnel / specialised personnel

According to several countries' prosecutors, the main obstacle in investigations of GBVAW complaints is the reduction of the personnel assigned to process the cases,<sup>137</sup> due to health-related issues, including quarantine, sickness absences and even death by COVID-19, as well as

<sup>127</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, CSO; North America, lawyer; East Africa, CSO; Southeast Europe, lawyer.

<sup>128</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>129</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>130</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>131</sup> In one Central American country (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>132</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer.

<sup>133</sup> UNODC questionnaire, North America, police; South Asia, policymaker; North-Africa, forensic expert 2; Southern Africa, police; Southwest Asia, police; Western Europe, police; Southeast Asia,

consultant policing; East Africa, police; Southern Africa, lawyer; East Africa, CSO; Southeast Europe, lawyer; West Africa, CSO; West Africa, academia.

<sup>134</sup> AIAMP (2020); UNODC Focus group, Eastern Europe, CSO.

<sup>135</sup> UNODC Focus group, Eastern Europe, CSO; South Asia, researcher.

<sup>136</sup> AIAMP, 2020; UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa prosecutor.

<sup>137</sup> AIAMP, 2020; UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor; Southern Africa, prosecutor; Southeast Asia, prosecutor; Southern Africa, prosecutor 2; North America, lawyer; Southeast Europe, lawyer.

adjustments of their work due to the health measures in place. Personnel reduction, in addition to an increase of GBVAW reporting in some places, has increased the workload of the remaining prosecutors, and their backlog of cases.<sup>138</sup>

In a Southern African country, the prosecution of GBVAW cases was hindered by a reduction of staff among the police, prosecutors and judges, due to working in shifts or quarantines imposed on sick staff. Shortages of investigators slowed down investigations - and consequently prosecutions - in addition to the shortage of prosecutors and judges/judicial officers.<sup>139</sup> In a Central American country, all public institutions started working in a shift system, which affected the investigation of cases. The Women's Prosecutor's Office partially suspended its activities and those who continued working did so in shifts.<sup>140</sup>

The adjustments made in order to comply with COVID-19 mitigation measures, have made prosecutors unable to expedite the investigation and prosecution of criminal cases. According to the AIAMP report, the reduction of personnel in the facilities or headquarters and the implementation of teleworking or remote work have been prioritized for staff at risk of infection or showing symptoms of COVID-19 as well as to those with children under their exclusive care or those in charge of caring for people with disabilities and the elderly.<sup>141</sup> Considering that women are, in most cases, the primary caretakers of children and dependent people in the family, these measures predominantly affected women prosecutors and personnel, who tend to be those dealing with GBVAW cases. This likely contributed to an increased reduction of specialised personnel to deal with these cases.

## Shifting priorities

As observed in relation to the police, during the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation

measures, prosecutors have focused on other priorities, including the enforcement of health measures, investigation and prosecution of cases of public unrest or other crimes.<sup>142</sup> According to prosecutors from one country, most of the police personnel and logistical resources were assigned to activities related to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>143</sup>

## Delayed investigations and procedures

As hearings and judicial deadlines were suspended in many countries, the prosecution of all cases was affected, except for those cases that required urgent measures, such as cases involving alleged perpetrators in pretrial detention.

In several countries, the reduction of personnel and the movement restrictions led to delayed or incomplete investigations.<sup>144</sup> In one Central American country, mandatory health measures, including confinement, work at home and reduction of personnel to carry out work in person, negatively interfered in the conduct of investigation procedures.<sup>145</sup> In one South American country, judicial police officers were not able to move within the territory and this resulted in investigations not being conducted within reasonable time limits or in a comprehensive manner.<sup>146</sup> In European countries, according to CEPOL, the lockdown altered investigations in 44 per cent of responding institutions: officials had less capacities and it was more difficult to get into contact with suspects, complainants and witnesses. Investigations slowed down, leaving offenders unpunished for longer than usual.<sup>147</sup>

This situation was aggravated by communication difficulties,<sup>148</sup> as well as difficulties in field investigation and interviews/interrogations.<sup>149</sup> In some countries, the Prosecutor's Offices remained closed to the public from the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020), allowing only phone calls or online contacts.<sup>150</sup> According to one prosecutor, this prevented building up a closer relationship with victims/survivors that usually is

<sup>138</sup> Amnistía Internacional (2020).

<sup>139</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, prosecutor.

<sup>140</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>141</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>142</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, prosecutor; Southeast Europe, lawyer; Southeast Asia, prosecutor.

<sup>143</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>144</sup> AIAMP (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge; South America, prosecutor; Southeast Asia, prosecutor; Southeast Asia, prosecutor.

<sup>145</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>146</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor.

<sup>147</sup> CEPOL (2020).

<sup>148</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, prosecutor.

<sup>149</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, prosecutor.

<sup>150</sup> South America, Prosecutor's Office, Special Unit on Gender Violence, personal communication.

instrumental in understanding the case and the woman's situation and in obtaining evidence to be brought to the judge.<sup>151</sup>

### *Forensic reports*

An additional problem in investigations was related to difficulties in undertaking expert forensic examinations and preparing reports, due to the suspension or partial suspension of expert services, especially during lockdown periods.<sup>152</sup> In some countries, all investigative acts, including forensic examinations and external reports, were suspended for several months during the period of lockdown. In some cases, face-to-face forensic examinations were suspended, with reports being made based on the documentation that the victim/survivor was able to provide. In other cases, forensic services were not serving all the locations or were lacking personnel, who had been deployed to deal with COVID-19 patients.<sup>153</sup> In other countries, difficulties included lack of essential supplies for DNA tests, or difficulties in psychosocial evaluations by collaborating entities.<sup>154</sup>

In other cases where forensic services were available, it was reported that examinations were not performed due to a lack of complaints. In one North African country, for example, the clinical forensic consultation had almost no intimate-partner violence victims/survivors examined for over three months, due to the lack of complaints.<sup>155</sup> The possible reasons for that situation are outlined in the above section on 'reporting'.

## 2.5 Judiciary

### Suspension of court activity

In almost all countries around the world, courts have been either closed or operating at reduced hours.<sup>156</sup> As a result, there have been limited hearings and considerable delays in the prosecution of cases. Total closures have been implemented in several countries,<sup>157</sup> for various durations. In some countries, all courts remained closed for almost 4 months, with no exceptions made for GBVAW cases.<sup>158</sup> In other countries, mobile courts, which grant protection measures to victims/survivors of GBVAW, ceased their work.<sup>159</sup>

In some cases, the total closure of courts and the uncertainty regarding their return to normal activity have led many women to seek alternative forms of customary and informal justice. Arbitrations and customary/traditional justice seem to have been increasingly used in some regions since the onset of the pandemic.<sup>160</sup> These systems, however, are often skewed against women and girls, as they tend to favour male-dominated structures and patriarchal values and lead to discriminatory and harmful outcomes for women and girls.<sup>161</sup> Great concern has been expressed in that respect by lawyers, legal associations and activists as well as relevant United Nations agencies.<sup>162</sup>

While some courts were operating at reduced capacity, in many countries, GBVAW or domestic violence cases were not prioritized.<sup>163</sup> Even when general lockdown measures were lifted, in many countries, court closures and quarantine measures applied every time someone tested positive for COVID-19.<sup>164</sup> As some countries experienced subsequent waves of COVID-19, new suspensions of trials and hearings became likely.<sup>165</sup>

In many countries the suspension of court hearings, appearances and trials resulted in delayed court proceedings.<sup>166</sup> Criminal justice practitioners highlighted the serious impact on

<sup>151</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor.

<sup>152</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, prosecutor; Southeast Europe, lawyer; South America, lawyer; Southern Africa, judge; North Africa, forensic expert 2; Southwestern European, South American and Central American countries (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>153</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>154</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge; South America, lawyer.

<sup>155</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert 2.

<sup>156</sup> UN General Assembly (2020); UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>157</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge; Southeast Europe, lawyer; North America, CSO; North Africa, forensic expert 2.

<sup>158</sup> UNODC Focus group, South Asia, CSO; Tarzi (2020, June 16).

<sup>159</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Central America, International organisation.

<sup>160</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>161</sup> IDLO (2020).

<sup>162</sup> Tarzi (2020, June 16); UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>163</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>164</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>165</sup> For example, an important number of US Courts have suspended jury trials as COVID-19 cases surge in November 2020. US Courts (2020).

<sup>166</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge; South America, judge; South America, prosecutor; Southeast Europe, lawyer; North



many GBV victims/survivors, with an increase in their feeling of vulnerability and their perception of a lack of interest in their cases from justice institutions, when their trials - often already adjourned and delayed - did not take place at their scheduled time.<sup>167</sup> In one country, trials of people already before the courts stalled and people arrested were unable to be arraigned. This situation infringed both on victims/survivors' rights to justice and on alleged perpetrators' due process rights.<sup>168</sup>

### Unavailability of parties or key personnel intervening in cases

Movement restrictions and lack or reduction of public transportation have severely obstructed victims/survivors, witnesses and defendants' physical access to courtrooms,<sup>169</sup> in particular in rural areas or when, due to the economic consequences of the pandemic, they have had to move their place of residence. The fear of being infected by COVID-19 also contributed to this situation.<sup>170</sup>

The unavailability of those working on court cases, including court staff, prosecutors, legal representatives or forensic experts, was also identified as a key challenge.<sup>171</sup> In a number of countries, the judiciary was affected by reduced number of judges and personnel,<sup>172</sup> including due to rotation of court staff and court officials.

### Increased backlog

All these difficulties have increased the backlog in criminal cases, including GBVAW cases, according to many practitioners.<sup>173</sup> This aggravated pre-existing backlogs in GBVAW cases. In one country, after the closure of courts or adjournments of hearings or trials, automated procedures applicable to rescheduling were not followed.<sup>174</sup>

America, CSO; North America, lawyer; South Asia, academia; Southern Africa, judge; North Africa, forensic expert 2. Central Asia (UNWomen, 2020c).

<sup>167</sup> Southwestern Europe, criminal lawyer, personal communication; UNODC Questionnaire, South Asia, academia.

<sup>168</sup> Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>169</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, prosecutor; Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>170</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert; Central America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>171</sup> UNODC / IDLO, 2020; UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>172</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, CSO; South America, judge; North Africa, forensic expert 2.

In the 12 countries covered by the AIAMP report, Public Prosecutor's Offices continued to operate, while many of the judicial bodies ceased to function or remained functional only for urgent cases during a certain period, causing serious delays in criminal proceedings.<sup>175</sup>

Additional causes for delays in court proceedings included the following:

- Quarantine or testing positive to COVID 19, including prison administrations not being able to bring accused/pre-trial detainees to court due to prison quarantine or positive testing of the accused;
- Legal representatives not being able to consult with pre-trial detainees as no visits to prison were allowed;
- Social workers or probation officers not being able to draft pre-sentence reports.

## 2.6 Legal Aid

Disruption of legal aid services, both for victims/survivors and perpetrators, contributed to adjournments and delays in legal proceedings. In many countries, legal aid offices were closed, including those dedicated to providing legal services in GBVAW cases.<sup>176</sup> Those that remained open experienced reduced availability of personnel, including specialised personnel, and the challenges of providing legal aid services remotely.<sup>177</sup> Detainees awaiting trial were prevented from consulting their legal representatives as no visits to prison were allowed in many countries.<sup>178</sup>

The need for legal aid on family related issues became more urgent during the lockdown and movement restriction measures. Relevant cases, often connected with GBVAW, included shared

<sup>173</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, West Africa, CSO; South America, judge; Southeast Europe, lawyer; North America, CSO and lawyer; South Asia, academia; South America, judge; Southern Africa, judge; South America, prosecutor; Southern Africa, prosecutor; North American and Central American countries (AIAMP, 2020); UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>174</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Central America, International organisation.

<sup>175</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>176</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert 2.

<sup>177</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Oceania, International organisation.

<sup>178</sup> For example, in countries in South Asia (UNODC Focus group, legal aid lawyer) and Southern Africa (UNODC Questionnaire, judge).



custody of children, weekly visits and requests to establish communication with children through video calls. In one country, these matters accounted for part of the increase in calls and inquiries to helplines through WhatsApp.<sup>179</sup> Given that victims/survivors of GBVAW often do not disclose such violence in the context of family law cases, the lack of face-to-face meetings with family legal aid providers may prevent lawyers from identifying GBVAW and acting accordingly.

## 2.7 Corrections

Although prison standards vary among and within countries,<sup>180</sup> prisons and detention facilities were considered as zones of high concern for authorities given their frequent overcrowding and the poor health conditions of prisoners.

Some emergency measures have allowed the release of inmates in certain cases, in order to decrease overcrowding and spreading of COVID-19. However, in many countries those decongestion measures have excluded GBVAW perpetrators.<sup>181</sup> Where the release of GBVAW perpetrators has been allowed, it is unclear whether victims/survivors were informed and able to obtain protective measures prior to the release, or if perpetrators were requested to find an alternative place to stay or were monitored to ensure they did not contact the victims/survivors.

Furthermore, it should be noted that within prisons or detention facilities, the restrictions imposed to prevent the spreading of COVID-19 have had a significant impact on GBVAW cases, including:

- Detainees or defendants being prevented from attending court hearings or trials in case of quarantine measures;<sup>182</sup>
- Detainees or defendants being prevented from consulting with their legal representatives, due to restrictions to visits in prison;<sup>183</sup>

- Sentencing processes being disrupted as social workers or probation officers are not able to do pre-sentence reports.

Concerning offenders benefiting from non-custodial measures, it was noted that parole officers and other relevant officials may be required to prioritize social distancing and communicate via voice or video call, which may limit their ability to fully assess the likelihood of recidivism, thus putting women at increased risk of gender-based violence.<sup>184</sup>

## 2.8 Coordination

In a number of countries, there was insufficient coordination among criminal justice agencies, as well as between them and essential service providers, including government and non-government led services. These difficulties, often pre-existent, have had an aggravated impact during the pandemic.<sup>185</sup> Specific problems included a lack of information in relation to services / agencies that were open and functioning during the lockdown period, changes in their forms of functioning, channels to efficiently reach services and authorities, as well as difficulties in referrals.

<sup>179</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>180</sup> For example, in one North African country, the pandemic was handled much easier in prisons in the capital city than in those in areas far from it (UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert 2).

<sup>181</sup> In at least 10 countries, sexual and/or domestic violence offences were among the exclusion criteria concerning measures to reduce the prison population in the context of COVID-19, according to a

global review by UNODC (forthcoming). See section 3.6 of this document.

<sup>182</sup> For example, in one Southern African country (UNODC Questionnaire, judge).

<sup>183</sup> For example, in countries in South Asia (UNODC Focus group, legal aid lawyer) and Southern Africa (UNODC Questionnaire, judge).

<sup>184</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Global, academia.

<sup>185</sup> AIAMP (2020); UNODC / IDLO (2020); Amnistía Internacional (2020).

### 3 Measures adopted to counter the challenges

Even under the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, States are bound to respect their obligations under international law, including international human rights treaties from which no derogation is allowed. Non-derogable rights include the right of access to court, due process guarantees and the right of victims/survivors to obtain an effective remedy.<sup>186</sup>

In accordance with their international obligations, States in all regions have adopted diverse measures aimed at ensuring women's access to justice in cases of GBVAW. This chapter analyses the main trends identified among the measures reviewed in this assessment. It should be underlined that the information available in most cases is limited to a description of the measures and does not include an analysis of the results achieved in practice.

#### COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker

The *COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker* (GGRT), developed by UNDP and UN Women, monitors policy measures enacted by governments worldwide to tackle the COVID-19 crisis, and highlights gender-sensitive responses. The GGRT is based on publicly available information, including official government documents, media coverage and existing policy repositories that track governments' responses to COVID-19. Data on measures was also provided by UNDP and UN Women country offices.<sup>a</sup>

The measures registered fall into four main policy categories: 1) social protection; 2) labour markets; 3) fiscal and economic policies; and 4) measures to address violence against women and girls. The GGRT has registered 2,517 measures adopted worldwide until the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2020, 704 of them on gender-based violence against women (i.e. 27,96 per cent of all measures), adopted in 135 out of 206 countries and territories.

The measures on GBVAW are classified in five areas: i) strengthening of services; ii) awareness-raising campaigns; iii) integration of VAWG in COVID-19 response plans; iv) collection and use of data, and v) other measures.

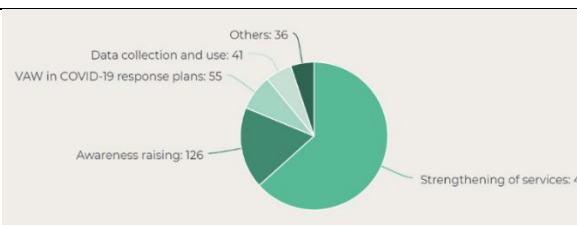


Figure 3. Number of VAW measures, by type (Source: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Fact Sheet. Version 1. Sept. 28, 2020)

Globally, most of GBVAW measures registered in the GGRT (63,49 per cent) were adopted in the area of “Strengthening of services” (447 measures), and 17,89 per cent of VAW measures were “Awareness-raising campaigns” (126 measures). 7,8 per cent were measures integrating VAWG in COVID-19 response plans (55 measures), 5,82 per cent measures on collection and data use (41 measures), and 4,97 per cent were other measures (35 measures).

The area of “Strengthening of services” includes the following types of measures:

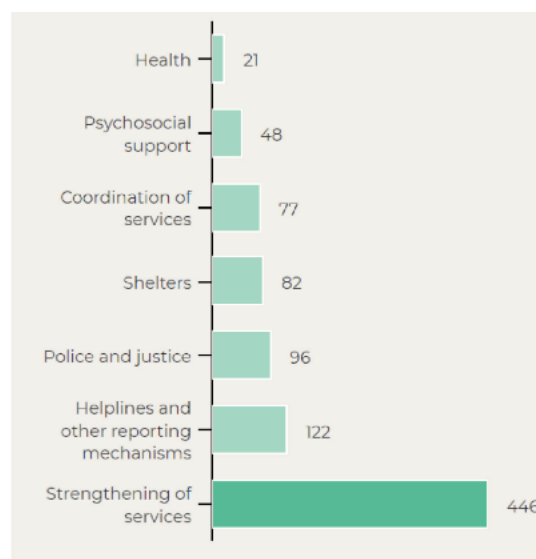


Figure 4. Number of measures to strengthen services, by measure sub-type (Source: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker – Global Fact Sheet. Version 1. Sept. 28, 2020)

- Hotlines and reporting mechanisms (122 measures in 82 countries)
- Police and justice responses to address impunity (96 measures in 65 countries)
- Continued functioning and expansion of shelters (82 measures in 63 countries)
- Coordinated accessible services (75 measures)

<sup>186</sup> HRC (2020).

- Continued provision of psychosocial support (48 measures)
- Continuity of health sector responses to VAW (21 measures)
- Others not specified (3 measures).

Most of the measures on gender-based violence registered in the GGRT (32 per cent) have been implemented in Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand.<sup>b</sup> However, in some cases the GGRT counts as “one measure” what in fact amounts to multiple measures. For example, in Colombia, 22 measures adopted by the Office of the Prosecutor in relation to GBVAW cases are counted as one single measure. In other cases, the “measures” registered are only political declarations or suggestions, i.e. have not been necessarily formally adopted or translated into actual practice. For example, official letters sent between different authorities asking for the consideration of certain issues or situations are sometimes reported as measures.

Around 20 per cent of measures in the area of “Strengthening of services” relate to police and justice responses, with some regional variations.<sup>c</sup> Although the GGRT classifies these measures as “justice responses to address impunity”, it does not provide any evaluation as to the effectiveness of these measures.

<sup>a</sup> See COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker Methodological note, available from [https://data.undp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19\\_Global\\_Gender\\_Response\\_Tracker\\_Methodological\\_Note\\_20092020.pdf](https://data.undp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19_Global_Gender_Response_Tracker_Methodological_Note_20092020.pdf).

<sup>b</sup> UNDP / UN Women (2020b).

<sup>c</sup> UNDP / UN Women (2020a; 2020c; 2020d; 2020e; 2020f).

including media campaigns, celebrities’ involvement and online information. Many of these campaigns were displayed not only in virtual environments but also in places often visited by women, even with movement restrictions in place, such as pharmacies and supermarkets, thereby expanding social responsibility in this area and promoting wider social involvement in the eradication of GBVAW, in line with international recommendations.<sup>187</sup>

These campaigns have been adapted to the pandemic context and to places where the presence of women was expected. For example, in **Georgia**, information on State-provided services for survivors of violence against women and domestic violence has been displayed in quarantine hotels for citizens returning to the country.

Source: A/75/144

### *Exceptions to the lockdown or other restrictions*

The health measures imposed, including lockdown, curfews or movement restrictions, typically did not expressly exclude survivors of GBVAW from such limitations. There was no clarity regarding the status of survivors in terms of movement restrictions, especially at the beginning of lockdown periods. In some countries, taking action to seek protection or report GBVAW crimes were not among the exceptions to the lockdown or other COVID-19 mitigation measures. As mentioned earlier, in some cases the lack of clarity on this issue led to women being sanctioned when they were trying to report GBVAW crimes.

As a consequence, many countries have later introduced express **exceptions to lockdown and movement restriction** measures for women reporting GBVAW (see Table 2, in Annex).

## 3.1 Measures adopted in the area of reporting and police responses

### 3.1.1 Reporting

Several measures have been adopted in order to increase and facilitate reporting of GBVAW cases. They include:

#### *Awareness raising campaigns*

**Several awareness raising campaigns**, informing the public about the channels for reporting (see examples in Table 1, in Annex), were organized,

<sup>187</sup> CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 35 (2017).

## *Additional channels and mechanisms for reporting*

Digital solutions and technical advances were widely used in relation to GBVAW responses during the pandemic. For example, NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan used messenger applications such as Telegram, WhatsApp and Viber to provide their services.<sup>188</sup> Likewise, in order to facilitate women's access to the reporting authorities (police and/or other institutions), additional channels were created or their use promoted (see Table 3, in Annex). These channels include remote reporting through phone calls, email, mobile phone applications or online forms and platforms. In some countries, new applications for mobile devices were created to help reporting violent incidences to the police safely and discretely, as well as, in some cases, providing geolocations and storing evidence. In other cases, existing applications (such as WhatsApp) were used.

In **Montenegro**, the “Be Safe” mobile app was launched to protect victims/survivors of violence. The app uses a “one tap” system for users to request help from the National SOS Helpline, sending an alarm via text message to responders, along with a precise geo-location. Professional staff educated and trained to support victims/survivors will then immediately reach out to assess what type of support is needed given the situation. The app contains features to allow users to contact organizations or people that they trust. It also offers educational and informative content, including information on survivors of violence' rights and entitlements.

*Source: Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.*

In addition to these ‘technology-based’ mechanisms and channels, other mechanisms and services to facilitate reporting were adopted in some countries, including provision of transportation so that the victims/survivors can report and/or carry out proceedings regarding the investigation; as well as the extension of opening hours and establishment of additional duty shifts.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Preliminary information from the WHO European Region commissioned COVID19 rapid assessment – strengthening public health response to violence against women and children, facilitated by Marie Claire Van Hout, international consultant at the UNODC

One of the most interesting initiatives among ‘offline responses’ is the involvement of public services and private companies to facilitate reporting of GBVAW. Due to the movement restrictions, pharmacies, groceries shops, postal workers, delivery drivers, food delivery companies and other services have become places for survivors to report cases of GBVAW, without having to go to police stations or to call helplines from home, facilitating reporting of such cases and women's access to support services. These initiatives represent a very positive step towards ensuring that GBVAW is considered not only as an individual problem, but as a social problem, in which all sectors of society should be involved, including companies pursuant to their social responsibility.

In **Brazil**, such measures were implemented through a formal agreement between the judiciary and pharmacists. The agreement specifically indicated that pharmacists would not be requested to take part in any further legal proceeding as a consequence of such reports. This development seems to signal that, in order to facilitate involvement of such actors, it is required that their contribution is not hampered with additional legal requirements. In Brazil, the success of this agreement has made the judiciary seek similar agreements with the transportation sector.

*Source: UNODC Expert group meeting, Brazil, judge.*

## *Data collection and analysis*

A limited number of examples show efforts in data collection and analysis of GBVAW cases and reports during the pandemic. In Fiji, domestic violence helpline data was analysed to look at trends in reporting during the pandemic.<sup>190</sup> In Israel, amid a spate of high-profile women's killings committed in the country during the pandemic and increasing concern expressed by police and social services, a committee was established to examine incidents of women who

Expert group meeting (hereinafter, referred to as Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting).

<sup>189</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>190</sup> GGRT.

had been killed.<sup>191</sup> This measure was adopted in the context of the pandemic, but its application will be permanent. It is also an example of the promising practice of domestic homicide and domestic/family violence death reviews. Such practice is used by a number of countries to improve criminal justice responses to GBVAW with a view to preventing gender-related killing.<sup>192</sup> It illustrates the implementation of one of the CEDAW Committee recommendations on GBVAW.<sup>193</sup>

### 3.1.2 Protection orders

In relation to protection orders, a variety of measures were adopted.

#### *Automatic or simplified extension of protection orders*

Many countries, at a certain point of lockdown, decided to automatically extend existing protection measures in favour of victims/survivors. In other countries, where automatic extensions were not granted, written applications or online forms to request the renewal of protection measures were provided (see Table 4, Annex).

The automatic extension of protection orders was a victim/survivor-centred measure that contributed to women's protection and safety, considering the difficulties of individually requesting an extension (often online or through legal representatives) while lockdown or movement restrictions were in place, as well as the increased tension and stress associated to this.

#### *Remote channels for protection order applications*

In many countries, remote channels were established to request protection measures (see Table 5, in Annex). These included alert systems created by technological applications for mobile telephony allowing direct communication with public security or police institutions, including online platforms, WhatsApp or email. In other

cases, digital signatures were required to request protection measures.<sup>194</sup>

In some cases, such as in Austria, persons in quarantine were allowed to file an application to obtain an interim injunction for protection against violence through the police. For this purpose, a form was created to be handed out to the victim/survivor along with an information sheet after the police issued an expulsion and prohibition to return order. The documents were translated into six languages in total. After the application to obtain an interim injunction was handed over to the police, the expulsion and prohibition to return order was automatically extended by two weeks. The police was obliged to submit the application including documentation (for example, the report of the incident) immediately to the court, if possible via the electronic legal communications system.<sup>195</sup>

#### *Protection orders adequate to the context*

Barring or restraining orders are not the only protective measures for victims/survivors of GBVAW. In many jurisdictions, protection measures that can be ordered by courts include the provision of shelter or safe accommodation for the victims/survivors and their dependents. A number of countries have ensured the expansion and maintenance of shelters, which faced an increased demand. There are interesting examples of collaboration with private actors and expansion of social involvement in response to GBVAW. In Ireland, NGO-led shelters expanded their capacity by collaborating with Airbnb; in France, a sports stadium was used; and in Italy, collaborations emerged between Booking.com and a former convent. In the Republic of Moldova, in order to overcome government-imposed quarantine measures that meant shelters were unable to accept new residents, the NGO Promolex rented an apartment.<sup>196</sup> In cases where shelters were full, the provision of shelter was replaced by the provision of hotel accommodation for victims/survivors.<sup>197</sup>

It is important to underline that some countries have ensured further funding to assist GBVAW

<sup>191</sup> Winer (2020, May 20).

<sup>192</sup> See Dawson (2017).

<sup>193</sup> CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 35 (2017). Para. 49.

<sup>194</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>195</sup> GGRT and Government of Austria (2020).

<sup>196</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

<sup>197</sup> UN General Assembly (2020).



services to adapt to the new COVID-19 regulations and anticipated rises in demand.<sup>198</sup> This is relevant to all services but particularly important in the case of shelters. In Tunisia, for example, a new shelter (compatible with distance/isolation measures) was established considering the health risks of receiving more women than normally.<sup>199</sup>

In different countries, measures were adopted in order to make protection orders more adequate to the context of lockdown (see Table 6, in Annex). These have included a wider use of barring orders. For example, in **Italy**, instead of the survivor having to leave the house she shares with an abuser (usually with her/their children), prosecutors have ruled that in situations of domestic violence the perpetrator must be the one to leave. Similar measures have been adopted in **Austria** and in the **Czech Republic, France, and Montenegro**.<sup>200</sup> These measures reduce the impact on the whole family group, as women and children may remain at their home, and only the perpetrator is removed from it. In **Mexico** City, these measures have now become the general rule in cases of GBVAW, after legal reforms.<sup>201</sup>

Although these types of measures were available before the COVID-19 lockdown and movement restriction measures, it seems that this context allowed a more systematic approach to the effective application of barring orders. In some cases barring orders seem to have been considered the most adequate option, considering that shelters or safe accommodation services were scaled down or were not able to accept more women.

Other relevant measures, considering the economic impact of the pandemic, are the provision of direct economic support to women survivors of GBVAW. For example, in Albania, in March 2020 it was announced that 482 survivors of domestic violence, who had a protection order issued, would benefit from a double payment of three months of economic assistance. In Malta, the Private Rent Housing Benefit Scheme, which provides a housing benefit to tenants on rent paid for the applicants and their families, was extended

to cover those experiencing domestic violence. In Ireland, women and children known to be trapped in abusive homes were provided rent supplements.<sup>202</sup>

Other countries implemented electronic monitoring of perpetrators ordered to keep a certain distance from the victim/survivor. Furthermore, in Kyrgyzstan, a bill was passed increasing the period of police detention for perpetrators of domestic violence from three hours to 48 hours, which was initiated as a direct result of the number of domestic violence cases increasing during COVID-19.<sup>203</sup>

### 3.1.3 Policing

#### *Preventive interventions*

One of the most interesting examples of preventive interventions by the police was the proactive approach to contact women (see Table 7, in Annex) who had previously reported GBVAW, in order to monitor their situation during lockdown or movement restriction periods. The timeframe of previous reports ranged from several months to two years. In some cases, this included a visit to their homes in cases considered high risk. In other cases, variations in GBVAW risk assessments were communicated to the judicial authorities, as in the case of Spain.

In **Ireland**, 'Operation Faoiseamh' commenced as part of community engagement response to COVID-19, launched by the national police (An Garda Síochána) on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 with the aim of preventing loss of life and to ensure that victims/survivors of domestic abuse were supported and protected. In Phase I of the operation, Garda Victim Liaison Offices, Divisional Protective Service Units and other appropriate resources were used to reach out and make contact with victims/survivors of domestic abuse reported between 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020 and 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020 with a view to ascertaining any existing issues of concern, to offer support and reassurance and to ensure that any issues identified were dealt with swiftly and decisively. A

<sup>198</sup> For example, the Italian government earmarked EUR 2 million for housing abused women and children; in Sweden, EUR 9 million was granted to civil society organisations working on domestic violence and in Kosovo, state funding for shelters was increased by EUR 900,000 (Source: Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting).

<sup>199</sup> Blaise (2020, May 4).

<sup>200</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

<sup>201</sup> Reporte Indigo (2020, November 24).

<sup>202</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

<sup>203</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.



total of 8,229 contacts or attempts at contact with victims/survivors of domestic abuse were recorded, and a number of victims/survivors used the opportunity presented by the proactive contact to request further assistance from An Garda Síochána and local resources were dispatched accordingly. According to the police, the feedback from victims/survivors was overwhelmingly positive.

Source: An Garda Síochána, Ireland's National Police and Security Service (2020, June 9).

### *Other measures*

Other measures adopted at the police level include issuing specific instructions and guidelines to police services regarding the reporting of GBVAW cases, in particular domestic violence incidents, and the obligations and responsibilities of the police (see Table 8, in Annex). In some other cases, specific trainings or refresher-training have been offered to the police in relation to GBVAW.

An interesting example from **Argentina** consists in the adoption of a detailed reporting guide and form for reporting GBVAW cases. It instructs police personnel to receive the complaint at the woman's home when they cannot go to specialized agencies or when the complainant does not wish to travel. It contains basic elements of conduct, care and safety that must be provided by the police personnel. Reporting forms can be sent to the corresponding court on duty by diverse channels, including email.<sup>204</sup>

## **3.2 Measures adopted in the area of investigation and prosecution**

This section outlines measures adopted to guarantee continuity in the investigation and prosecution of crimes of GBVAW in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### *Prioritization of investigation and prosecution of GBVAW cases*

In several countries, instructions and guidance documents were issued to prosecutors in order to ensure that GBVAW investigations and prosecutions were given priority (see Table 9 in Annex). This included guidance on urgent measures suggested to prosecutors for cases of GBVAW during COVID-19 lockdowns and movement restrictions and criteria for first steps in cases of intimate partner violence. Good practices to address cases committed in this context include, for example, the strengthening of protocols and criteria for risk identification and assessment, as well as criteria for holding detention hearings in domestic violence cases, and protection measures that need to be requested in cases where detention hearings cannot be held.<sup>205</sup>

### *E-justice mechanisms*

In a number of countries, e-justice<sup>206</sup> mechanisms have been introduced in investigation and prosecutorial activities (see Table 10 in Annex). These include, in the case of GBVAW, a variety of measures, including: recording of telephone or video call statements for victims/survivors of domestic violence; measures to take photographs that can be used as evidence in case of complaints made in police units; virtual working meetings with police personnel in order to define priority lines of investigation, identify problems and solutions.

### *Forensic examinations*

The most common measures adopted in relation to expert forensic examinations in the context of lockdown and movement restrictions involve the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) (see Table 11 in Annex). They include remote expert assessments and reports, especially in relation to psychological, psychiatric and social work expertise. In this area, the use of the Gesell chamber has been encouraged in some countries,<sup>207</sup> a tool that also has the potential of

<sup>204</sup> Procuraduría General de la Nación, Argentina (2020).

<sup>205</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>206</sup> For the purposes of this document, *e-justice* is the inclusion or the use of knowledge and information technologies in the administration

of justice. E-justice supposes the use of a plurality of technological instruments and channels to delivering justice (Bueno, 2010).

<sup>207</sup> AIAMP (2020). In other contexts, where cases could proceed, social distancing and protective measures to be implemented also

reducing secondary victimization, i.e. suffering caused to the victim/survivor as a consequence of the inadequate response of institutions and individuals.<sup>208</sup>

### Training

Some countries have implemented virtual training for prosecutors and prosecution personnel to deal with GBVAW cases and have implemented digital platforms for the development of work meetings and training programs (see Table 12 in Annex). The increased use of virtual platforms by criminal justice practitioners was used as an opportunity to increase the number and periodicity of trainings. For example, in South Africa, in August 2020 the judiciary started organizing open webinars held every two weeks for stakeholders and the public on different aspects of GBVAW.<sup>209</sup>

## 3.3 Measures adopted by the judiciary

In some countries, no judicial measures were adopted<sup>210</sup> or the courts simply remained closed with no exceptions. In several jurisdictions, however, specific measures have been implemented by judicial bodies specifically in relation to GBVAW cases. In some cases, the judiciary took a leading role in relation to overall responses to GBVAW amidst the COVID-19 crisis.

In **India**, due to the rise in domestic violence cases since the implementation of lockdown, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir passed an order to ensure that all domestic abuse cases would be treated as urgent by the courts. It suggested various measures, including increased tele-counselling or online counselling of women and girls; designated informal safe spaces for women where they could report domestic violence, such as grocery shops; and the immediate designation of safe spaces and shelter homes in empty hostels, academic institutions and other sites for victims/survivors of domestic violence, alongside an increased campaign to spread awareness of these issues. The Court also ordered that the

relevant authorities should inform the Court of the steps taken in order to implement these measures.

*Source: High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, Court on Its Own Motion v/s Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh through Secretaries, Social Welfare Department. Order dated 16.04.2020.*

In some cases, protocols, guides or guidelines of action for judges in order to protect victims/survivors of crimes of GBVAW were issued, adapting them to the current context. With a view to avoid new episodes of violence, uniform criteria were established in Spain to regulate parental visitation regimes that were carried out at “meeting points” (places used to avoid contact between parents, for custody related purposes), as they were closed due to health restrictions. These criteria outlined the option of agreed upon alternative solutions, sometimes including the intervention of third parties to deliver and / or collect children.<sup>211</sup>

### Prioritization of GBVAW cases

In a number of countries, GBVAW cases were expressly considered as urgent matters by the courts, even where courts remained closed for most cases (see Table 13 in Annex). Additionally, duty shifts were implemented to give attention to urgent cases or cases involving detained individuals.<sup>212</sup>

In Albania, Austria, France, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro and the Netherlands, measures were taken to prioritize and/or fast track the legal processes. In Croatia, allowances were made for cases where victims/survivors missed court deadlines due to COVID-19. In Montenegro, perpetrators of GBVAW were immediately taken to the misdemeanour court after committing an offence. In Serbia, the High Court Council declared that despite the courts closing, domestic violence cases would continue to be processed. In Belgium, a new tool was introduced to ensure that evidence was recorded and not lost in the situation of

created problems, for example, with sexual offences when dealing with child witnesses using intermediaries, as the camera range did not allow for them to be 1.5m apart in the testifying room and all measures to ensure safety had to be implemented (UNODC Questionnaire, South Africa, judge).

<sup>208</sup> See: UN General Assembly (2010) Resolution 65/228, annex, para 15(c).

<sup>209</sup> UNODC Focus group meeting, judge.

<sup>210</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>211</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>212</sup> AIAMP (2020).

postponed hearings.<sup>213</sup> In Spain, after the implementation of COVID-19 measures, the judiciary implemented an Emergency Plan with special attention to vulnerable groups, including victims/survivors of GBVAW.<sup>214</sup>

### *E-justice mechanisms*

The use of e-justice mechanisms by the judiciary may include electronic judicial platforms (equivalent to web pages through which to carry out any procedural acts); identification and authentication systems for the parties and information involved (electronic signatures, electronic seal or secure verification codes); electronic notifications; electronic judicial files; videoconferencing for hearings and trials; digital case management, etc.

The introduction of ICTs mechanisms in criminal justice procedures can improve the quality and efficiency of justice services, as well as their openness, transparency and accessibility. E-justice mechanisms have the potential to facilitate women's access to justice not only during lockdown or movement restrictions, but also in ordinary times, by addressing obstacles they usually face, such as corruption, high costs, delays, backlog of cases,<sup>215</sup> as well as cultural and physical barriers to travelling outside their villages or communities.<sup>216</sup> The use of ICTs has created an opportunity to increase effectiveness in the justice sector, beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

In **Bangladesh**, one of the biggest challenges in accessing justice lies in the long distance of district courts from women's homes and ensuing costs associated with travelling back and forth for court sessions. In the case of female litigants, this is aggravated by the fact that conservative families often require male relatives to accompany women to the cities where the district courts are based. As a consequence, the operation of virtual courts by the judiciary, sanctioned by passing the Use of Information and Communications Technology in Court Ordinance 2020, in May 2020, has been considered of immense potential in eliminating the distance factor.

Source: Huda (2020, May 21).

In several countries, the judiciary introduced or increased the use of e-justice mechanisms in their activities as a consequence of the restrictions derived from the pandemic, including in GBVAW cases (see Table 14 in Annex). These include virtual court hearings and trials (hearings and trials by videoconference technologies), electronic notifications, etc.

### *Backlog reduction measures*

In many countries, special measures to address judicial backlog in cases of GBVAW have been adopted (see Table 15 in Annex). This includes, for example, the appointment of temporary judges to support and purge cases in order to decongest work in El Salvador<sup>217</sup> or the increase of the number of judges to begin hearing misdemeanour family violence cases in some counties in USA.<sup>218</sup> In South Africa, weekly case management meetings among all stakeholders were held at courts, in order to prioritize cases and improve efficiency.<sup>219</sup>

## 3.4 Measures adopted in the area of legal aid

Most of the measures adopted in the area of legal aid are related to facilitating women's access to legal aid services, and in some cases, an increase in funding (see Table 16 in Annex). Many of these measures are technology-based. For example, in Ukraine, legal aid NGOs have used the 'Your Rights' App to provide legal advice, while the Cypriot NGO "One Women At A Time" conducted Zoom-based webinars to provide legal advice to survivors of intimate partner violence on "How to 'Shut Out' your COVID-19 abuser legally".<sup>220</sup>

Another interesting example of wider social involvement is found in relation to legal aid in **India**. The Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA) announced specific measures such as collaboration with Mother Dairy booths (Milk Booths), pharmacists and chemists for providing

<sup>213</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

<sup>214</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>215</sup> Huda (2020, May 21); Addadzi-Koom & Adjei Bediako (2019).

<sup>216</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020); Huda (2020, May 21).

<sup>217</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>218</sup> Carnett (2020 November, 20).

<sup>219</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge

<sup>220</sup> Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

information to survivors of violence and launched an app to deliver legal aid to these individuals. DSLSA has established close contacts also with ANGANWADI (rural child care centre) and ASHA (accredited social health activist) workers who might come across domestic violence cases in their areas.

*Source: COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker*

### 3.5 Measures adopted in the area of corrections

Few measures were identified in relation to corrections (see Table 17 in Annex). Although measures aimed at reducing the prison population in response to the threat of COVID-19 are currently being implemented in several countries worldwide, certain categories of prisoners have been excluded from such initiatives, including those convicted for sexual offences, domestic violence and other violent crimes.<sup>221</sup> Some countries that allowed the release of such offenders, such as Ecuador, adopted protection measures for victims/survivors.<sup>222</sup>

### 3.6 Coordination measures

Some of the measures adopted in different jurisdictions were aimed at reinforcing coordination among criminal justice agencies or between such agencies and other services (see Table 18 in Annex). Some criminal justice agencies indicated that, due to the pandemic, communication procedures between agencies that were usually carried out through written documents became impossible. Interestingly, the use of virtual channels (by email and, in cases of extreme urgency, via cell phone or WhatsApp) not only allowed such communication to continue, but seems to have improved it. Criminal justice professionals reported that the use of email and other personalised channels allowed greater

coordination between entities for the communication of protection measures and requests for information.<sup>223</sup>

Prosecutors in various countries adopted or adjusted coordination mechanisms with other entities, especially public security and police agencies, as well as local authorities, to follow up on protection measures. In other cases, coordination efforts included civil society organisations and GBVAW specialised services. Specific forms of coordination were also established with public or private health teams visiting homes for COVID-19 related emergencies to detect and gather information about possible situations of domestic violence.<sup>224</sup>

Furthermore, coordination has allowed judicial procedures to continue despite the limitations imposed by pandemic-related restrictions. For example, in Australia, survivor protection and support facilities were granted extended powers of representation for survivors of violence, for the duration of COVID-19.<sup>225</sup> In Colombia, the work of “coordination roundtables” among diverse institutions has solved practical problems related to unavailability of key participants in the judicial procedures, such as “family defenders” whose participation is required in the investigation of sexual violence against children and adolescents.<sup>226</sup>

Coordination and collaboration between criminal justice agencies and CSOs are equally important. Examples include cases in which these organisations stepped in and complemented services provided by the state agencies. In the Solomon Islands, the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team provided phone credits for authorized judges, court clerks and magistrates to issue and review protection orders. The credit enabled them to return calls from survivors and get information to issue orders.<sup>227</sup>

<sup>221</sup> UNODC (2020b). The exclusion criteria vary among countries, as well as the definitions of crimes, but in many cases there are explicit exclusion of some GBVAW crimes. For example, in Bangladesh (rape, murder after rape, acid violence), Burkina Faso (female genital mutilation), Côte d'Ivoire (serious crimes), Colombia (sexual abuse), RD Congo (rape); Cyprus (family violence, sex offences), Gabon (rape and offences against minors); Iran (serious crimes), Ireland (domestic abuse), Italy (those who share a home with the victim of the crime), Kenya (serious offences); Mexico (serious offences), Namibia (rape, drug facilitated assault), Nepal (rape), Portugal (domestic violence), Senegal (rape, sexual offences against minors), Somalia (serious

crimes), South Africa (sexual offences, gender-based violence), Turkey (sexual abuse), United Kingdom – England and Wales (violent or sexual offences), UK – Northern Ireland (sex offences, domestic violence), UK – Scotland (sex offences) and Zimbabwe (rape or any sexual offence).

<sup>222</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>223</sup> Colombia (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>224</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>225</sup> Australia, GGRT.

<sup>226</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>227</sup> Wood & Majumdar (2020).

## 4 Limitations and obstacles in implementing measures to address the impact of COVID-19

The above outlined measures, adopted by diverse jurisdictions to counter the challenges created by COVID-19 lockdown and restrictions in cases of GBVAW, have been in place for less than a year. In most cases, no information was available in relation to their implementation or impact.

Considering the information reviewed for this assessment, as well as pre-existing difficulties in criminal justice responses to GBVAW, it is possible to identify limitations, weaknesses and obstacles in the implementation of measures adopted to improve women's access to justice in cases of GBVAW in the context of the pandemic.

This analysis does not focus on pre-existing obstacles to women's access to justice in GBVAW cases (e.g. lack of adequate legislation to address GBVAW or criminal justice officials' biases),<sup>228</sup> although they are referred to when examining these problems.

### 4.1 Overall lack of prioritization of GBVAW responses in the context of the pandemic

In several jurisdictions, GBVAW cases were prioritized by criminal justice agencies, including the judiciary and prosecution. However, decisions to prioritize cases were often adopted *ad hoc* by the respective institutions and not pursuant to a general rule prioritizing GBVAW cases during lockdown and movement restrictions. In fact, most of campaigns and national calls to adhere to movement restrictions did not make explicit reference to GBVAW cases.

Explicit exceptions were introduced in several cases only afterwards, for example by allowing reporting of GBVAW without being fined. In many cases, GBVAW essential services, including

protection measures for victims/survivors such as safe accommodation, have been scaled down or closed. In numerous countries, courts remained totally closed for months, with no exceptions for cases of GBVAW. At the same time, statutes of limitations on offenses, particularly sexual violence offenses, continued to run and expire.

The lack of a general exception to applicable COVID-19 mitigation measures aggravated the pre-existing lack of prioritization of GBVAW cases in courts and other criminal justice agencies.<sup>229</sup> Some reports indicate that the pandemic was actively used as a new justification for inaction by criminal justice agencies, in contexts where a lack of progress in cases related to GBVAW had been a longstanding problem.<sup>230</sup> Lack of prioritization is often due to a lack of sensitization amongst stakeholders and lack of standardised and clear procedural rules in these cases. In that context, ad-hoc standards tend to be adopted, for example, by judges in hearing these cases.<sup>231</sup>

Overall, the fact that GBVAW responses were not identified as relevant and urgent contributed to perpetuating the idea, still pervasive among criminal justice professionals in many countries, that these crimes are not serious and that protecting the integrity of women and children and removing the aggressor from the home environment are not priorities.<sup>232</sup>

### 4.2 Lack of coordination

Even where GBVAW cases were prioritized by criminal justice agencies, a lack of coordinated measures affected the criminal justice process. For example, the closure of courts for GBVAW cases minimized the impact of any prioritization by police or prosecutors.

### 4.3 Lack of clarity in measures and their scope

The lack of a general rule to prioritize GBVAW responses at all levels also resulted in a lack of

<sup>228</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, Consultant; North America, lawyer; Southern Africa, prosecutor; South Asia, policymaker.

<sup>229</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>230</sup> Amnistía Internacional (2020).

<sup>231</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South Asia, academia.

<sup>232</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge; North America, lawyer.



clarity about the type and modality of services that remained operational, as well as the degree and speed of responses.<sup>233</sup> In some cases, there was public confusion about whether lockdown and curfew orders applied to victims/survivors wanting to report a crime, whether local police stations remained open and how social distancing measures would apply in these cases.<sup>234</sup>

Even more seriously, there was limited understanding of what constitutes GBVAW among those in charge of enforcing these measures or a lack of a common understanding of what crimes should be considered among GBVAW.<sup>235</sup> This aggravated the coordination deficiencies among agencies and entities, mentioned above.

A lack of understanding of GBVAW also led to many measures being adopted with a limited scope. In fact, most of the measures reviewed in this assessment concern IPV and domestic violence,<sup>236</sup> sexual violence,<sup>237</sup> and in some cases homicide / femicide.<sup>238</sup> Very few measures explicitly address online violence, which seems to have increased during the pandemic as some evidence shows.<sup>239</sup>

Lack of clarity has also affected the social understanding of the measures implemented during the pandemic by criminal justice agencies. For example, in certain cases criminal cases were moved online but it remained unclear for the public how many, if any, cases of GBVAW were included among them.<sup>240</sup>

Additionally, some stakeholders considered there had been a lack of timely information concerning legislation, as well as a lack of consideration of the needs of police and other criminal justice professionals in the design of these measures.<sup>241</sup>

## 4.4 Inadequate measures

Some of the measures reviewed in this assessment, although considered by criminal justice agencies as positive steps towards ensuring women's access to justice in GBV cases, contain elements that may make them inappropriate or counterproductive for women's rights.

The withdrawal of their complaints by victims/survivors was identified as a concern by criminal justice agencies in some countries.<sup>242</sup> As a response, some countries decided to decline all requests to withdraw domestic violence complaints or empowered the police to act as complainant when the victim/survivor was unwilling to open a criminal case.<sup>243</sup> While there is a legitimate public interest and duty to investigate and prosecute GBVAW cases, there is a risk that these measures may expose victims/survivors to further violence, in particular if they are not being provided with adequate protection measures and social support. A victim/survivor-centred and gender-responsive approach should encourage and respect women's voices, agency and autonomy.

In another country, considering the large number of hearings and trials that would need to take place at the end of the judicial recess due to confinement, the Prosecutor's Office decided to actively engage in plea bargaining in GBVAW cases, allowing victims/survivors to give their consent online or by telephone.<sup>244</sup> These measures may respect the will of the victim/survivor and be intended to reduce secondary victimization by avoiding the victim/survivor's confrontation with the aggressor at the trial. However, they may send a signal of deprioritization of GBVAW cases or even assume that secondary victimization in trials is inevitable, whereas it is the responsibility of criminal justice agencies to eliminate such victimization through adequate gender-responsive procedures.

<sup>233</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, lawyer.

<sup>234</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

<sup>235</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, prosecutor.

<sup>236</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge; West Africa, academic; North Africa, forensic expert 2; South America, prosecutor; North America, victims' unit; Southeast Europe, lawyer.

<sup>237</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor; North America, victims' unit; North Africa, forensic expert 2.

<sup>238</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert 2; North America, CSO.

<sup>239</sup> UN Women (2020a).

<sup>240</sup> Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>241</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Global, consultant.

<sup>242</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>243</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, prosecutor; Van Hout, UNODC Expert group meeting.

<sup>244</sup> AIAMP (2020).

## 4.5 Lack of monitoring and follow up mechanisms

The measures adopted by governments and criminal justice agencies responded to the immediate impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures. Their formulation was driven by urgency more than evidence-based planification. According to available information, most of these measures were put in place and, in some cases, continue to be in place without any monitoring or evaluation mechanisms. As a consequence, the impact of these measures on women's access to justice cannot be assessed.

## 4.6 Obstacles to implementation of e-justice responses

### 4.6.1 Lack of consideration of social, geographic and gender gaps in access to ICTs

Many of the measures adopted and reviewed in this assessment are technology-based measures. Such measures assume that parties to the criminal justice process, including women victims/survivors of GBVAW, have access to technology. Often, this is not the case. As one court official underlined, a key obstacle in lodging a complaint during lockdown was the inability of economically deprived women and children to access on-line platforms for assistance.<sup>245</sup>

Despite the growing access to Internet in recent years worldwide, access is far from homogenous. According to data released in 2019 by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 53,6 per cent of individuals use the Internet, globally. In developed countries, that percentage was close to 87 per cent, while in the least developed countries (LDCs) only 19 per cent of individuals had Internet access. Europe is the region with the highest Internet usage rates, Africa the region with the lowest.<sup>246</sup> African and South Asian countries have the lowest proportions of people using the Internet, although there are intra-regional differences.

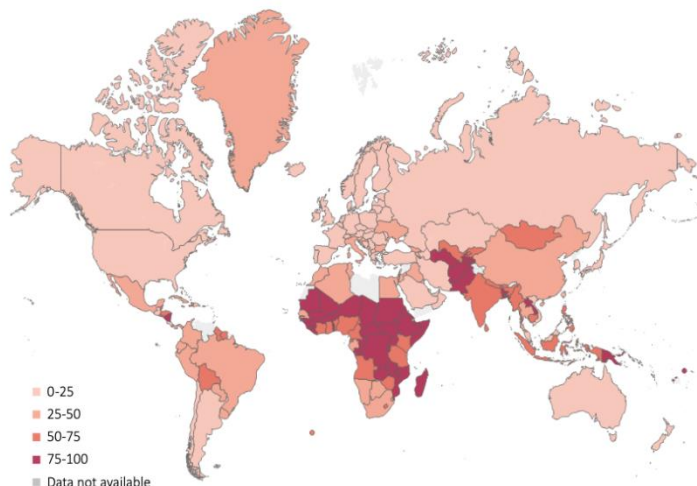


Figure 5. Percentage of the population not using the Internet, 2019 (ITU estimate). (Source: ITU Publications. Measuring digital development. Facts and figures 2019.)

According to ITU data, the proportion of women using the Internet globally is 48 per cent, compared to 58 per cent of men. The gap is small in developed countries and large in developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Between 2013 and 2019, the gender gap hovered around zero in the Americas and has been shrinking in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Europe. However, in the Arab States, Asia, the Pacific, and Africa, the gender gap has been growing (due to the rapid growth in the number of male Internet users).<sup>247</sup>

The 2020 report of the World Wide Web Foundation indicates that, beyond basic access, it is necessary to consider minimum thresholds for regular access, an appropriate device, enough data and a fast connection. When using this more robust measure of access, gender gaps increase or reappear in countries in which it was narrow. For example, two countries with small gender gaps in basic access, have a wider gap in meaningful connectivity with 17 per cent and 14 per cent respectively, affecting women's access to more bandwidth.<sup>248</sup>

A lack of ICT skills is also a barrier to effective Internet use. In 40 out of 84 countries for which data is available, less than half the population possesses basic computer skills such as copying a file or sending an e-mail with an attachment.

<sup>245</sup> High Court of Jammu and Kashmir, *Court on Its Own Motion v/s Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh through Secretaries, Social Welfare Department*. Order dated 16.04.2020; Vivek (2020); Amnistía Internacional (2020).

<sup>246</sup> International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2019).

<sup>247</sup> ITU (2019).

<sup>248</sup> World Wide Web Foundation (2020).

All these factors constitute a serious limitation to the implementation of technology-based measures in the criminal justice system. Far from ensuring women's access to justice, these measures might aggravate the exclusion of wide groups of women over the world.

These challenges could have a disproportionate impact for women's use of certain e-justice measures, such as virtual hearings, because videoconferencing has higher bandwidth requirements. In terms of kbit/s per Internet user, Europe has by far the highest bandwidth usage (211 kbit/s), followed by four regions with similar bandwidth usage (between 100 and 130 kbit/s). Africa is lagging behind, with 31 kbit/s per Internet user.<sup>249</sup>

There are also problems related to affordability. This remains a challenge in many countries, especially LDCs. Among all regions, Africa's mobile broadband bundles are the most expensive. In many African countries and the LDCs many households have neither Internet access nor a computer.

Obstacles also arise in the use of phone calls. According to ITU data, although mobile-broadband subscriptions and mobile-cellular subscriptions have grown in the last years and almost the entire world population (97 per cent) lives within reach of a mobile cellular signal, mobile phone ownership is correlated with income levels. The lowest mobile phone ownership rates are found in Africa and South Asia, the highest rates are in Europe, with Latin America in between. Moreover, there is a relevant gender gap in mobile phone ownership. Considering data from 85 countries, in 58 countries more men than women own a mobile phone. In 23 of those countries, the gender gap is over 10 per cent, and in 14 of those countries over 20 per cent. Among the countries in which a higher proportion of women than men own a mobile phone, the gap is usually quite small.<sup>250</sup>

These obstacles were confirmed in the present review. For example, a criminal justice practitioner

indicated that there was little or almost no digital access by women who are poor and live in peripheral communities.<sup>251</sup> In another country, the Prosecutor's Office highlighted a lack of access to remote channels for reporting, considering people who do not have an internet connection or do not have a digital culture, representing a barrier in access to services.<sup>252</sup> Even in countries with high levels of mobile phone use, news reports indicate that women experiencing domestic violence were less able to contact police during lockdowns.<sup>253</sup> In many countries, helplines are available but not 24/7 or not toll-free.<sup>254</sup>

#### 4.6.2 Inadequacy of e-justice mechanisms in specific cases

Women's limited access to technology is compounded by the level of control exercised by perpetrators of GBVAW and affecting women in the most diverse contexts. Phones or computers are often controlled by male relatives, leaving women without the opportunity to safely make a phone call or use any other form of digital communication to report violence and seek help, in particular when they live with the perpetrator.<sup>255</sup> According to the IRC, in humanitarian crisis settings in African countries, displaced women and girls' access to mobile phones and other digital technology was often limited, determined by unequal gender dynamics and, in situations of intimate partner violence, likely to be heavily controlled and monitored by the abuser.<sup>256</sup>

Some e-justice mechanisms are not accessible to specific groups of women. These may include women with disabilities, women without the needed ICTs skills, including elderly women, and women who are illiterate, or have no or limited knowledge of the official languages of the country.

For some GBVAW victims/survivors, such as in cases of rape, the use of video conferencing may avoid post-trauma triggered by being in the same room as their attacker.<sup>257</sup> However, some reports indicate that virtual court proceedings may affect the provision of victim/survivor centred justice and increase the emotional and mental trauma of

<sup>249</sup> ITU (2019).

<sup>250</sup> ITU (2019).

<sup>251</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge.

<sup>252</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>253</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, consultant.

<sup>254</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>255</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>256</sup> IRC (2020).

<sup>257</sup> Kenniston (2015).

giving testimony.<sup>258</sup> In addition, according to the Prosecutor's Office of one European country, difficulties in accessing "normal" reporting or counselling channels make women feel more insecure and less likely to see reporting as a viable option at that time, with the result that they may prefer to reduce confrontation with their aggressor.<sup>259</sup>

#### 4.6.3 Reluctance to the use of ICTs mechanisms by criminal justice officials

Another obstacle to the use of e-justice mechanisms identified during this assessment is the reluctance of criminal justice institutions to rely on them. In particular, criminal judges and defence lawyers were reported to have concerns regarding the right of the accused to be taken 'before a judge' in cases of virtual hearings. The rights of offenders (in particular those detained or imprisoned) who may be facing coercion or torture during their detention or imprisonment should be taken seriously, particularly in countries where law enforcement authorities have been accused of abuse and torture.

In countries with an established practice of using CCTV cameras for victims/survivors' interrogation and participation in court hearings, in particular in cases involving children and GBVAW, no additional problems have arisen regarding the wider use of videoconferencing in the COVID-19 context.<sup>260</sup> In other countries, however, judges expressed concern that videoconferencing prevented them from perceiving victims/survivors' and witnesses' body language and non-verbal communication.<sup>261</sup>

## 4.7 Lack of infrastructure and capacities in the criminal justice system

A closely related obstacle is due to gaps in the available infrastructure within the criminal justice system. This included a lack of technology, equipment and services, including cell phones, computers or internet connection,<sup>262</sup> which affected all criminal justice agencies, including courts and legal aid services.<sup>263</sup> In one South American country, for example, there was a lack of digital files and computers, as well as a lack of internet access in all courts all over the country.<sup>264</sup> In other cases, there was during lockdown a saturation of helplines, the main channel to contact the Office of the Prosecutor, as well as connectivity problems in municipalities and rural areas which prevented telephone and virtual complaints.<sup>265</sup>

Another key challenge is represented by the capacity gaps among criminal justice institutions and personnel. This affects the ability of police, judges and prosecutors to ensure remote management and follow-up.<sup>266</sup> While innovative phone apps may help increase access to justice, skilled personnel are required in order to respond adequately to such messages.<sup>267</sup>

## 4.8 Insufficient consideration of intersectional discrimination

Most of the measures reviewed in this assessment do not consider the specific situation of women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Most of the respondents to the UNODC Questionnaire underlined that there are groups of women with particular difficulties in their access to justice in cases of GBVAW. According to them, challenges and difficulties were mostly faced by women who are housewives

<sup>258</sup> Nagarajan (2020).

<sup>259</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>260</sup> UNODC Expert group meeting, Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>261</sup> Jakelić (2020, October 24).

<sup>262</sup> UNODC questionnaire, North America, police; South America, prosecutor; Southeast Europe, lawyer; Southern Africa, prosecutor; South Asia, police; Southwest Asia, police; Southeast Europe, CSO; South Asia, policymaker; Southeast Asia, prosecutor; North Africa, forensic expert 2; East Africa, police; Southern Africa, lawyer; South

America, judge; North America, CSO; West Africa, CSO; Central American and North American countries (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>263</sup> UNODC questionnaire, South America, lawyer; South Asia, academia; Oceania, international organisation; South America, judge; Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>264</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, judge.

<sup>265</sup> In one South American country (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>266</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North Africa, forensic expert 2.

<sup>267</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, consultant.

economically dependent of the aggressor,<sup>268</sup> sex-workers,<sup>269</sup> domestic workers,<sup>270</sup> elderly and disabled women,<sup>271</sup> immigrant and displaced women,<sup>272</sup> indigenous women and ethnic minorities,<sup>273</sup> as well as lesbian and transgender women.<sup>274</sup> Women from low-income backgrounds were most affected by poor transport, high transport costs and accessibility.<sup>275</sup> They often could not afford legal assistance and experienced secondary victimization by poorly trained prosecutors.<sup>276</sup> In one country, the difficulty of women in accessing relevant services was due to the fact that these services were not free, such as telephone calls, access to social networks or free virtual consultations.<sup>277</sup>

With few exceptions, most measures to assist victims/survivors of GBVAW did not consider linguistic diversity, and were not accessible for illiterate women who would not know about the existence of such measures and about the procedures to access them.<sup>278</sup> In many countries, legal illiteracy among women is rampant, coupled with a general lack of awareness of rights, entitlements and the procedural aspects of dealing with cases.<sup>279</sup> Many measures failed to consider the needs of women affected by other intersecting forms of discrimination, including those based on physical or mental ability. For example, women with hearing impairment may have difficulties with phone-based services or are unable to read lips when service providers are wearing a mask.

In several countries, as public transport routes were significantly reduced, if not completely suspended during the lockdown period, rural women were restricted from going to courts unless they had their own means of transportation.<sup>280</sup> These restrictions had a

disproportionate impact on poor women and women from remote areas.

There are, however, discriminated groups of women that were not even mentioned by the stakeholders consulted for this assessment. Among those most invisible are women in prison, especially those belonging to already marginalised groups, such as transgender women. Women in prison are exposed to GBVAW within prison settings as well as after their release. During the COVID-19 pandemic, women in prison were affected by the reduction of visits and contact with families due to the pandemic, increasing their isolation and lack of economic support and aggravating their vulnerability to violence. While some of them benefited from early release or pardons enacted by countries as part of efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in prisons,<sup>281</sup> their personal situation should be assessed in order to provide them with options to avoid any potential risk of GBVAW.

## 4.9 Insufficient budgeting

Insufficient budgets for criminal justice responses to GBVAW is a general problem, both before and in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In one country, for example, the budgets of criminal justice agencies were not increased during the emergency. On the contrary, a reduction of 15 per cent in the resources available for each part of the justice system in the 2021 budget was expected.<sup>282</sup>

The assessment did not identify any country where a specific budget was provided for measures to protect victims/survivors of GBVAW crimes or facilitate their reporting and the investigation and prosecution of their cases during the pandemic or in the post-COVID-19 period.<sup>283</sup> In general terms, the increasing costs associated

<sup>268</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor; North Africa, forensic expert; Southeast Asia, prosecutor; South America, judge; South America, judge 2.

<sup>269</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, prosecutor; Southeast Europe, lawyer; West Africa, academia; Southern Africa, lawyer.

<sup>270</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South America, prosecutor; West Africa, CSO 2.

<sup>271</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer; North America, lawyer; West Africa, CSO 2; South America, judge

<sup>272</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Europe, lawyer; North America, victims' unit; West Africa, CSO 2.

<sup>273</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, lawyer; West Africa, CSO; West Africa, academia; South America, judge; North America, victims' unit.

<sup>274</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, North America, lawyer; Southern Africa, lawyer.

<sup>275</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, East Africa, CSO; Southern Africa, judge.

<sup>276</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South Asia, academia.

<sup>277</sup> In Central America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>278</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, West Africa, CSO 2; North Africa, forensic expert 2; Central America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>279</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, South Asia, academia.

<sup>280</sup> UN General Assembly (2020); UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge; Southeast Asia, prosecutor.

<sup>281</sup> <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2020/July/covid-19-in-prisons--member-states-and-unodc-reiterate-their-commitment-to-the-nelson-mandela-rules.html>

<sup>282</sup> AIAMP (2020).

<sup>283</sup> In Southwestern European, Central American, South American and North American countries (AIAMP, 2020).



with the implementation of e-justice mechanisms have raised the issue of budget constraints,<sup>284</sup> aggravating existing funding concerns.<sup>285</sup> Only in some cases the use of ICTs and virtual courts allowed for reduced costs for the judiciary, for example by saving resources dedicated to transportation and accommodation of some witnesses or experts.<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southern Africa, judge; North Africa, forensic expert; Central America (AIAMP, 2020).

<sup>285</sup> UNODC Questionnaire, Southeast Asia, consultant; Southeast Asia, prosecutor; South America, judge; North America, police; South Asia, police.

<sup>286</sup> UNODC Expert group meeting, Southern Africa, judge.

## 5 Conclusions and recommendations

The following recommendations, based on the results of the assessment, are addressed to Member States, particularly their criminal justice agencies, with a view to improve their responses to GBVAW in the context of the pandemic and to prepare for possible future emergencies that could result in similar circumstances. All measures, implemented during these extraordinary times, that improve criminal justice responses to GBVAW and enhance women's access to justice, in particular for marginalised groups of women, should be made permanent and scaled up, as appropriate. While some recommendations can be implemented quickly, others require long term efforts that need to be sustained, both under extraordinary and ordinary circumstances.

### 5.1 Data collection, monitoring and evidence-based policies

#### 5.1.1 Conduct assessments and monitor responses to GBVAW during COVID-19 and other emergencies

In many countries, the measures presented in this review continue to be in place and many will probably remain or expand their application during 'ordinary times', after the end of the pandemic. Since no evidence-based assessment of their implementation was planned, their application and effectiveness should be subjected to continuous assessment and monitoring by criminal justice agencies, in particular in relation to their impact on women's access to justice.

The following aspects should be considered:

- *The degree to which measures are implemented in different parts of the territory.* This is important because of the various obstacles to their application that have been revealed, such as saturation of helplines or lack of trained personnel to attend such calls.

- *The impact that such measures have had on the different elements of the justice chain.* For example, the increased use of ICTs may have different impacts on police investigation, prosecution or judicial interventions in cases of GBVAW.
- *The impact of such measures on women affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.*<sup>287</sup> This requires a specific focus on women who are at particular risk of violence or disadvantage in accessing justice, due to their poverty, ethnicity, disability, language, location or other factors.
- *The views and feedback of victims/survivors of GBVAW and of specialised services working with them.* This includes legal aid and other services provided by CSOs. Based on a victim/survivor-centred approach, acknowledging women as subjects of rights and promoting their voice, agency and autonomy is a crucial element in crime prevention and criminal justice responses to GBVAW.

#### 5.1.2 Conduct surveys and research to inform measures to address GBVAW during COVID-19 and other emergencies

Assessment and monitoring should be complemented by surveys, research and studies on the situation, views and needs of women, especially those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination,<sup>288</sup> which should contribute to:

- Understanding the dynamics of GBVAW during the periods of lockdown and movement restrictions, in order to assess the prevalence of GBVAW, including online violence, experienced by women and the causes for not reporting to the criminal justice system;
- Understanding any particular tendency detected, for example an increase of requests for withdrawals during lockdown, in order to

<sup>287</sup> Including women who are migrant, including undocumented migrants, displaced, asylum seekers, refugees, indigenous and ethnic minorities, sex-workers, domestic workers, elderly and disabled women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, women from low-income or marginalised groups, including women who use drugs, who are in prison, homeless, etc.

<sup>288</sup> In countries where informal systems of justice remain in place - and even more used due to the closure of Courts-, an in-depth

assessment of their interventions in GBVAW cases should be done with the participation of civil society organisations -in particular, those representing marginalised groups of women-, in order to identify mechanisms to improve the outcomes for women victims/survivors of GBVAW, and to promote gender-sensitive justice as well as access to formal justice cases in which informal justice acts reinforce gender-based discrimination.

identify its causes and identify the best measures to address them.

### 5.1.3 Implement existing UN recommendations on data collection, research and evaluation concerning crime prevention and criminal justice responses to GBVAW

In order to adjust current and future measures to the reality of GBVAW cases in each country, criminal justice agencies should fully implement existing human rights treaty bodies' and UN recommendations to collect, analyse and publish all relevant and disaggregated data on GBVAW cases.<sup>289</sup> Priority should be given to the collection of data on forms of GBVAW that might be increasing during the current context, including online or technology-mediated violence, as well as on particularly affected groups of women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

In all cases, data collection efforts should prioritize women's and girls' safety, privacy and confidentiality, should be based on clear objectives and rationale and respect the principle of doing no harm.<sup>290</sup>

## 5.2 Attention to intersectional discrimination

Women affected by multiple forms of discrimination or from marginalised groups, including indigenous women, sex workers, women who use drugs, who are in prison or homeless, women with disabilities, transgender women, migrants including undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, internally displaced populations (IDPs) and refugees, among others, should be expressly considered in the design, implementation and assessment of all measures.

Research should be conducted on the obstacles that such specific groups face in accessing justice

in cases of GBVAW, and how these obstacles have evolved during the pandemic. Measures should be adopted to meet the specific needs of certain groups of women.<sup>291</sup> As a minimum, helplines and hotlines should be accessible to different ethnic populations, linguistic minorities and women with disabilities.

Community-based legal aid providers and community-based paralegals, endowed with appropriate resources, should facilitate access to justice for women who have disabilities, are illiterate, do not speak or read the official languages of the country or cannot access online services. In this sense, the international guidance on access to justice for persons with disabilities should be followed.<sup>292</sup>

## 5.3 A general exception to restrictions at all levels in cases of GBVAW

### 5.3.1 Clear official messages to the public

All official messages from the criminal justice system, political and health authorities, should be clear in indicating that reporting GBVAW or accessing essential services, including police and justice services, are an exception to movement restriction measures (including curfew, lockdown, or any other movement restriction).

- The message "stay home, stay safe" - used in the case of the current pandemic - should always be accompanied by a clear message that GBVAW will not be tolerated and that victims/survivors can leave the house without the fear of being stopped, sanctioned or punished by the authorities.
- Awareness-raising campaigns to promote policies in the context of public health emergencies (such as lockdown or movement restrictions calls) should include the dissemination and reinforcement of the message that GBVAW is unacceptable, even in the extraordinary context of a pandemic. Such

<sup>289</sup> Including CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 35 (2017), the updated Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010 (A/Res/65/228, annex, para. 21).

<sup>290</sup> UN Women / UNDP / WHO / IOM / OHCHR / UNODC / OCHA / UNFPA / UNICEF (2020). Inter-Agency Statement on Violence against Women and Girls in the Context of COVID-19.

<sup>291</sup> A/75/144.

<sup>292</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (2020) International Principles and Guidelines on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities.

campaigns are relevant not only for the general public but also for public officials, including in the criminal justice system. This could contribute to address, for example, police perceptions that domestic violence is a private issue or public officials' reluctance to believe in its seriousness.

### 5.3.2 Continued operation of all criminal justice agencies and services for GBVAW cases

Public statements that GBVAW cases are an exception to movement restrictions should be reinforced and accompanied with specific provisions in relation to all criminal justice agencies and specialised services in their coordinated responses to such crimes. Accordingly:

- *All criminal justice agencies and services should ensure continued operation for GBVAW cases.* This includes police, legal aid, prosecution and judicial services, shelters and safe accommodation, forensic experts and other relevant institutions and services.
- *Criminal justice agencies should scale up their services to meet increased needs.*
- *Under no circumstances should court closures affect GBVAW cases.* As a minimum, court hearings should continue for protection orders (including restraining and barring orders).
- *Continued operation of criminal justice agencies and specialised services for GBVAW should be widely publicised, adequately funded and strengthened as essential services.* This should include rapid assessments of shelters' capacity, design of risk assessments, safety planning and case management, adapted to the crisis context, to ensure victims/survivors' access to support.

## 5.4 Prioritization of GBVAW cases

Considering the individual and social impact of GBVAW, these cases should be given priority by criminal justice actors in times of reduced activity, such as during lockdown or similar movement

restriction measures. Prioritization of GBVAW cases should encompass the following elements:

### 5.4.1 Specific directives on GBVAW prioritization

Specific directives should be adopted by criminal justice agencies in order to ensure that all frontline officers understand their duty to respond to these cases as a matter of priority. This requires a common and broad understanding of GBVAW shared by all criminal justice agencies, including forms of GBVAW usually neglected or invisible, such as psychological violence, coercive control, breaches of protection orders, etc.

Such directives should include:

- *Measures to ensure that temporary closures at any criminal justice agency do not affect timely responses to GBVAW cases.*
- *An automatic extension of protection orders during lockdown or other movement restriction measures.*
- *Proactive police interventions.* During lockdown or movement restriction measures, this is crucial in order to safely contact previous GBVAW complainants.
- *Measures to address the backlog of GBVAW by the judiciary.* Periods in which there is a reduction of judicial activity in other non-prioritized areas, should be used as an opportunity to tackle the pervasive de-prioritization that often affects GBVAW cases and is reflected in their backlog.

### 5.4.2 Awareness raising and reporting campaigns

Awareness raising campaigns should aim at making all women aware of channels and mechanisms available for reporting and protection, as well as of GBVAW being an exception to movement restrictions. All awareness raising campaigns should acknowledge women as subjects of rights and promote their agency and autonomy.

Channels for reporting GBVAW and accessing support services, including legal aid, should be expanded, including through the use of

technology-facilitated channels. This should include the following elements:

- ICTs mechanisms should facilitate safe reporting by women or bystanders.
- Legal aid should be offered even in cases in which the woman has not yet decided if she wants to initiate legal actions against the perpetrator.
- Legal education and information on GBVAW responses and services should be provided by all technologies available, in particular those reaching most of the population and territories, including radio and TV.

#### 5.4.3 Continued specialisation of criminal justice personnel in GBVAW

Measures to ensure an adequate number of specialised police, prosecutors, judges, legal aid providers and court staff to deal specifically with GBVAW cases, included those reported through ICTs, should continue and be reinforced during crisis periods. Special measures should be foreseen in order to maintain GBVAW responses even under extraordinary circumstances, such as:

- Ensuring that personnel and professionals dealing with GBVAW cases are not transferred to other areas.
- In case of need, retired or in-training personnel could be allowed to work some hours a week to reinforce other areas.

All extraordinary measures taken during times of crisis should consider the long-term goal of increasing the number of women working in all criminal justice agencies and areas, at all levels.

#### 5.4.4 Regulated use of Alternative Dispute Resolutions

It should be ensured that GBVAW cases are not mandatorily referred to alternative dispute resolution procedures, including mediation and conciliation. Their use should be restricted in line

with international recommendations,<sup>293</sup> including in plea bargaining agreements.

### 5.5 Coordinated efforts at all levels, with emphasis at the local level

Coordination is essential for providing survivor-centred responses to GBVAW and ensure efficient interventions by criminal justice agencies. Although coordination is needed at all times, during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical and imperative. The multiple challenges imposed by the responses to the pandemic have affected criminal justice agencies as well as essential services providers in diverse forms, requiring a much higher level of coordination.

While in some countries this has been achieved through roundtables or high-level coordination networks among criminal justice agencies, local level coordination seems to be the most effective to analyse concrete needs, requirements and obstacles that exist in specific territories. It should be underlined that the current pandemic, as other crises, affects specific regions within countries differently. For example, movement restriction measures are being implemented in different localities or cities, at different times and to a different extent. Considering the increasingly local character of such restrictions, local coordination measures should be especially encouraged.

#### 5.5.1 Coordination among criminal justice agencies and services

In order to ensure prioritization of GBVAW cases, it is necessary that all criminal justice agencies act in a coordinated manner. This is important considering the repercussions along the justice chain of a de-prioritization at any stage, for example, the closure of courts or specialised forensic services working at reduced capacity. Family or civil courts that issue civil protection orders in cases of domestic violence should be part of coordinated responses.

<sup>293</sup> See: UN Women / UNDP / UNODC / OHCHR (2018). Practitioners' Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice (p. 233-234). According to CEDAW's General Recommendation No. 35 (2017) the use of ADR procedures should be allowed only when a previous evaluation by a specialised team ensures the free and informed consent by the affected victim/survivor and that there are no indicators of further risks for the victim/survivor or their family members. ADR procedures

should empower the women victims/survivors and be provided by professionals specially trained to understand and adequately intervene in cases of GBVAW, ensuring an adequate protection of women's and children's rights as well as an intervention with no stereotyping or re-victimization of women. Finally, ADR procedures should not constitute an obstacle to women's access to formal justice.



Measures to improve national and local level coordination should be adopted in line with international standards and recommendations.<sup>294</sup> Additionally, coordination at the local level should address all the aspects considered in the present recommendations, in particular:

- Consider mechanisms for improving attention and protection of the victims/survivors of GBVAW, including civil protection orders, considering the limitations imposed by movement restrictions or reduced capacities of some services.
- Enable adequate and immediate communication between criminal justice agencies as well as forensic experts and legal aid services to promptly respond to difficulties that may arise due to health-related restrictions, at any stage of the criminal justice response to GBVAW crimes. Consistent messages and responses should be provided to victims/survivors.
- Identify obstacles concerning specific groups of women, in particular those affected by multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, considering factors relevant at the local level, such as rural or urban characteristics, geographical remoteness, linguistic diversity, marginalised communities.

### 5.5.2 Coordination between GBVAW services and CSOs

Coordinated responses should include social services that provide support and protect women victims/survivors of GBVAW, including shelters, specialised centres and counselling services, whether provided by State agencies or by CSOs.

Women's organisations and other CSOs are acting as a nexus between State agencies and victims/survivors in the context of the pandemic.<sup>295</sup> Considering their role, CSOs, in particular those representing marginalised groups of women, should be part of the coordination schemes to prioritize and adequately respond to GBVAW. These organisations contribute to the

coordination of efforts by identifying obstacles faced by women, particularly specific groups of women, in accessing justice, considering pre-existing inequalities and current struggles affecting them in the context of the pandemic, and promoting women's engagement in the design of measures to counter such challenges.

Social workers, particularly women, and other community leaders could have an important role to facilitate contact between women victims/survivors of GBVAW and State services available, including justice services.. Essential service providers can play a key role in supporting survivors in accessing justice, for example through the gathering of medical evidence and/or services through paralegals.<sup>296</sup>

Local and rural CSOs could contribute and support access to justice for women, facilitating the access of rural, low income or illiterate women to both safe environments and technologies that would allow their participation in online legal proceedings, from filing complaints to participating in hearings and trials. This is important considering that women victims/survivors of GBVAW often keep on living with the perpetrators at the time of reporting, and even during legal proceedings.

### 5.5.3 Community engagement in GBVAW responses

A wider community engagement should be promoted during the pandemic and beyond. The following measures should be considered:

- The use of pharmacies, post offices, grocery stores, etc., to facilitate reporting and provision of information and support for women in cases of GBVAW should be reinforced and expanded through social responsibility schemes.
- Similar agreements should be made with the hospitality sector, in order to complement shelters and alternative accommodation services in cases of GBVAW.
- Partnerships and agreements with ICT companies should be explored to:

<sup>294</sup> See: UNODC (2014) Blueprint for Action: an Implementation Plan for Criminal Justice Systems to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women; UN Women / UNFPA / WHO / UNDP / UNODC (2016). Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to

Violence. Module 5: Essential Actions for Coordination and Governance of Coordination.

<sup>295</sup> Majumdar & Wood (2020).

<sup>296</sup> UNODC / IDLO (2020).

- ensure access to free helplines and affordable phone and adequate internet services for women victims/survivors of GBVAW, to facilitate their participation in online legal proceedings, as well as for local CSOs that provide a nexus between women and criminal justice agencies, and
- address online GBVAW with Internet intermediaries, following international recommendations.<sup>297</sup>

## 5.6 Adequate protection measures

Protection orders should be granted considering the impact of the pandemic and its consequences on GBVAW as well as the evolving dynamics of GBVAW in a crisis context. This includes the patterns of escalating coercive control, different tactics being used by perpetrators in situations of lockdown, increased incidence of cyber-violence and increase levels of stalking through ICT communication methods.

All GBVAW specialised services should be delivered in line with the goal to protect and empower women, including specialised services working with perpetrators of GBVAW that prioritize victim/survivor safety.

### 5.6.1 Simplify mechanisms to obtain and extend protection orders

In all cases of GBVAW, protection measures granted should be tailored to the context of the pandemic and adopt a victim/survivor-centred approach.

In case of lockdown or similar movement restriction measures, protection orders should be automatically extended, and remote and simplified application for protection orders should be allowed.

### 5.6.2 Prioritize removal of perpetrators from common home

Although ensuring access to shelters is fundamental, protection measures should prioritize that, whenever their safety can be ensured, survivors can remain at home, with their children and other dependents, and are protected from further violence. The issuance and monitoring of eviction, restraining or barring orders against alleged perpetrators should be preferred<sup>298</sup> and enforced through adequate sanctions for non-compliance. If needed, options for accommodation should be explored, for example through social responsibility schemes that allow for hotels or hostels (currently vacant in most countries, due to the pandemic) to be used as alternative accommodation. Women's agency and autonomy should be promoted in all cases.

In cases of women deprived of their liberty, who often are victims/survivors of GBV, the application of non-custodial measures should be expanded, particularly in the context of COVID-19 considering their increased vulnerability.<sup>299</sup> Women released from prison should be granted adequate protection measures in cases of risk of GBVAW, including access to safe accommodation.

### 5.6.3 Assess and address the safety risks of victims/survivors in decisions concerning release and other non-custodial measures

Applications for bail or other non-custodial measures by those suspected or accused of GBVAW should only be granted after a risk-assessment has been carried out in consultation with the victims/survivors, to enable courts and other relevant authorities to make an informed decision and to order adequate protective measures.

Those convicted or imprisoned for GBVAW crimes, including domestic violence, sexual crimes, and other violent crimes, should not be automatically eligible for emergency release or non-custodial measures under extraordinary release schemes.

<sup>297</sup> Human Rights Council (2018).

<sup>298</sup> UN Women / UNDP / WHO / IOM / OHCHR / UNODC / OCHA / UNFPA / UNICEF (2020).

<sup>299</sup> Alternatives to detention for women, such as judicial supervision or suspended sentences with probation, should be considered, in

particular, for women detained on grounds of administrative or other non-severe offences, low-risk offenders and those who can safely be reintegrated into society, women nearing the end of their sentences, pregnant or sick women, older women and women with disabilities. CEDAW (2020) Guidance Note on CEDAW and COVID-19.

Adequate risk assessments considering the safety of the victim/survivor should be carried out prior to release or the granting of bail, conditional release, parole or probation. Prison and corrections authorities should ensure the right of victims/survivors to be informed of the aggressor's release from detention or imprisonment. Judicial protection orders should also be granted for women victims/survivors in case of release of such perpetrators.

## 5.7 Guidelines for the use of e-justice mechanisms in GBVAW cases

The use of ICTs has the potential to facilitate criminal justice procedures and practices in GBVAW cases, including:

- Reporting of GBVAW through remote channels;
- Virtual hearings for barring, restraining and other urgent protection orders;
- Victim/survivor and witness statements through videoconference;
- Remote access to criminal records;
- Online or electronic case management systems;
- Examination of expert witnesses through videoconference;
- Virtual trials;
- Virtual training for judges, prosecutors, forensic experts, police, legal aid providers and other criminal justice professionals.

The implementation of remote or technology-facilitated procedures in relation to GBVAW cases must be carried out in full respect for the rights of victims/survivors and perpetrators.<sup>300</sup> In order to adequately use e-justice mechanisms in cases of GBVAW in the context of the pandemic and beyond, the following aspects should be considered.

### 5.7.1 Planning, availability and participation

The use of e-justice mechanisms should be planned to ensure that infrastructure is available for all CJ agencies, including legal aid services, and that the meaningful participation of

victims/survivors is guaranteed, considering the varying levels of access to ICTs between countries and within countries.

This would require the following:

- An assessment in each country of the advisability of implementing such mechanisms, bearing in mind the access to ICTs by women victims/survivors of GBVAW, especially those facing intersectional discrimination.
- Prisons and detention facilities should have adequate infrastructure to make videoconferencing technology available to the accused, in a way that safeguards attorney-client privilege. Bearing in mind the importance for the victim/survivor of avoiding delays and adjournments, the offender's access to legal aid and to the adequate ICTs should be ensured.
- Considering the situation of women living in remote and rural areas, indigenous women or women belonging to marginalised communities with limited access to ICTs, local CSOs, in particular those providing legal aid services, could be used as remote witness facilities to enable such women to file online complaints and ensure their participation in remote proceedings, while providing community support.
- The reliability of equipment and systems used for remote justice proceedings should be in line with international human rights standards and norms and conform with adequate privacy protections. Technical support personnel should be available to monitor and resolve connectivity problems, software and hardware compatibility issues and interruptions.

### 5.7.2 Adaptation of legislative frameworks

Legislative frameworks should be adapted, in consultation with all stakeholders from the criminal justice agencies and GBVAW services, including CSOs, to allow and regulate the implementation of remote access to criminal proceedings. Legislative frameworks should include provisions about the following:

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<sup>300</sup> Bueno (2010).

- Types of hearings or procedures allowed to take place remotely;
- Categories of people that can participate remotely in criminal proceedings (the accused, prosecution and defence attorneys, victims/survivors, witnesses, judges, court staff, other justice officers, journalists, members of the public, etc.);
- The role of local CSOs as remote facilities for ensuring women's access to justice, in particular women from poor or marginalised communities, and to facilitate publicity of hearings and trials;
- Guarantees to ensure the respect of all human rights, the right to a fair trial and the right of access to justice in a gender-responsive manner, including:
  - i) Ensuring the right of the accused to access to legal assistance before, during, and after the proceedings, as well as legal assistance for the victim/survivor;
  - ii) Ensuring that all parties can meaningfully participate in the remote hearings;
  - iii) Providing adequate protective measures for victims/survivors and witnesses, who might fear retaliation from the accused or experience further violence, including abusive behaviour during remote hearings;
  - iv) Providing support and counselling, including test sessions, to those who have no previous experiences with technology-facilitated procedures, as well as to those who are required to give accounts of traumatic experiences;
  - v) Providing victims/survivors with the opportunity to attend court proceedings and, as appropriate, to be accompanied by their legal representative, by a victim services professional or by another support person;
  - vi) Providing secure access to facilities that enable the court, witnesses, the defence, and the prosecution to submit evidence and to fully examine that evidence during the hearing,

when remote hearings involve the filing or review of evidence ;

- vii) Allowing social workers, probation and parole officers to have the closest safe access to the offenders, in order to adequately elaborate their reports;
- viii) Ensuring the victim/survivor's right to be informed about the case throughout legal proceedings;
- Design of a system that prioritizes the security of communication and protection of confidential information and documents;
- Publicity of hearings (for example via streaming), with due protection of victims/survivors and witnesses as needed;
- Periodic review of the legal framework regulating the use of these mechanisms;
- Adequate budgeting to implement e-justice mechanisms and to build capacities for their adequate use in GBVAW cases (see 5.6.3. below).

### 5.7.3 Training in GBVAW, e-justice and ICTs

All criminal justice actors, including law enforcement, judges, prosecutors and court staff, should have access to training in GBVAW, e-justice and ICTs. Training should specifically focus on the following elements:<sup>301</sup>

- Understanding the evolving dynamics of GBVAW in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and similar crisis scenarios, including relevance of psychological violence, coercive control, online violence, etc.
- Mitigating GBVAW victims/survivors and witnesses' vulnerabilities and concerns during online hearings or other procedures, reducing any risk of stereotyping or secondary victimization, as well as any risk of further violence from the perpetrator through the use of technology, while acknowledging women as subjects of rights and promoting their agency and autonomy.

<sup>301</sup> Additional topics and issues that could be part of relevant training can be found in the updated Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime

Prevention and Criminal Justice, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010 (A/Res/65/228, annex, para. 20); CEDAW Committee, General Recommendation 35 (2017).

Trainings should also address law enforcement training needs in relation to the impact of the pandemic in GBVAW cases,<sup>302</sup> including:

- Victims/survivors' protection when there are limited possibilities to contact them, how to reach families within their homes, alternative methods of supporting families at risk of violence, and how to deal with victims/survivors who cannot contact the authorities;
- Alternative ways of reporting incidents;
- How to develop strategies to contact victims/survivors using new technologies and develop communication tools appropriate to this type of context (online reporting, SMS alert, etc.) and discrete reporting procedures via remote and online means;
- How to carry out a domestic violence investigation during lockdown if the perpetrator is living together with their victim/survivor(s);
- How to improve interviewing and questioning techniques via (video) call;
- How to assess and identify psychological effects of quarantine, closure, emergency situations in children, adolescents and adults; behaviour analysis;
- How to work with persons infected with COVID-19;
- Preparation of an adequate risk assessment via remote and online means; and
- Sharing best practices.

<sup>302</sup> According to CEPOL (2020). However, the CEPOL survey shows that there is also a high need for training of law enforcement on how to address domestic violence cases independently of COVID-19. According to CEPOL, training needs on general level include:

- Improve the knowledge of domestic violence overall, systemic changes in society's negative approach to committing violence in general, preventive campaigns.
- Effective police response to domestic violence.
- Professionalization of police officers on the issue of domestic violence to be important, improving law enforcement in investigation domestic violence cases as well as taking measures to combat domestic violence.
- The domestic violence could be explained more by personal factors (individual, inter-relational and psychological) much more than by circumstantial factors (contextual, collective and social). A training in those areas would be an improvement in the understanding of the phenomenon.
- Ability to detect a risk situation even in the case of a simple intervention without violence.
- Better understand the tools and consumption habits of young people in terms of digital technology in order to be able to anticipate their risky behaviours;

#### 5.7.4 Access to legal aid in e-justice procedures

Access to legal aid should be ensured, including through:<sup>303</sup>

- Community-based legal aid providers and community-based paralegals, endowed with appropriate resources, who should facilitate access to justice through information, guidance and support in the use of e-justice mechanisms, particularly for women from marginalised groups;
- Hotlines and online services offered by criminal justice agencies, with no prerequisite of initiating legal actions against the perpetrator; and
- Increased budgetary allocations for legal aid, to provide adequate payment for legal aid providers and make legal aid geographically accessible for women, in particular those affected by multiple forms of discrimination.

#### 5.7.5 Assessment of gender responsiveness of e-justice mechanisms

Regular assessments of the gender-responsiveness of e-justice mechanisms, such as videoconferencing (according to *Recommendation 5.1* of this document) should be carried out. This should include data collection to monitor its impact and specific research on GBVAW cases, considering:<sup>304</sup>

- the quality of the courtroom experience for the witness, including victims/survivors;

- Identifying/recognizing the varied forms and early signs of domestic violence.
- Improve the way to interact with the perpetrator: motivational, unbiased and conducive approach to an emotional stabilization process, with medical and social support. This would be a decisive step in victim's safety.
- The skills and practical experience of law enforcement authorities in conducting the interrogation of victims of domestic violence, including child victims, as particularly vulnerable victims in criminal proceeding.
- Education of police authorities in the field of empathic skills, care of police authorities from the point of view of psychogenic.
- Cooperation with psychosocial-legal support agencies and accommodation structures.
- Raise awareness among potential witnesses.
- Prevention strategies.

<sup>303</sup> See also United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems (A/Res/67/187).

<sup>304</sup> Wallace (2008); Hatipoğlu-Aydın & Berkay Aydın (2016).



- the way that witness evidence is received in the courtroom;
- the nature of the interaction between the witness and other parties in the courtroom; and
- the ability of the court to maintain control of the courtroom environment and ensure safety of the victim/survivor.

### 5.7.6 Access to face-to-face proceedings

Access to face-to-face proceedings should be ensured for cases in which someone either cannot safely access/use ICTs, or rejects their use. This is particularly important for technologically excluded and marginalised communities, for example in humanitarian crisis contexts.<sup>305</sup> In such cases, in-person procedures should be available and criminal justice agencies should ensure women's access to justice while implementing adequate health measures necessary to protect the health and safety of justice professionals and court users. These should include:

- Providing PPE to frontline justice providers;
- Allowing vulnerable criminal justice practitioners to work from home where

possible, to ensure the protection of their health and safety; and

- Taking adequate health measures in courtrooms, including physical distancing, hand sanitizing stations, etc.

## 5.8 Budgeting

All measures to be implemented should be adequately resourced and budgeted. Urgent measures should be part of national strategies to address the COVID-19 crisis. Budgeting should consider the increasing demand for emergency hotlines, shelters and safe accommodation, legal aid, and police and justice services. As many of the measures adopted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic will remain in place permanently, they should be considered in financial resource planning for the provision of essential services to address GBVAW, in particular in the area of justice and policing, as well as in local and national coordination. The technical guidance provided by UN agencies in this regard should be considered when determining marginal and operational costs, target populations, geographic areas, capacities required, as well as monitoring and evaluation.<sup>306</sup>

<sup>305</sup> IRC (2020).

<sup>306</sup> UN Women / UNFPA / WHO / UNDP / UNODC (2020). Module 7. Guidance on Estimating Resource Requirements for selected interventions in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on

Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence and beyond. Available at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/ESP\\_Module-7-CostingTool-EN.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/ESP_Module-7-CostingTool-EN.pdf)

## 6 Annex

Table 1. Examples of awareness raising campaigns to promote reporting

Country	Description	Date	Source
Australia	The Domestic Violence Support Package includes funding for the national domestic, family and sexual violence hotline, 1800RESPECT, and for the “Help is Here” campaign, launched to provide clear information about where to seek help for family, domestic and sexual violence.		GGRT
Azerbaijan	Cases of domestic violence were prevented by the intervention of the Child and Family Support Centres. Special events have been organised regarding the prevention of gender-based discrimination and increasing awareness of the value of girls in society, the role of social workers in preventing gender-based violence during the pandemic, and gender and reproductive health. Additionally, awareness-raising campaigns to combat gender-based violence and a number of programmes dedicated to “Women’s rights” were launched.		Council of Europe database
Bosnia and Herzegovina	A project to support victims/survivors of gender-based violence during the state of emergency was launched. The plan foresees to (i) inform the public and particularly victims/survivors, through a media campaign, about the available support services and ways to obtain them; (ii) provide SOS telephone-lines and personnel; and (iii) provide possible additional accommodation through social protection institutions that have the capacity for quarantine.		Council of Europe database
Brazil	A booklet on online-VAW was launched, including information on reporting	April/20	<a href="https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/agosto/68ENFRENTANDO_VIOLENCIA_ONLINE.pdf">https://www.gov.br/mdh/pt-br/assuntos/noticias/2020-2/agosto/68ENFRENTANDO_VIOLENCIA_ONLINE.pdf</a>
Brazil	Booklet: Prevention of Violence in pandemic COVID- 19. It explains the options that women have to report or not, protection measures and channels to obtain them.		AIAMP
Brazil (local)	A guide was published by the Judiciary of the State of Rio de Janeiro, on resources for GBV victims/survivors during the pandemic	4/May/20	<a href="https://www.emerj.tjrj.jus.br/publicacoes/cartilhas/violencia-domestica/versao-digital/index.html">https://www.emerj.tjrj.jus.br/publicacoes/cartilhas/violencia-domestica/versao-digital/index.html</a>
Chile	Information campaign on VAW to promote community awareness and facilitate access to complaint and protection of women during lockdown.		AIAMP
Croatia	Recommendations and information for potential victims/survivors on how to behave in situations of suspected violence have been publicly disseminated. The ministry has sent a public appeal to all citizens, family members, neighbours, friends for protecting potential victims/survivors of violence and reporting suspected violence.		Council of Europe database
Ecuador	Media and social media campaign to promote reporting crimes of GBVAW		AIAMP
El Salvador	Video campaign to give advice and provide information in the event of violence #LibreDeViolenciaEnLaEmergencia (#FreeFromViolenceDuringEmergency)		<a href="https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=629977337626268">https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=629977337626268</a>
Fiji	A national media campaign in three languages, which was aired in July, August and September to raise awareness about gender-based violence.		GGRT
Georgia	A communication strategy on domestic violence against women during the pandemic has been developed in		Council of Europe database

Country	Description	Date	Source
	order to raise awareness, build knowledge, and decrease acceptance of violence against women.		
Guatemala	Media dissemination campaigns of new modalities for reporting, including their translation into majority indigenous languages.		AIAMP
India	In Indian state of Maharashtra, state police have teamed up with the local NGO Akshara and the Department of Women and Child Development's Special Cell for Women and Children [TISS] (based in police stations) to launch a campaign to disseminate information on an emergency police number 100 [not usually associated with domestic violence] for complaints and support during the lockdown. To ensure a wide coverage and outreach the initiative appealed to celebrities and other government agencies. Popular celebrities like top Bollywood actors and sportspersons were requested to lend their voice for asking women to 'Report Domestic Violence' as reporting acts as a deterrent and also reinforces it as a crime.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
Kazakhstan	GBV leaflets with step-by-step information on what to do when confronted with violence continued to be disseminated across Kazakhstan (17,000 copies) through the police.		<u>UNFPA, July 31</u>
Malta	Campaign with pharmacies which involved providing them with business cards with contact numbers of national services and NGOs who offer support and services to victims/survivors of domestic violence. Ongoing online campaign on social media platforms which include emergency contact numbers.		Council of Europe database
Monaco	An information campaign dedicated to domestic violence during periods of confinement has been broadcast on various communication media and on social networks.		Council of Europe database
Montenegro	Conducted a campaign to remind of the legal protection and services available and promote their application.		Council of Europe database
New Zealand	The Ministry of Justice has a resource website that gathers a range of support services and information for survivors.		GGRT
Panama	An online Orientation guide for women who are in a situation of domestic violence, in the framework of the COVID-19 pandemic, was developed jointly by diverse public institutions, including Police and the Prosecutor's Office.		<a href="https://inamu.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Gu%C3%AD-a-de-orientaci3n-a-Mujeres-VD-_FINAL.pdf">https://inamu.gob.pa/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Gu%C3%AD-a-de-orientaci3n-a-Mujeres-VD-_FINAL.pdf</a>
Romania	Online campaigns are organised, with the participation of public figures, promoting the intervention of the authorities in cases of DV.		GGRT
Slovak Republic	Leaflets about domestic violence have been sent to main supermarkets to make victims/survivors aware of assistance possibilities.		Council of Europe database
Slovenia	Negotiations with pharmacies are being held to start sharing relevant information and contact numbers. The police is raising awareness and spreading information on social media.		Council of Europe database
Switzerland	The Federal Office of Public Health launched a new platform for mental health around the coronavirus, that contains information on conflicts within family and relationship with help-line numbers for victims/survivors and perpetrators.		Council of Europe database
Tunisia	Media spoke about the risk of a rise in GBV cases recalling access to health and judicial protection measures		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2

Country	Description	Date	Source
United Kingdom	Media campaigns both on social media and mainstream media to promote new ways of reporting for victims/survivors.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
Uruguay	Since the beginning of the pandemic, a media campaign was launched on social networks and the media, informing of ways to make complaints by toll-free numbers and email.		AIAMP
West Bank and Gaza	The Palestinian Police launched a national campaign to raise awareness among women during COVID-19 lockdown on available gender-based violence services. The campaign included video, radio spots, messaging.		GGRT

Table 2. Examples of exemptions from lockdown restrictions for women

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	A resolution of Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity clarified that people in situations of GBV may be exempted from isolation measures when they need to request assistance or make a complaint. Together with the Ministry of National Security, procedures were articulated to guarantee these exceptions.	04/April/20	Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity. Resolución 15/2020: <a href="https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/227462/20200405">https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/227462/20200405</a> . <a href="https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria">https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria</a>
Bolivia	An instruction for the military and the police ensured that women who have experienced violence can leave their house to escape abuse without being subject to any type of sanctions and limitations for breaching COVID-19 lockdown measures.		GGRT
Fiji	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GBV Working Group negotiated that women fleeing violence should be transported in police vehicles to support services during curfew hours.</li> <li>- The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre vehicle has also been cleared by police to move around during the Government-imposed curfew, to transport survivors as required.</li> </ul>		GGRT
Georgia	A policy-level decision was made not to fine those potential victims/survivors of domestic violence who, in order to escape violence, leave home during the curfew hours.		Council of Europe database
Myanmar	Nationally the police have specifically confirmed that those facing violence in the home, or elsewhere, are free to leave and won't face penalties, even under curfew or lockdown conditions, and have said that this information has been passed on to frontline officers.		GGRT
North Macedonia	Women who have experienced violence could leave the house without being subject to any type of sanctions and limitations for breaching COVID-19 lockdown measures.		GGRT
Sri Lanka	The Ministry of Women and Children and Social Services has a collaboration with the Police and helpline services to obtain curfew passes to ensure safe transportation of survivors to shelters during curfew periods.		GGRT

Table 3. Examples of additional channels and mechanisms for reporting

Country	Description	Date	Source
Andorra	WhatsApp number habilitated in order to receive reports of GBV, free of charge and on service 24h	24/March/20	<a href="https://www.govern.ad/comunicats/item/11353-s-habilita-un-numero-de-whatsapp-per-a-les-victimes-de-violencia-de-genero">https://www.govern.ad/comunicats/item/11353-s-habilita-un-numero-de-whatsapp-per-a-les-victimes-de-violencia-de-genero</a>

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	WhatsApp number available for attention of GBV cases	28/April/20	<a href="https://www.ambito.com/informacion-general/whatsapp/lanzan-numero-asistir-victimas-violencia-genero-n5098872">https://www.ambito.com/informacion-general/whatsapp/lanzan-numero-asistir-victimas-violencia-genero-n5098872</a>
Argentina	Remote communication channels were optimized, by telephone, WhatsApp and email for complaints; social media campaigns were carried out to publicize reporting alternatives		<a href="https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria">https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria</a>
Argentina	Agreement with pharmacies so that women in situations of violence can go to request assistance (by asking for a “red facemask”) and get in direct contact with helpline.		<a href="https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria">https://www.argentina.gob.ar/generos/medidas-en-materia-de-genero-y-diversidad-en-el-marco-de-la-emergencia-sanitaria</a>
Brazil	São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are allowing virtual domestic violence complaints.		<u>Wilson Center, May 15, 2020</u>
Brazil	The campaign “Red sign” (Sinal Vermelho) allow women to ask for help in pharmacies and supermarkets in Brazil, by painting a red “X” in one of their hands.	10/June/20	<a href="https://www.amb.com.br/sinalvermelho/">https://www.amb.com.br/sinalvermelho/</a>
Brazil	A number of Apps, e.g. ‘SOS Mulher’ in the State of São Paulo, are being developed in a joint partnership between the police and civil society, to report incidents of domestic and family violence during social isolation, as well as incidents of non-compliance with emergency protective measures imposed on the offender, which may result in preventive detention and initiation of criminal proceedings.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
Canada	Phone / online reporting to the police has been implemented or improved.		UNODC questionnaire, police
Chile	All regional and local offices of prosecutors have made complaints received by email receivable (for GBV and other crimes)		AIAMP
Chile	Agreement with pharmacies to facilitate reporting by women or other persons, who may ask for “facemask 19” and be contacted with helplines	27/April/20	<a href="https://minmujeryeg.gob.cl/?p=39567">https://minmujeryeg.gob.cl/?p=39567</a>
Chile	WhatsApp number available for attention of GBV cases	28/April/20	<a href="https://minmujeryeg.gob.cl/?p=39619">https://minmujeryeg.gob.cl/?p=39619</a>
Chile	A protocol was adopted for attention and access channels for reporting domestic violence and GBV in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. They include, among others, the obligation to implement online and telephonic channels for reporting		<a href="http://secretariadegenero.pjud.cl/images/documentos/protocoloArt26/Protocolo_art_26_072020.pdf">http://secretariadegenero.pjud.cl/images/documentos/protocoloArt26/Protocolo_art_26_072020.pdf</a>
Croatia	A total of seven SOS phones operating 24/7 are available for victims/survivors to receive the necessary counselling assistance. Directory of institutions, organisations and other establishments providing assistance, support and protection to victims/survivors of family violence is available on the ministry’s website, as well as on the address book of country teams for prevention and combat against violence against women. Social welfare centres have formed crisis teams for crisis intervention which report urgently to the field and take all necessary measures. The Ministry of the Interior has invited the public to report any form of domestic violence.		Council of Europe database
Cyprus	The police and the Association for the Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence are available through a 24-hour help line.		Council of Europe database
Czechia	Mail-delivery personnel of the Czech post will be trained to recognize signs of domestic violence, communicate with the survivor and offer help.		GGRT
Ecuador	Digital form to report acts of gender violence to the Prosecutor's Office (for victims/survivors or others).	20/April/20	<a href="https://www.fiscalia.gob.ec/denuncia-en-linea-violencia-contra-la-mujer/">https://www.fiscalia.gob.ec/denuncia-en-linea-violencia-contra-la-mujer/</a> .



Country	Description	Date	Source
El Salvador	In addition to having technological applications to file the complaint, safe transportation is facilitated to the victim/survivor to proceedings.		AIAMP
El Salvador	An App ( <i>Libre</i> ) was devised to provide information to citizens intended to identify criminal behaviours and prevent, detect and report acts of violence against women.	11/march/20	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak7QWNMcLPs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ak7QWNMcLPs</a>
Estonia	Specific code words that women can use in order to indicate that they need help from the police have been developed.		Council of Europe database
France	Pop-up violence against women counselling centres have been established in supermarkets, through a partnership between the Government, mass retail chains and local associations.		GGRT
Georgia	Emergency hotline under the Ministry of International Affairs continues to provide 24/7 free service. The application has a chat mode and a silent SOS bottom. Alternative ways of reporting domestic violence, such as chat boxes, mobile applications and silent SOS signals have been implemented. A countrywide SMS system in different languages is used to provide information to every citizen on alternative ways of reporting domestic violence and violence against women. Pharmacies and grocery shops, which have not closed during the pandemic, are being used as safe spaces to learn about alternative ways of reporting domestic violence through posters and flyers. TV and social media videos are also being used.		Council of Europe database
Guatemala	Complaints are received mainly telephonically, and protection measures are required before the jurisdictional bodies without the need for the presence of the victim/survivor		AIAMP
Guatemala	The Office of the Prosecutor for Children and Adolescents established a telephone line to receive complaints from children and adolescents who are victims of crimes and carry out the corresponding coordination with the Attorney General's Office.		AIAMP
India	The National Commission for Women launched a WhatsApp number to report cases of domestic violence, in addition to the online reporting services that were already operational		GGRT
India	Courts in Jammu and Kashmir presented directions to local government to address the increase in violence through the creation of special funds and designating informal spaces for women such as grocery stores and pharmacies where women could report abuse without alerting the perpetrator		<u>Nigam, 2020</u>
Indonesia	The government has ensured integrated and comprehensive reporting mechanism for victims/survivors against women and children by involving The National Police and Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection		GGRT
Italy	Italian police are utilizing a "YouPol" app, originally designed to assist young people in reporting bullying and drug dealing, but now adapted to provide survivors with a way to message the police without the knowledge of their partner.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant GGRT
Lebanon	Phone / online reporting to the police has been implemented or improved. Other channels to report GBVAW cases have been put in place for women to report and seek help without alerting perpetrators.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Luxembourg	The Ministry of Equality between Women and Men, along with partners, have set up a joint helpline and		GGRT

Country	Description	Date	Source
	email address for use by survivors of violence during the lockdown period.		
Monaco	A system has been set up to facilitate reporting to pharmacies and staff has been informed to provide assistance to a person who claims to be a victim/survivor.		Council of Europe database
Montenegro	Developed a mobile application that sends an automatic message to the national SOS telephone line containing the phone number from where the call was made and the exact location of the victim/survivor.		Council of Europe database
Morocco	Digital services are being provided by the Ministry of Justice via a website (see <a href="http://www.mahakim.ma/">http://www.mahakim.ma/</a> ), which includes the possibility to file a complaint via email. A system was also developed to link telephone hotlines to all courts, complemented by the use of a mobile app that allows victims/survivors to submit complaints urgently and without having to present themselves in person at a court or at a police station. Free-to-use phone numbers have been disseminated through the media and social media and complaints are forwarded directly to the court, which has jurisdiction over the complaint. Through this system, follow-up measures are taken either by the police or by helping victims/survivors in accessing a shelter or by providing information about social services for less serious or urgent cases. Hotlines have also been set up to allow lawyers and litigants to request information on ongoing cases.		GGRT
Nepal	Phone / online reporting to the police has been implemented or improved.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Nicaragua	The National Police have the telephone line 118 and a section of their website to make complaints virtually.		GGRT
Panama	Reporting has been online and by email during confinement		AIAMP
Poland	A free internet application for the victims/survivors of violence within the family has been developed. It allows for a discreet contact with a pre-configured e/mail address, as well as for a quick dialling of an emergency number in urgent cases.		Council of Europe database
San Marino	Health and psycho-social assistance services competent for reporting cases and collecting data has continued to operate regularly. A new toll-free number, active 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (including public holidays) has been made available to all victims/survivors of violence. A mobile application is being developed, with an emergency call button, a GPS track, and audio recording. All information collected on the app will be registered in a database at the disposal of law enforcement agencies.		Council of Europe database
Solomon Islands	The family violence unit within the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) were on high alert for any reported gender-based violence (GBV) cases, with police vehicles specifically allocated for any GBV related accompaniment services.		GGRT
Spain	A complaint system was set up through pharmacies, so pharmaceutical staff calls the emergency services and the protocol for gender violence is implemented		AIAMP
Spain	The Government Delegation for Gender Violence established two WhatsApp lines that, together with the 016 phone, providing information to victims/survivors about existing resources		AIAMP
Spain	Police established means for telephone or telematic complaint		AIAMP

Country	Description	Date	Source
Uganda	Uganda police force established a dedicated toll free line to provide rapid response services to GBV across the country.		GGRT
United Kingdom	Police organisations have worked with community groups, NGOs etc to provide pathways for victims/survivors to access services. A major pharmacy chain in the United Kingdom has provided 'safe spaces' for victims/survivors by encouraging access to the pharmacist consultation areas.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
United Kingdom	Cumbria Police has appealed to postal workers, delivery drivers, food delivery companies, and any essential workers who visit homes to look out for signs of abuse and report them to the police department.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
United Kingdom	The Silent Solution is a police system used to filter out large numbers of accidental or hoax 999 calls. It also exists to help people who are unable to speak, but who genuinely need police assistance. You will hear an automated police message, which lasts for 20 seconds and begins with 'you are through to the police'. It will ask you to press 55 to be put through to police call management. The BT operator will remain on the line and listen. If you press 55, they will be notified and transfer the call to the police. If you don't press 55, the call will be terminated. Pressing 55 does not allow police to track your location.		(CNN, April 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2020)
Zambia	Phone / online reporting to the police has been implemented or improved. Other channels to report GBVAW cases have been put in place for women to report and seek help without alerting perpetrators.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Zimbabwe	Other channels to report GBVAW cases have been put in place for women to report and seek help without alerting perpetrators.		UNODC Questionnaire, lawyer

Table 4. Examples of simplified extension of protection orders

Country	Description	Date	Source
Albania	The Ministry of Justice extended the protection orders for women whose protection order was expired, and tried to involve other courts on providing protection orders in places where the court was not operational		UNODC Questionnaire / CSO
Argentina	Extension of protection orders, including perimeter restrictions, approach and contact prohibitions, exclusions from home and granting of alert devices – "panic button", anklets, etc.- <sup>307</sup>	30/March/20 and then 13/May to 12/July 2020	Resolución PGN 29/2020 <a href="https://www.fiscales.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PGN-0029-2020-001-1.pdf">https://www.fiscales.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/PGN-0029-2020-001-1.pdf</a> <a href="http://www.ovd.gov.ar/ovd/verMuiltimedia?data=4097">http://www.ovd.gov.ar/ovd/verMuiltimedia?data=4097</a>
Brazil	Automatic extension of emergency protective measures (so that women do not have to reiterate the request to the judge).		UNODC Questionnaire, judge
Chile	A model of written request for renewal of protection measures about to expire, was created and made available for prosecutors.		AIAMP
Chile	The National Service for Women and Gender Equity (SernamEG) requests the automatic renewal for six months of the precautionary measures in favour of women victims/survivors of violence during the health crisis. This request was sent to all the Family Courts in the country that handle cases of violence against		GGRT

<sup>307</sup> The Superintendency Court of the National Chamber of Civil Appeals, on March 19, 2020, decided to consider those measures automatically extended for a period of 60 (sixty days). The Office of the Prosecutor decided that all prosecutors should ask for such extensions, unless there was opposition by the victim (case in which the support of an specialised unit was required to verify the circumstances).

Country	Description	Date	Source
	women, and where SernamEG acts as their legal representative.		
Greece	After a month, protection orders were automatically extended		UNODC Questionnaire / lawyer
Guatemala	The Judiciary indicated that the protection measures were automatically extended		AIAMP GGRT
USA (New York)	Restraining Orders: extending stay away and protection orders in domestic violence cases, parties do not need to show up to court in person to petition to extend their restraining orders, which will temporarily remain in effect under the public health emergency. Shelters in New York City are deemed “essential services” and are still operating, pivoting their services to hotlines, phone consultations and virtual sessions.		<a href="#">(New York Times, March 23, 2020)</a>
USA (Washington, DC)	Restraining Orders: D.C. Superior Court modified some of its regular operating procedures, measures that include extending stay away and protection orders in domestic violence cases through May 1. That means parties do not need to show up to court in person to petition to extend their restraining orders, which will temporarily remain in effect under the public health emergency.		<a href="#">(City Paper, March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020)</a>

Table 5. Examples of remote application for protection orders

Country	Description	Date	Source
Armenia	Information on prevention of domestic violence available on the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, including data on the contact and hotline services.		Council of Europe database
Australia	Victims/survivors of family and domestic violence can now apply for restraining orders online under new laws introduced by the Government in May to protect victims and survivors of such violence amid the COVID-19 pandemic.		<a href="#">Government Press Release, May 2020</a>
Austria	Simplification of filing a restraining order: The police hands the restraining order application form directly to the survivor, when issuing a protection order or when checking compliance with it (within 3 days of issue). In addition, the restraining order can be filed electronically. People in quarantine can apply for an interim injunction for protection against violence, which will automatically extend an expulsion and prohibition to return order by two weeks.		GGRT
Brazil	The public defender’s office in São Paulo State in Brazil is allowing people to report domestic violence online and requesting that judges issue restraining orders or other protection measures remotely instead of requiring victims/survivors to appear in their office.		UN General Assembly (2020)
Brazil	The victim/survivor of GBVAW can be notified of the approval or rejection of protection orders, either electronically or by telephone.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Bulgaria	Victims/survivors and their children can turn to the “Social Assistance” departments in the whole state as well as to the Ministry of Interior through e-mail or telephone. Everyone in need of support can call the national, round-the-clock, specialized phone line for professional help.		Council of Europe database
Chile	Prosecutors have to request protection orders from the courts as soon as possible, in particular restraining orders. Verbal notification of protection orders is allowed.	8/April/20	<a href="http://www.fiscaliadechile.cl/Fiscalia/sala_prensa/noticias_det.do?id=17578">http://www.fiscaliadechile.cl/Fiscalia/sala_prensa/noticias_det.do?id=17578</a>

Country	Description	Date	Source
China	Court systems issued personal safety protection orders through online platforms		GGRT
Colombia	Protection routes are now activated by email and in cases of extreme urgency via cell phone or WhatsApp, which makes communication more successful because it is certain that the request reaches the institution and the indicated person.		AIAMP
Fiji	GBV Working Group with Fiji Police and the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre to help explain how to get a domestic violence restraining order over the telephone.		GGRT
Guatemala	Call Centre assisted victims/survivors who could not travel to prosecutors' offices or police headquarters, increasing the number of complaints and allowing women victims/survivors of violence obtain protection measures, which are processed by the Prosecutor's Office before the competent Court, without the need of the victims/survivors' physical presence.		AIAMP
Nigeria	Remote applications for protection / restraining orders; Protection orders for victims/survivors in cases of release of perpetrators		UNODC Questionnaire, academic
Tonga	Court orders and decisions during the two-week national lockdown were submitted and received online; the courts were flexible with enforcement of maintenance payments during the lock down period.		GGRT
Uganda	Remote applications for protection / restraining orders; Protection orders for victims/survivors in cases of release of perpetrators		UNODC Questionnaire, CSO

Table 6. Examples of more adequate protection orders

Country	Description	Date	Source
Australia	Changes to Criminal Code include: allowing the court to impose a requirement that an offender be subject to electronic monitoring under Conditional Suspended Imprisonment Orders and Intensive Supervision Orders; permitting a judicial officer to include, as a home detention bail condition, a direction that an accused be subject to electronic monitoring; improving access to restraining orders, including enabling restraining order applications to be lodged online; creating a separate offence for breach of a family violence restraining order, increasing the penalty to \$10,000 from \$6,000 and extending the limitation period for prosecuting breach of restraining order offences to two years; and allowing the Family Court and Children's Court to issue interim restraining orders on an ex-parte basis, in the same way the Magistrates Court is permitted to do so.		<a href="#">Mirage News, April 3, 2020</a> GGRT
Belgium	Temporary preventive measures like an eviction can still be imposed by the Prosecutor.		GGRT
Croatia	There are 19 shelters for domestic violence victims/survivors and sufficient numbers of places. Family centers provide counselling and assistance services for victims/survivors of domestic violence; counselling is provided through electronic media and is conducted by specially trained professionals employed by family centres. The social welfare centre will provide the victim/survivor promptly with accommodations when required. Shelters are obliged to provide conditions for the purpose of ensuring mandatory isolation. The victim/survivor is informed of the release of prisoners from prison.		Council of Europe database



Country	Description	Date	Source
Denmark	The support system is functioning during the lockdown. The municipalities continue to offer shelters for victims/survivors. 55 new temporary rooms in women's shelters are going to be established in order to increase capacity. Funds have also been allocated to increase the capacity in shelters for male victims/survivors of domestic violence. There is a national hotline and an e-mail service that provides urgent support for victims/survivors and can refer them to other services such as shelters and legal counselling. Phone counselling sessions for victims/survivors have been introduced as a result of the temporary shutdown of counselling services.		Council of Europe database
Ecuador	The National Court instructed that it is mandatory for judges on duty to order protection measures in cases of VAW or domestic violence, whether flagrant or not flagrant.	24/April/20	National Court of Justice, Oficio No. 212-P-CNJ-2020 <a href="https://www.cortenacional.gob.ec/cnj/images/pdf/CONCLUSIONES-MESA-VIRTUAL.pdf">https://www.cortenacional.gob.ec/cnj/images/pdf/CONCLUSIONES-MESA-VIRTUAL.pdf</a>
Germany	The German Government passed a bill for easier access to social security and protection of social services because of coronavirus. This bill includes measures for violence protection services, like women's shelters and women's support services. The National Helpline "Violence Against Women" which is free, anonymous, confidential and available in 17 languages, is available. According to the violence protection law, the perpetrator can be banned from shared accommodation.		Council of Europe database
Ireland	Additional financial resources are being delivered to women shelters.		Council of Europe database
Italy	Instead of the survivor having to leave the house of an abuser, prosecutors have ruled that in situations of domestic violence the perpetrator must leave the family home.		<u>UN Women</u>  GGRT
Mexico	Judges in Mexico City received permission to issue protection orders electronically during the pandemic		<u>Milenio, April 6, 2020</u>
Peru	The Ministry of Interior has designed a house-to-house visit guide to monitor protection measures for women survivors of violence.		GGRT
Slovak Republic	Victims/survivors of domestic violence are admitted to shelters that have quarantine capacities and are admitted to housing facilities if they have a negative COVID-19 test.		Council of Europe database
Slovak Republic	Discussions are being held on setting up intervention centres, for cases when police use a home expulsion order against the abuser for ten days and informs the intervention centre. During this period, the centre provides legal and technical assistance to women when using protection measures.		Council of Europe database
Slovenia	Safe houses and mother's homes are open and accept new victims/survivors, but follow instructions to prevent infection. Counselling is running via telephone, emails, web and video calls.		Council of Europe database
Spain	An alarm system (AlertCops) is installed on the victims/survivors' phones, so when in distress they could immediately communicate with the police by pushing a button.		<a href="https://www.policia.es/org_central/seguridad_ciudadana/unidad_central_part_ciudadana/diptico_alertcops_sp.pdf">https://www.policia.es/org_central/seguridad_ciudadana/unidad_central_part_ciudadana/diptico_alertcops_sp.pdf</a>
Suriname	In order to address GBV, there has been increased police surveillance as well as a court order that allows for daily submission of protection orders.		GGRT
Tunisia	Protection orders for victims/survivors in cases of release of perpetrators.		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert
Tunisia	Electronic monitoring of offenders / defendants / accused out on bail		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2

Country	Description	Date	Source
Turkey	40 facilities, 9 public institutions, 10 guest houses, 15 hotels and 6 dormitories are being used for housing victims/survivors of violence. If the women or their children have complaints such as fever, cough, chest pain, etc. they are delivered to health institutions and tested for COVID-19. Newly admitted victims/survivors are isolated for 14 days. As a leisure time activity, women who are staying in institutions are producing masks. All institutions are periodically disinfected.		Council of Europe database

Table 7. Examples of preventive interventions

Country	Description	Date	Source
Albania	Police has been proactive in contacting all individuals who filed domestic violence complaints in past months.		UNODC Questionnaire / CSO
Belgium	Some local police, through their victim assistance service, proactively contact victims/survivors who have filed a complaint at the police station over the past three months concerning acts of domestic violence. This allows local police to monitor the evolution of their situation during quarantine measures can be monitored. At the same time police are actively reaching out to various associations involved in domestic violence to inform them of their business continuity plans.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant GGRT
Canada	Police has been proactive in contacting all individuals who filed domestic violence complaints in past months		UNODC questionnaire, police
France	The Lille Gendarmerie Company has reopened all the cases of domestic violence in the past few months (including those that have been dealt with by the criminal justice system). Dedicated police units contact people by telephone as a means to reach out to victims/survivors of VAWG who feel unable to call for help. In case of doubt such as hesitation on the phone or lack of response to questions, a police team goes to the victim/survivor's home. If responding officers find evidence of physical violence during the visit, the case is dealt with very quickly.		UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant
India	The Odisha Police will conduct a special drive with the help of the state's crime records bureau to reach out to women who have suffered domestic violence.		<a href="#">India Today, April 18, 2020</a>
Ireland	Survivors of incidents recorded in 2018-2020 will be contacted and those at high risk will be visited.		GGRT
Lebanon	Police has been proactive in contacting all individuals who filed domestic violence complaints in past months.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Lithuania	The Police Agency Action plan has been prepared to contact individuals who experienced domestic violence in the past and visit individuals in self-isolation. Additionally, Police officers liaise with people living in remote rural areas who have previously been survivors of domestic violence, provide them with information on protective measures, and provide advice on other issues within the area of competence of the police.		GGRT
Norway	The Police Directorate has given clear guidelines to the police districts to pay special attention to cases of domestic violence, both new cases and cases already under investigation.		GGRT
Portugal	Security forces intensified their action by contacting known domestic violence cases, to verify potential situations of increased risk and to engage in protective measures, where necessary, as this remains a priority investigation crime.		GGRT

Country	Description	Date	Source
Spain	State security forces have strengthened their protection and monitoring system for victims/survivors incorporated into the VIOGEN system, increasing calls and evaluations to them, and communicating changes in risk assessment to the judicial and fiscal authorities.		AIAMP
Zambia	Police has been proactive in contacting all individuals who filed domestic violence complaints in past months.		UNODC Questionnaire, police

Table 8. Examples of other measures in the area of policing

Country	Description	Date	Source
Australia	The Domestic Violence Support Package includes funding for a dedicated COVID-19 family and domestic violence taskforce was set up within the Department of Communities, to work with police and service-providers to ensure services remain open during the pandemic.		GGRT
Bangladesh	Inspector General of Police has instructed all relevant units and Police Stations to ensure due services to the women & girls victims/survivors of violence including rescue, lodging complaint, medical and shelter support, if required.		GGRT
Canada	Police from other crime units have been deployed to work on cases of GBVAW		UNODC questionnaire, police
Colombia	Diverse measures are adopted to guarantee the uninterrupted service of the family police stations, in particular in relation to domestic violence cases. Those include providing mechanisms to receive complaints, to provide assistance and to make notifications and summons by online or telephone means.	22/March/20	Decree 460 of 2020 <a href="http://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Decretos/30038968">http://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Decretos/30038968</a>
Colombia	Webinar of Guidelines for Family Police Stations, and Regulations issued by the National Government such as Decree 460 of 2020 on the operation of family police stations		GGRT
Croatia	Based on reports or information about violence against women, the police act urgently to take measures to prevent further abuse and further victimization and to protect victims/survivors.		Council of Europe database
Cyprus	The Police investigate all allegations of domestic violence and, where necessary, arrests are being made, as well as appeals to the courts, remand orders, and protective orders to exclude suspects, for the better protection of survivors (as the Courts of the Republic of Cyprus continue to adjudicate serious and urgent cases and to issue the required Judicial Decrees).		GGRT
Cyprus	The police continues to investigate all allegations of domestic violence and, when necessary, arrests and appeals to the courts, remand orders and protective orders to exclude suspects are being made. The Police have made sure that there is the possibility of taking visualized testimonies from children during the investigation of domestic violence cases in larger rooms, in order to comply with social distancing. In addition, procedures for further use of technology have been accelerated to bridge the access between victims/survivors and the police.		Council of Europe database
Georgia	The police have been working proactively and the court has been operational remotely.		GGRT
Georgia	Quick and efficient police response to reported violence cases continues to be provided.		Council of Europe database

Country	Description	Date	Source
Greece	Close co-operation of governmental organisation with the Department for Combating Domestic Violence of the Hellenic Police Headquarters, in order to effectively address the problems of women survivors of violence and refer them to the appropriate support structures. The Department has sent orders with special guidelines to all subordinate police services regarding the reporting of domestic violence incidents, highlighting the need for strict implementation of existing legislation and the demonstration by police staff of the required sensitivity, responsibility and professionalism, as well as the need to inform the survivors about the available housing structures and psychosocial and legal support services. Finally, in order to assist the work of the police officers who handle domestic violence cases, lists of contact information and the addresses of the counselling centres, the Research Centre for Gender Equality and the Municipalities were sent.		GGRT
Ireland	National Police and Security Service or An Garda Síochána has increased efforts through their <i>Operation Faoisimh</i> , a community engagement response to COVID-19, to reassure victims/survivors that "domestic abuse incidents, including coercive control, will continue to receive highest priority response for service".	1 April 2020	UNODC Questionnaire / Consultant GGRT
Latvia	Services are being provided remotely.		Council of Europe database
Lebanon	Police from other crime units have been deployed to work on cases of GBVAW		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Lebanon	Specific directives or guidelines to deal with GBVAW cases remotely have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Malawi	Government has been working with the Police to develop fast tracking measures for investigation and prosecution of child abuse and gender-based violence cases.		GGRT
Marshall Islands	The Gender division of the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs conducted a refresher on domestic violence to Majuro Atoll Municipal Police on the relevant legislation and the duty of police in responding to domestic violence in June 2020.		GGRT
Monaco	It is now possible to contact the police by sending an e-mail.		Council of Europe database
Nepal	Nepal Police has appointed coordination officers in all Provincial and Metropolitan offices. Circulars have been sent to all police stations to address gender-based violence with high priority and gender-based violence data is updated in the Nepal Police website. Nepal Police has developed and disseminated information materials on GBV services during COVID-19.		GGRT
Nicaragua	Police stations for women and the Public Ministry have continued their work to attend to and investigate cases of violence against women in the context of the health crisis.		GGRT
Portugal	All local Commissions for the Protection of Children and Young People were given specific guidelines on procedures in cases of domestic violence during the pandemic		GGRT
Solomon Islands	The Family violence units within Public solicitor office (PSO) were also ready to respond to cases referred through the SAFENET system. Both the RSIPF and PSO are members of the SAFENET and SAFENET is also a member of the GBV in Emergency Committee.		GGRT
Trinidad and Tobago	Trinidad and Tobago's Police Service's Gender-Based Violence Unit, staffed with specially trained police		GGRT

Country	Description	Date	Source
	personnel, is available to support survivors during COVID-19		
Tunisia	A notification was circulated to Police and Judicial authorities reminding the importance of managing domestic violence including GBV.		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2
Ukraine	As a response to the escalation of domestic violence due to the pandemic, the National Police conducted a series of trainings for police officers on preventing and combating domestic violence.		GGRT
Zambia	Police from other crime units have been deployed to work on cases of GBVAW. Additional shifts have been implemented to cover GBVAW cases adequately.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Zambia	Specific directives or guidelines to deal with GBVAW cases remotely have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Zimbabwe	Spotlight check initiative to engage police and follow on GBV cases		UNODC Questionnaire, lawyer
Zimbabwe	Police from other crime units have been deployed to work on cases of GBVAW.		UNODC Questionnaire, lawyer

Table 9. Examples of prioritization and guidance measures in prosecution

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	The Specialized Fiscal Unit for Violence against Women - UFEM published a list of urgent measures suggested to prosecutors for cases of gender violence in situations of home isolation during the COVID-19 emergency. The measures include dispatching police to stop violence and removing the aggressor from the scene, receiving complaints and statements at home or remotely, as well as applying a number of judicial protection measures. The document states that while the exceptional situation lasts, questions of competence must be postponed, and the case must be resolved taking into account the gravity of the facts and the urgency of the situation.		<u>Government Guide</u> <u>Argentina, AIAMP.</u> “Medidas urgentes sugeridas a fiscales para casos de violencia de género durante el aislamiento preventivo y obligatorio dispuesto a raíz de la pandemia de COVID-19” <a href="https://www.fiscales.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/UFEM-Gui%CC%81a_actuacio%CC%81n_COVID-19.pdf">https://www.fiscales.gob.ar/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/UFEM-Gui%CC%81a_actuacio%CC%81n_COVID-19.pdf</a> GGRT
Argentina	Opening hours were extended and attention was ensured throughout the week		AIAMP
Armenia	According to the Decree N41-N dated 17.03.20, issued by the Chairman of the Investigative Committee (IC), officials in charge of conducting preliminary investigations shall if possible postpone the execution of investigative and other judicial actions, excluding emergency investigative and other judicial actions. The investigation of domestic violence cases is conducted in the same way during the pandemic, as in the past, in accordance with the special recommendation of the IC Chairman.  In the state of emergency, considering the powers of prosecutors and from the perspective of the response to domestic violence cases, the need to investigate private complaints cases in a public procedure should be considered. In such cases, a need arises to accept the survivor of domestic violence and discuss grounds for continuing the investigation of the private complaint in a public procedure. Although the criminal and judicial legislation does not anticipate such procedure, the prosecutor holds such authority and several prosecutors have fulfilled this authority during the pandemic in the frame of telephone communication, and not face-to-face meetings. It is however worth mentioning that some prosecutors have met with survivors face-to-face and discussed the future proceeding of cases.	17/March/20	GGRT



Country	Description	Date	Source
Bolivia	The prosecution has issued an instruction to all its prosecutors specifying the need for continuous hours of operation, to guarantee continuity of services for serious cases, including violence against women.		GGRT
Cambodia	Specific directives or guidelines to deal with GBVAW cases remotely have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor
Colombia	A <i>Strategic Direction of the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation in times of COVID-19</i> was adopted, setting strategic priorities of the Office of the Prosecutor. The prioritized crimes include femicide, domestic violence and sexual violence and, in general, cases of GBV in which a risk of femicidal violence has been identified for the victims/survivors.	2/June/20	Resolution 0674, of June 2, 2020 <a href="https://www.fiscalia.gov.co/colombia/wp-content/uploads/2020-RES-0-0674-DIRECCIONAMIENTO-ESTRATEGICO-EN-TIEMPOS-DE-COVID.pdf">https://www.fiscalia.gov.co/colombia/wp-content/uploads/2020-RES-0-0674-DIRECCIONAMIENTO-ESTRATEGICO-EN-TIEMPOS-DE-COVID.pdf</a>
Colombia	The Office of the Prosecutor telephonic service has a specialized team of agents for the attention of GBV crimes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week		AIAMP
Colombia	The Office of the Prosecutor has strengthened telephonic and email attention channels (for all crimes).	19/March/20	Circular No. 0009 del 19 de Marzo del 2020 <a href="https://www.fiscalia.gov.co/colombia/noticias/comunicado-5/">https://www.fiscalia.gov.co/colombia/noticias/comunicado-5/</a>
Colombia	Considering saturation of helplines during the lockdown, the number of agents and researchers tripled, and technological tools were also updated to make attention times more efficient		AIAMP
Egypt	Public prosecution took immediate steps & necessary legal measures after the emergence of some lawsuit of exploitation of women and girls, and the prosecution of making money by illegal means, within the framework of protecting women and girls from human trafficking crimes and electronic/cybercrimes.		GGRT
Lebanon	The Attorney General of the Court of Cassation issued a circular requesting the judicial police to open immediate records for all reported domestic violence cases, including those without witnesses. Quick measures to investigate, even remotely, and without asking the victim/survivor to come to police station and file a complaint.		GGRT  UNODC Questionnaire, police
Spain	Afternoon times have been made available to hold hearings that have not been held so far due to the alarm state, as well as to carry out those that are currently scheduled.		AIAMP
The Netherlands	The Public Prosecution Service ('Openbaar Ministerie') is prioritizing cases involving sexual violence and vulnerable survivors.		GGRT
United Kingdom	Relaxation of Investigatory Regulations: Proposal to relax "time limits on investigating crimes...to allow survivors of violence in the home to report perpetrators once the coronavirus restrictions were eased"		<u><a href="#">The Guardian, April 15, 2020</a></u>

Table 10. Examples of e-justice mechanisms in prosecution

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	Witness statements, according to the characteristics and needs of the victim/survivor, can be in person, by telephone or by zoom. <sup>308</sup>		AIAMP
Austria	Courts and prosecution services are advised to increasingly make use of video conferencing tools.		GGRT
Cambodia	The prosecution service is working remotely in GBVAW cases. More prosecutors have been deployed to work on cases of GBVAW.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor

<sup>308</sup> The Coordination of the Strategic Litigation area of UFEM decides in each case.

Country	Description	Date	Source
Chile	Victim' statements can be made through phone calls or videoconference.		AIAMP
Colombia	The Office of the Attorney General of the Nation enabled the platform "To denounce" to make complaints of gender-based violence. Expansion of technological and human resources of the hotlines.		GGRT
Ecuador	Digital Signatures were provided to prosecutors to request Protection Measures for victims/survivors of violence.		AIAMP
Finland	The Prosecution Service has remained operational and is able to carry out its duties in cases where the police conduct a preliminary investigation. The prosecutors have also been instructed to present to the courts the organisation of a trial remotely if anti-virus measures prevent a personal presence and the case is appropriate for such a proceeding.		GGRT
Namibia	Specific directives or guidelines to deal with GBVAW cases remotely have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor
Philippines	Prosecutors have resorted to emails, phone calls, or even social media messaging applications to reach out to victims/survivors and ensure their attendance in the hearings.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor
Uganda	UNDP Uganda is working with government and UN partners to adapt e-learning modules for police, public prosecution, judiciary and prison officers.		<u>UNDP, Gender and COVID19</u>

Table 11. Examples of measures in relation to forensic expert examinations

Country	Description	Date	Source
Belgium	Three Sexual Violence Care Centres continue to support survivors 24/7 and offer medical and forensic care, as well as psychological support and follow-up. Psychosocial and legal consultations are provided by telephone		GGRT
Argentina	The psychological expert reports have been carried out remotely and forensic examinations are carried out respecting the health protocols established.		AIAMP
Chile	A document with considerations on remote forensic examinations (including psychologic, psychiatric and social examinations) has been disseminated, suggesting the postponement of those examinations unless absolutely necessary and indicating in this case a series of measures to be adopted. Specifically, the online expert evaluation of boys and girls under 14 years old has been discouraged.		AIAMP
Chile	Guidance for taking photos of injuries		AIAMP
Tunisia	A specific hospital procedure was adopted.		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert
Spain	The strengthening of psychosocial teams and Comprehensive Forensic Assessment Units was considered within the "Shock Plan of the General Council of the Judiciary for reactivation after the state of alarm"		<a href="https://www.cgsalmeria.com/phocadownload/29-06-2020PLAN%20DE%20CHOQUE%20DEL%20CONSEJO%20GENERAL%20DEL%20PODER%20JUDICIAL.pdf">https://www.cgsalmeria.com/phocadownload/29-06-2020PLAN%20DE%20CHOQUE%20DEL%20CONSEJO%20GENERAL%20DEL%20PODER%20JUDICIAL.pdf</a>
Panama	Expert examinations, including psychological, psychiatric, serology, biomolecular, forensic criminology and related expertise, were resumed.	June 21, 2020	AIAMP
Peru	Special Protection unit is authorized to carry out social interviews (social assessment) and psychological evaluations using technological resources such as telephone calls or video calls or any other similar technological resource		Legal Decree N° 1470

Table 12. Examples of measures on training

Country	Description	Date	Source
Colombia	Virtual training of OP personnel in dealing with cases of gender violence in the COVID-19 context		AIAMP
Chile	Trainings are maintained, remotely		AIAMP

Table 13. Examples of prioritization of GBVAW cases by the judiciary

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	The Office of Domestic Violence (OVD), under the responsibility of the vice president of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, remains open 24 hours a day during the extraordinary judicial holiday.	13/April/20	<a href="http://www.ovd.gov.ar/ovd/verNoticia.do?idNoticia=4176">http://www.ovd.gov.ar/ovd/verNoticia.do?idNoticia=4176</a>
Argentina	Despite the declared judicial holiday, all cases in relation to domestic violence and gender violence -not criminal- were considered urgent		AIAMP
Belgium	Urgent hearings will continue to be guaranteed		GGRT
Bosnia and Herzegovina	The treatment and prosecution of gender-based offences takes place in accordance with the applicable legal provisions and has not deteriorated during the pandemic.		Council of Europe database
Brazil	Law N. 14022 extends the protection measures for women in situation of violence during the state of health emergency; determines VAWG reported cases will be considered urgent processes for consideration of legal matters, granting of protection measures, and related assistance; and makes in-person reporting channels (mostly police stations) mandatory for the following crimes: femicide, physical harm, threat under fire arm, sexual violence, sexual violence against vulnerable populations, corruption of a minor, sexual act in the presence of child or teenager, disruption of a VAGW protection measure, violations of the Child and Adolescent Statute (Law 8069/1990), and violations of the Elderly Statute (Law 10741/2003).		GGRT
Canada	Provincial courts continue to hear urgent matters including urgent family matters such as protection orders via conference call.		GGRT
Chile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Domestic violence and GBV cases have been considered a priority for the Court's intervention, including protection orders.</li> <li>- Family courts have to review and renew protection orders, acting ex officio</li> <li>- Domestic violence hearings should be considered urgent (non-urgent hearings were suspended)</li> </ul>	8/April/20	Supreme Court's Acta 53/2020 <a href="https://www.pjud.cl/documents/10179/19212859/acta+53-2020.pdf/b3a15648-7e18-41b9-990d-390594d554a5">https://www.pjud.cl/documents/10179/19212859/acta+53-2020.pdf/b3a15648-7e18-41b9-990d-390594d554a5</a>
Colombia	Arrest warrant hearings and hearings on requests for protection measures (Law 1257 of 2008) were considered exceptions to the suspension of terms in the judiciary.	22/May/20	Based on Agreement PCSJA20-11556 of the Superior Council of the Judiciary, of May 22, 2020 on exceptions to the suspension of terms AIAMP
Costa Rica	Courts continue to hold hearings on domestic violence as well as when a criminal type hearing must be held to establish precautionary measures or to extend them.		GGRT
Croatia	All judicial authorities continued to operate, taking only urgent matters with adequate security control, while hearings and other non-urgent actions were postponed until further notice. The National Call Centre provides citizens, after calling the toll-free telephone number		Council of Europe database

Country	Description	Date	Source
	with information about the process of criminal proceedings, information on victims/survivors' and witnesses rights, and refers them to the institutions where victims/survivors may receive additional forms of professional assistance. The line is anonymous.		
Ecuador	Cases of flagrant violence against women and family members, are exempt from the judicial suspension, and will be subject to the pre-established duty shifts		The Council of the Judiciary, through Resolution No. 031-2020 GGRT
El Salvador	Telephone, social networks, WhatsApp and video calls are used to maintain communication with victims/survivors and know their location, if they have access to such technology and their use do not expose them at risk.		AIAMP
Ethiopia	The country has continued to hear domestic violence cases with minimal interruption.		GGRT
France	Despite the closure of the courts, cases of domestic violence are dealt with by the courts as a priority. Immediate appearance hearings are continued to allow for the immediate repression of violent spouses.		GGRT
France	Family court judges continue to issue protection orders. These are aimed at ensuring prompt and effective protection for survivors of violence, organizing the material situation of women and relations with children after separation.		GGRT
Guatemala	Despite the partial suspension of judicial activities, the Courts for Femicide and Other Forms of Violence against Women and Sexual Violence on duty and the Criminal Peace Courts continued to provide their services to obtain protection orders and to process flagrant crimes.		AIAMP GGRT
Honduras	The Justice Supreme Court issued a directive for continued access to justice of women survivors of violence.		GGRT
India	The Jammu and Kashmir High Court directed all courts in Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh to treat cases of domestic abuse as urgent		UN General Assembly (2020)
Jamaica	Courts remained open during the lockdown for domestic violence cases.		GGRT
Malta	Courts of Justice have closed, but they have been given the power to order the hearing of urgent cases or cases where the court deems that the public interest should prevail, including cases of domestic violence. In cases where suspicion exists that a witness might be infected or was in mandatory quarantine, the testimony of such witness is conducted via videoconferencing facilities. Legal and judicial time-frames have been suspended.		Council of Europe database
Mexico	The courts have remained open for VGM cases, which have been considered urgent or priority		UNODC Questionnaire / CSO
Mexico	17 states (out of 32) establish on-call shifts to issue orders of protection in family matters, and 7 in criminal matters		<a href="https://equis.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DESProteccion_Informe.pdf">https://equis.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/DESProteccion_Informe.pdf</a>
Mexico	Centers of Justice for Women continue to operate during the COVID-19 health emergency.		GGRT
Paraguay	Courts have remained open for GBVAW cases, as they are considered urgent or a priority. Special duty shifts have been introduced for judges in GBVAW cases.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Paraguay	The management of the Gender Secretariat of the Supreme Court of Justice was reinforced and adapted to the situation of COVID-19.		GGRT
Peru	Legal Decree Nº 1470: The new decree established measures to guarantee attention and protection of victims/survivors including: technological resources		Legal Decree Nº 1470

Country	Description	Date	Source
	are used that allow immediate communication between the victim/survivor and the judge.		
Serbia	The High Court Council classified cases of domestic violence (including protective measures for the victims/survivors of violence) among those that the courts continued to deal with even during the state of emergency, specifying that such cases will continue being prosecuted before courts without delay.		GGRT
Slovenia	Courts operate in a limited capacity with urgent matters, which includes domestic violence cases.		Council of Europe database
South Africa	Courts remained open as far as possible - judicial officers worked remotely/virtually if needed; priority cases were followed up prior to hearing dates to make suitable arrangements to proceed/get witnesses to court etc.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
South Africa	For the remainder of Level 4 of the lockdown, South Africa's courts will prioritize cases involving corruption, sexual offences, gender-based violence and femicide, serious violent crimes, robbery, murder and the violation of COVID-19 regulations.		GGRT
South Africa	The Chief Justice of the Republic of South Africa delegated authority in terms of section 8(3) of the Superior Courts Act, 2013 to all Heads of Court in the Superior Courts and Magistrates/Lower Courts to issue such Directives as would enable access to courts in relation to any urgent matter, bail applications, Maintenance and Domestic Violence related matters and cases involving Children issues.	24 March 2020	<a href="#">Thomas Rueters, June 2020</a>
South Africa	The Minister of Justice and Correctional Services issued Directions stipulating that: Victims/survivors of domestic or sexual violence are among those who are entitled to access courts during the emergency, subject to social distancing and safety measures; protection orders and criminal proceedings for sexual offences, GBV and Femicide are among the matters to be continued, while other trials must be postponed; trials involving pre-trial detainees must be prioritized; those accused of petty offences must be released and warned to appear in court on a future date; prosecution services must facilitate and expedite the fixing of bail by prosecutors.	3 May 2020	<a href="#">Thomas Rueters, June 2021</a>
Spain	Although the judicial activity was paralyzed, reception of complaints and adoption of protection measures for victims/survivors of GBV and domestic violence have been declared essential judicial services.		AIAMP
Tunisia	A duty shift was set and a decision to work remotely enacted.		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2
Uruguay	Processes for protection, investigation and criminalization of domestic and GBV, and violence against children and adolescents are considered essential, and therefore not affected by the suspension of judicial activity.	16/March/20	Resolution 12/2020 of the Supreme Court of Justice <a href="https://www.poderjudicial.gub.uy/novedades/noticias-institucionales/download/8069/6435/19.html">https://www.poderjudicial.gub.uy/novedades/noticias-institucionales/download/8069/6435/19.html</a>
Zimbabwe	Domestic violence cases remain treated as urgent matters at court. A Victim Friendly Unit is in operation.		GGRT

Table 14. Examples of e-justice mechanisms at the judicial intervention

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	Hearings take place by zoom, notifications by electronic means, extended opening hours for the reception of cases in person. In the case of the Office of Domestic		AIAMP; UNODC Questionnaire, Judge



Country	Description	Date	Source
	Violence of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation, it is open 24h, all days.		
Bangladesh	Justice sector, particularly the Supreme Court, is undertaking to expand the Virtual Courts System for Nari o Shishu Nirjatan Daman (Women and Children Repression and Prevention) Tribunals.		GGRT
Barbados	Virtual courts have been introduced for cases of "urgent" nature, which include cases of violence against women and girls.		GGRT
Brazil	São Paulo is allowing judges to grant emergency protective measures virtually and transmit summons through WhatsApp.		<u>Wilson Center, May 15, 2020</u>
Chile	Regulation of teleworking and videoconferences in the judiciary. Videoconferencing is optional for the parties	13/March/20	Supreme Court's Acta 41/2020 <a href="https://www.pjud.cl/documents/10179/19212859/acta+41-2020+teletrabajo.pdf/e08fdf87-2674-45d7-a9d4-6fb6518f5a24">https://www.pjud.cl/documents/10179/19212859/acta+41-2020+teletrabajo.pdf/e08fdf87-2674-45d7-a9d4-6fb6518f5a24</a>
China	Provide justice services virtually, including legal advice, psychosocial advice, police and justice services including hearings. Also instituted phone, teleconference and online hearings.		<u>UNDP, Gender and COVID19</u>
Colombia	The Government issued a decree to guarantee continued access to services virtually, such as legal and psychosocial advice, police and justice services, including hearings.		GGRT
Cyprus	During the pandemic, there is the possibility of taking visualized testimonies from children during the investigation of domestic violence cases, in larger rooms, in order to comply with physical distancing measures.		GGRT
Ecuador	The hearings have been carried out electronically and, if necessary, in person.		AIAMP
Guatemala	As of July 2020, Courts began to hold virtual hearings and some convictions have been obtained on GBV cases.		AIAMP GGRT
Lebanon	Through the National Commission for Lebanese Women, the government justice sector now supports online testimonies and case management. Following confinement measures, some judges used remote listening techniques to issue protection orders for women at risk of and surviving GBV. Some judges have also ordered forensic doctors to document physical abuse of survivors at police stations.		GGRT
Marshall Islands	Virtual court hearings are being introduced and efforts are underway to improve the justice system as a key means to ensure continuity of access to justice throughout any containment and response measures. The judiciary continues its practice of prioritizing domestic violence cases, including the issuance of protection orders within 24 hours.		GGRT
Nigeria	In Borno, selected criminal cases (including VAWG) are heard by the High Court and some magistrates' courts via virtual court proceedings.		Nagarajan, 2020
Panama	Videoconference hearings using the available telematic platforms.		AIAMP
Singapore	All Court hearings in the Family Justice Courts scheduled from 2 June 2020 onwards will be conducted by way of remote hearing through video conferencing or telephone conferencing where appropriate. Mediation and counselling sessions will likewise proceed by remote means in appropriate cases.	2/June/20	GGRT
South Africa	Remote / electronic tools (for example, use of electronic forms, electronic court files,		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge

Country	Description	Date	Source
	videoconferencing for hearings or testimony, etc.) have been used or improved		
Sri Lanka	The judiciary undertook the first phase of remote court hearings		GGRT
Tunisia	Remote / electronic tools (for example, use of electronic forms, electronic court files, videoconferencing for hearings or testimony, etc.) have been used or improved.;		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2
USA (Washington State)	Electronic Court Proceedings: They are "taking a 100per cent 'in-person' service and now doing it remotely. The company created a filing process similar to the way TurboTax helps prepare tax forms.		<a href="#">NPR, March 30, 2020</a>
Zimbabwe	Specific directives or guidelines to deal with GBVAW cases remotely have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, lawyer

Table 15. Examples of backlog reduction measures

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	Abbreviated trials and suspensions of trials were agreed upon.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Argentina	Backlog reduction measures (for example, improving the system for scheduling court hearings, minimising adjournments, etc.) have been implemented.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
El Salvador	Mechanisms have been implemented to reduce judicial backlog, including: 1) Appointment of judges and temporary judges to help purge the cases. 2) Development of virtual audiences. 3) Establishment of communication channels using technology.		AIAMP
South Africa	Chief Justice has delegated authority to all heads of courts to issue directives to manage courts and cases at the different court levels		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
South Africa	Prioritizing cases and weekly case management meetings held at courts with stakeholders to improve efficiency (though still depend on availability of all role-players and subject to court closures)		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge

Table 16. Examples of legal aid measures

Country	Description	Date	Source
Australia	The Domestic Violence Support Package includes funding for the legal assistance sector		GGRT
Azerbaijan	Special events regarding legal aid to the victims/survivors of domestic violence have been organised.		Council of Europe database
Chile	The government has ensured operability of all the lawyers of the 'extreme violence' line, throughout the country.		GGRT
Chile	UNDP and UN Women have been working with the National Prosecutor's Office to increase the number of survivors that pursue legal proceeding against their aggressors. The intervention, developed with the support of the Behavioural Insights Team and funding from the Innovation Facility, offers remote accompaniment and information to women throughout the legal proceedings		<a href="#">UNDP, Gender and COVID19</a>
China	Provide justice services virtually, including legal advice.		<a href="#">UNDP, Gender and COVID19</a>
Colombia	Authorities issued a decree to guarantee continued access to services virtually, including legal counsel, psychosocial advice, and police and justice services, including hearings.		<a href="#">UN Women, 2020</a>
Colombia	Successful experiences of articulation of the Ministry of Justice with legal clinics to provide attention and		GGRT

Country	Description	Date	Source
	guidance to women victims/survivors of gender violence		
Fiji	Legal Aid published information about support for DV cases during the COVID-19 lockdown/curfew period.		GGRT
India	The Government has shared National Legal Aid Services Authority's (NALSA) directory of Legal Service Institutions functional across the country along with NALSA Legal Aid Helpline and online portal with all the One Stop Centres and Women Helplines to facilitate legal aid and counselling to women facing violence.		GGRT
India	The Delhi State Legal Services Authority (DSLISA) announced specific measures such as collaboration with Mother Dairy booths (Milk Booths), pharmacists and chemists for information on survivors of violence and also launched an app to deliver legal aid to these individuals. DSLISA has also tied up with anganwadi (rural child care centre) and ASHA (accredited social health activist) workers who might come across domestic violence cases in their areas.		GGRT
Ireland	Measures have been implemented to ensure that survivors can access the courts and legal aid		GGRT
Malta	The criminal court registrar has provided the police headquarters with a list of available lawyers who are offering legal assistance according to a daily roster system.		Council of Europe database
Poland	Special assistance is provided by phone or by electronic means of communication. The legal advice centre is available on selected days. All calls are free of charge. The internet application contains legal information helpful to victims/survivors.		Council of Europe database
Republic of Moldova	Online legal support accessible to women and girls who may be affected by COVID-19 and are, at the same time, victims/survivors of domestic violence.		
Singapore	Ongoing provision of 'iLAB chatbot' provided through Government of Singapore's Ministry of Law, to give tailored legal advice on situations of divorce and family violence		GGRT
Spain	Specialized legal aid providers are available by telephone or telematic communication		AIAMP
Spain	Legal services hotline continues to function, from 08.00 to 22.00 every day of the week. This service is provided in 52 languages and with a service adapted to possible situations of disability.		GGRT
Spain	Urgent measures for protection and assistance to victims/survivors of GBV were adopted (including legal and advice services 24 hours a day, by phone and online; monitoring telematic devices of compliance with protection measures, awareness-raising campaigns), enabling uncommitted funds from the 2019 budget to address these measures.	31/March/20	RD-L 12/2020 <a href="https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4209">https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2020-4209</a>
Sri Lanka	Extended government relief package to 12,000+ women clients of the Legal Aid Commission. Compilation of laws/regulations related to quarantine and restriction of movement (including for women and girls) was shared among legal professionals, judiciary, human rights institutions, and other stakeholders who would be in a position to assess legal compliance of ad-hoc measures introduced during the pandemic.		GGRT
Tunisia	Phone / online legal aid has been implemented or improved. Specific directives or guidelines in relation to GBVAW cases (priority, eligibility rules for intake, etc.) have been issued.		UNODC Questionnaire, forensic expert 2

Country	Description	Date	Source
Ukraine	The Government launched the hotline "15-47" – a 24-hour government hotline for survivors of domestic violence, providing legal aid and psychological support.		GGRT
West Bank and Gaza	The Palestinian Bar Association (PBA) and four legal aid providers and other partners launched an awareness raising campaign through media outlets to reach out to women, children and men who are in need of legal aid services and to keep them updated about current situation (ordinary and family courts decisions, instructions, legal clinic services within new work arrangements through radio episodes, social media live streaming, one to one consultation sessions through phone and online).		GGRT

Table 17. Examples of measures in the area of corrections.

Country	Description	Date	Source
Brazil	The victim/survivor of GBVAW must be notified of the aggressor's release. For aggressors detained for violence against women, orders to review the prison situation, issued due to the pandemic, do not apply.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Colombia	Population deprived of liberty can be granted the possibility of temporary home detention or imprisonment (for 6 months), after compliance with requirements and conditions. Crimes excluded: femicide, acid-burning, serious injuries, sexual crimes, domestic violence, among others.	14/April/20	Decree 546 of 2020 <a href="https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=112859">https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=112859</a>
Ecuador	Exhortation of the State Attorney General's Office to the Judicial System, so that justice operators, given the release of GBV aggressors in the context of the health crisis, review precautionary measures.		AIAMP
Ecuador	If preventive detention is substituted, in cases of violence against women or members of the family, protection measures must be requested and dictated to guarantee the integrity of the victim/survivor and her possible confrontation with the aggressor, fundamentally avoiding the return of the aggressor to the victim/survivor's home.	24/April/20	National Court of Justice, Oficio No. 212-P-CNJ-2020 <a href="https://www.cortenacional.gob.ec/cnj/images/pdf/CONCLUSIONES-MESA-VIRTUAL.pdf">https://www.cortenacional.gob.ec/cnj/images/pdf/CONCLUSIONES-MESA-VIRTUAL.pdf</a>
Georgia	As a result of assessment of the epidemiological situation, on 18 May, reporting at the probation bureaus resumed for those accused of family violence.	18/May/20	GGRT
Mexico	Protection orders for victims/survivors in cases of release of the convicted		UNODC Questionnaire / CSO
Panama	Technological equipment has been installed in prisons, so the accused is allowed to virtually attend the hearings		AIAMP

Table 18. Examples of coordination measures

Country	Description	Date	Source
Argentina	A deformed referral system was institutionalized		AIAMP
Argentina	Coordination between the national and provincial judiciary was intensified in order to guarantee access to justice for people in situations of gender-based violence.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge GGRT
Bolivia	Guidelines on urgent protective measures for women who have experienced violence must be immediately communicated to the presiding prosecutor or judge. In coordination with the local municipality, police must promote distancing from the aggressor or refer survivors to a safehouse and conduct a risk assessment.		GGRT

Country	Description	Date	Source
Brazil	Expansion of access to justice projects and meetings of the network to combat violence.		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Cambodia	Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor
Canada	Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken.		UNODC questionnaire, police
Chile	Bolstering coordination among diverse institutions, including police and ministry of women		AIAMP
Colombia	A high-level articulation group for the response to GBV (gender-based violence) in the context of COVID -19 was created (including UN agencies and UNODC)		AIAMP
Colombia	Articulation between the Office of the Attorney General of the Nation and the Family Commissioners for the development of their functions as judicial police, for family police stations requesting technical support.		AIAMP
Colombia	Strengthening of the articulation with the Colombian Institute of Family Welfare (ICBF) and the Articulating Mechanism of Gender-Based Violence.		AIAMP
Colombia	The Office of the National Prosecutor's Office has progressed in the dialogue with civil society organizations to listen to their needs and proposals, as well as exchange of information on the concerns and difficulties of the entities according to their capacities, the national and regional reality		GGRT
Costa Rica	A series of inter-institutional coordination was launched, including with the Ministry of Public Safety, to strengthen patrolling and home visits where situations of violence have been registered, foreseeing the possibility that a survivor may not be able to leave the home to report violence. It coordinated with the Public Ministry to relocate persons and protect women who risk threats on their life.		GGRT
Cote d'Ivoire	Additional UNICEF personnel and partners have completed training on GBV risk mitigation & referrals for survivors, including for SEA.		<a href="#">UN Women, UNICEF July 17</a>
Cote d'Ivoire	An automatic referral mechanism to the Office of the Prosecutor and legal proceeding has been set up for cases of violence against women and girls cases.		GGRT
Ecuador	Through the National System for the Prevention and Eradication of Gender Violence, it has been possible to maintain inter-institutional coordination in the request, delivery and monitoring of protection measures.		AIAMP
Ecuador	<i>Communication and attention protocol for cases of GBV during the COVID-19 Health Emergency</i> , with provisions related to the diverse public institutions' roles in cases of GBVAW, was adopted		<a href="https://www.derechoshumanos.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Actualizacion-Protocolo-comunicacion-y-atencion-violencia-1.pdf">https://www.derechoshumanos.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Actualizacion-Protocolo-comunicacion-y-atencion-violencia-1.pdf</a>
El Salvador	Virtual working meetings were held between prosecutors and police personnel, in order to define priority lines of investigation, identify problems and actions to overcome them.		AIAMP
Fiji	A training was also developed specifically for health-care workers in hospitals and clinics to identify and safely refer women and children who have experienced violence.		GGRT
Fiji	The GBV Working Group developed technical tools, adopted referral pathways, and provided trainings and communication. This included a referral pathway for women with disabilities.		GGRT
Lebanon	Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken		UNODC Questionnaire, police



Country	Description	Date	Source
Namibia	Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken.		UNODC Questionnaire, prosecutor
Nepal	Arrange meetings with safe house directors and request them to make one separate quarantine room.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Norway	There has been a strengthened dialogue between the Police Directorate and different departments in the police districts, such as the centres for crime survivors, the “Barnahus”, the police online patrols and the SARA co-ordinators, to exchange experiences and knowledge on measures implemented locally.		GGRT
Paraguay	UNDP is working with partners to activate and expand a national roundtable which brings together law enforcement and justice, GBV and child protection officials. UNDP Paraguay is also working with partners to equip the Ministry of Women with a “situation room” that will track the evolution of GBV and coordinate the response and the prevention of GBV during the COVID-19 crisis.		<u>UNDP, Gender and COVID19</u>
Serbia	Multi-agency teams (prosecutors, police, centres for social work) have processed reported cases of violence, barring orders were issued to perpetrators during the state of emergency.		GGRT
South Africa	A national level committee formed with representatives of all stakeholders including judiciary to look into court optimization measures chaired by Department of Justice Deputy Minister		UNODC Questionnaire, Judge
Uruguay	A protocol for public and private health personnel was adopted, including those who go to homes and those who attend emergencies, so that they can detect possible situations of domestic violence	28/March/20	<a href="https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-salud-publica/comunicacion/noticias/informe-situacion-relacion-coronavirus-covid-19-uruguay-1">https://www.gub.uy/ministerio-salud-publica/comunicacion/noticias/informe-situacion-relacion-coronavirus-covid-19-uruguay-1</a>
Zambia	There is a multi-sectoral response in the midst of the pandemic. Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken.		UNODC Questionnaire, police
Zimbabwe	Measures to improve coordination with other relevant institutions (for example, through Memorandums of understanding) have been taken.		UNODC Questionnaire, lawyer

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