



COVID-19
RESPONSE



Fast and flexible, and meeting women's real needs

REGULAR RESOURCES RISE TO THE IMMENSE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

Photo: Ariel Silva/ CDMX

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 has underscored the value of regular resources in UN Women's work everywhere in the world.

Programmed without restriction, regular resources make the pandemic response fast and comprehensive, as a crisis of this magnitude demands. They underwrite actions fully attuned to the specific needs and priorities of women and girls.

Regular resources enabled UN Women to act quickly at the start of the crisis by sending health information and protective equipment to marginalized women who otherwise would not have them. They meant UN Women could bolster services to prevent and protect against gender-based violence, and help shape gender-responsive social protection measures to cushion devastating economic consequences.

With regular resources, UN Women continues to draw global attention to the many gender dimensions of COVID-19. Regular resources enable UN Women's support to national governments and the United Nations system, including UN country teams, to set priorities and policies, and recognize women's critical leadership and multiple roles in tackling the pandemic. Early gender assessments in

all regions shed some of the first light on gender concerns, while UN Women's [Women Count Data Hub](#) has provided crucial data, and now features a dedicated [COVID-19 section](#).

The pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequities, resulting in further exclusion and discrimination. As a health crisis becomes a multifaceted development crisis, regular resources are more important than ever to protect gains and prevent losses. In recovering from the pandemic and moving beyond it, including towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, regular resources are among the best investments in continued progress for women and girls.

This brief provides an updated summary of how UN Women is deploying regular resources for the COVID-19 response. It details the results of practical assistance to women and girls, especially those in vulnerable communities, and of advocacy for a gender perspective in national, regional and UN system efforts.

UN Women thanks all donors of regular resources for making possible its work to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, and bring about lasting, positive changes in the lives of women and girls.

Regular resources underpin resilience

Stepped up actions to prevent COVID-19 from derailing gender equality gains are crucial now and over the coming months, as uncertainty about the virus entrenches high levels of unemployment in shrinking economies. A shadow pandemic continues to unfold, where a significant rise in violence against women impairs and erodes gender equality gains.

To prevent backsliding and sustain progress already made, UN Women is working to tackle persistent systemic barriers to equality and develop transformative approaches. This includes the integration of gender considerations in economic stimulus packages as well as the reinvention of working life, and in plans to turn crisis into opportunity and build back better.

UN Women is supporting COVID-19 response and recovery actions in over 75 countries, targeting those with particularly weak health systems. It is expanding on past experiences with the Ebola and Zika viruses, which affirmed that applying a gender lens in a systematic and intentional way is the most effective strategy to manage infectious diseases. Encouraging women's leadership and amplifying their voices in planning and programme implementation are crucial to curb infection and hasten recovery.

In 18 countries, UN Women participates in COVID-19 humanitarian response plans and coordination. To reach the most vulnerable women and girls in 14 crisis-affected countries, it launched a programme specifically to closing critical gaps in humanitarian action. The programme complements the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan and contributes to achieving the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan.

Building on regular resources, UN Women led the insertion of a strong emphasis on gender in the multi-partner United Nations COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, designed to assist low- and middle-income countries. A Gender HelpDesk aids UN country teams in developing programmes for funding.

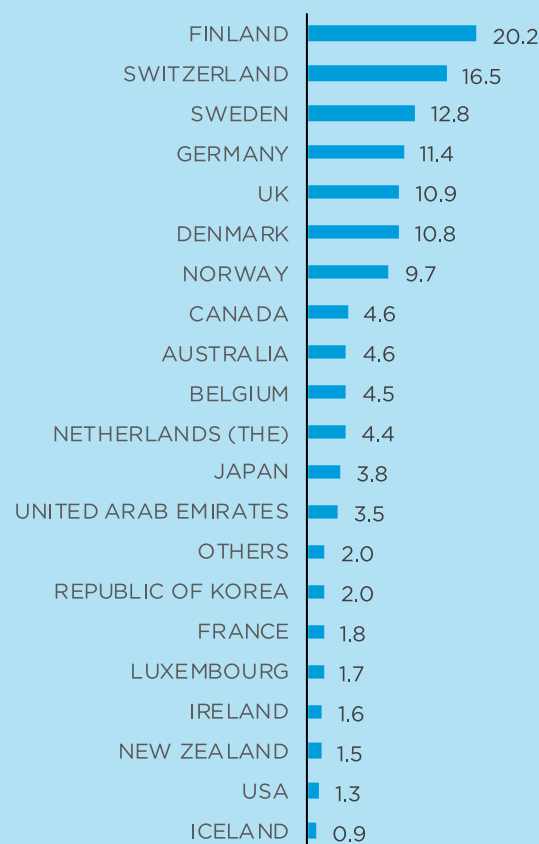
Through regular resources, UN Women mobilized the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality to drive an all-of-UN system COVID-19 response to gender issues, bringing together the collective expertise of 32 entities. The network developed [key gender messages](#) and actions and issued a [minimum requirements checklist](#) that covers core elements of UN assis-

tance, from socio-economic assessments to programme design to monitoring implementation. UN Women also leads regional UN gender coordination platforms that share knowledge and advance South-South collaboration. They convene governments, women's organizations, civil society and the private sector around gender-responsive COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Regular resources to date have made UN Women's global response to COVID-19 fast and effective, as shown on the following pages. Yet many countries are fragile and struggling to cope, with women bearing the brunt of the crisis. New infusions of regular resources would allow UN Women to scale up support to make a sustained and significant difference in the lives of millions of women and girls.

REGULAR RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS FOR 2020 (IN MILLION US\$)

As of 31 August 2020



CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED AS OF 31 AUGUST REPRESENT **65%** OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ENDORSED BUDGET OF **\$200 MILLION** FOR REGULAR RESOURCES IN 2020.



AFRICA

UN Women's offices in East and Southern Africa and West and Central Africa have re-programmed regular resources to respond to the immediate effect of COVID-19 on women and girls, including through measures to mitigate and reduce gender-based violence. UN Women is assisting governments in the region to mainstream gender in COVID-19 response pillars. Regular resources have enabled the mapping of gender interventions in the United Nations COVID-19 response in five African countries – the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone**.

In **Zimbabwe**, UN Women supported monitoring of the escalation of violence against women and girls, which has informed advocacy for the Government to prioritize the issue in the national COVID-19 response plan and allocate funding for lifesaving services. In **Uganda**, assistance to the police resulted in a new national helpline for women facing gender-based violence. In **Somalia, South Sudan** and the **United Republic of Tanzania**, UN Women has assisted hotlines for women and girl survivors of violence, and helped to improve access to essential services such as psychosocial support, health care and legal aid, including through referrals and reporting to gender and children's desks of the police.

In **Ethiopia** and **Mozambique**, UN Women is providing emergency shelter services for violence survivors. It has distributed protection kits to the police in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, and backed public awareness campaigns by the police in **Liberia**. In **Niger**, television and radio widely shared gender-responsive messages around protection and rights. In **Malawi**, 61 traditional leaders modified community by-laws to protect women and girls from the risk of gender-based violence during restrictions on movement, and to overcome challenges in accessing justice.

The region has seen multiple initiatives steering social protection mechanisms and economic stimulus packages to serve women and girls. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, regular resources meant UN Women could work with the national agency for small and medium enterprises to assess COVID-19 fallout on women-led businesses and craft supportive measures accordingly. UN Women in **South Africa** is offering a suite of virtual learning courses through online classrooms with partners such as Google and MTN Group Limited.¹ This virtual set-up is assisting 4,500 women-owned businesses to apply for and access government stimulus funding.

Throughout the region UN Women has aided women entrepreneurs to produce more than 300,000 masks and, in some cases, distribute them to women at the front lines of the COVID-19 response. In **Senegal**, 7,500 masks and 2,500 hand-sanitizing gels were distributed to caregivers, midwives and nurses in large maternity wards and hospitals. In **South Sudan**, sanitation materials and 3,500 facemasks reached small-scale businesswomen and food vendors in 14 markets around Juba.

Many UN Women offices are supporting the #HeForSheAtHome campaign, which aims to highlight the unfair burden on women and encourage men to do their equal share. In **Kenya**, support for establishing an Unstereotype Alliance chapter has helped foster a culture of diversity and inclusion, develop guidelines to free advertising from stereotypes, and drive higher awareness and social change, particularly on reducing the burden of unpaid care on women.

UN Women has partnered with UNICEF and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights to conduct rapid gender assessments of COVID-19 impacts in **Cote d'Ivoire, Central African Republic and Senegal**. Assessments will also soon be conducted in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone and Togo**. These provide valuable analysis and data for responses and investments, including in gender-disaggregated data, unpaid care solutions, services and more.

Photo: UN Women WCARO/ Khadidiatou Ndiaye



By the issues: UN Women's response to COVID-19



Burden of care – Women reportedly do three times as much unpaid care work at home as men, a disparity that has become increasingly obvious with people confined to their homes. Many UN Women offices are carrying out social mobilization campaigns urging shared responsibility of domestic tasks, such as through #HeForSheAtHome. Related efforts entail advocacy and evidence supporting policy changes to achieve a fairer care economy.



Ending Violence against Women – UN Women is helping countries to provide essential services (such as shelters, hotlines and online counselling), and use technology for prevention and protection measures. Given the shadow pandemic of rising rates of violence, UN Women is intensifying efforts to respond, including through concerted media campaigns, and advocacy for actions to stop gender-based violence in national COVID-19 policy frameworks.



Economic resilience, social protection mechanisms and economic stimulus packages – UN Women is backing social protection packages with specific gender provisions, including cash for care work. It advocates financial assistance for female-headed households and support for women-owned enterprises through procurement and capacity development, among other measures.



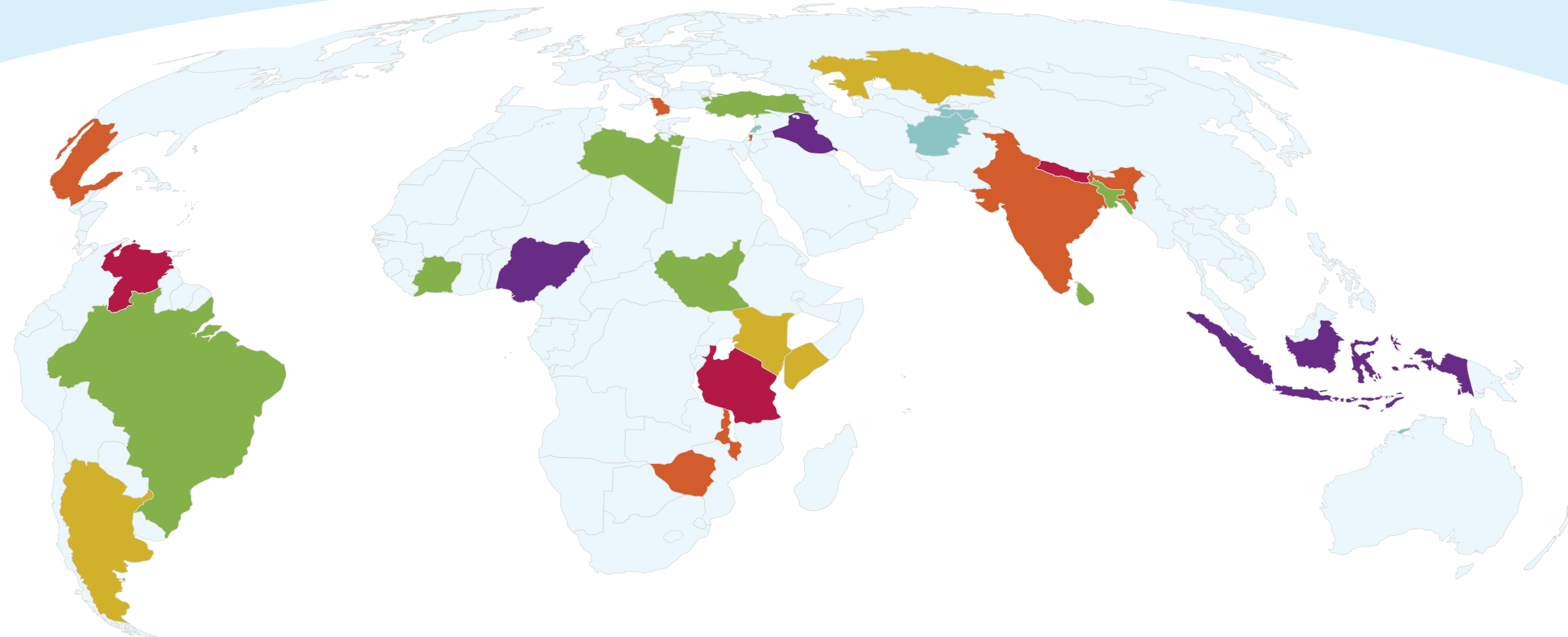
Leadership, women and girls' participation – From the local to the national levels, UN Women joins women leaders to assemble common positions and solutions, and collaborate with diverse partners from civil society, the private sector, and groups of indigenous peoples, youth and people with disabilities. It supports women's efforts to access and share information that improves participation and protects rights. And it stands behind their push for affirmative action and a full role in decision-making on all COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.



Gender mainstreamed into national coordination and data – UN Women helps bring gender into all dimensions of national COVID-19 response plans, as well as into broader national planning and data. Technical expertise supports gender-disaggregated data collection and use, needs or impact assessments, and report cards to measure gender-responsiveness.



UN Coordination and inter-agency processes – Through the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and participation in UN country teams, UN Women is driving an all-of-UN system approach to COVID-19 that is highly gender-responsive. Engagement with UN system partners at the regional and country levels translates this emphasis into the integration of gender-linked actions across crisis responses.



“The support of our donors underlines our shared belief that gender equality and women’s rights are essential, not just to getting through the pandemic, but to creating a better future. Together, we can accelerate change, expand horizons, and get millions of women and girls onto the secure footing we need to rebuild both our societies and our economies.”

PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women



AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN

In the Americas and the Caribbean, UN Women has put the care economy and the promotion of national care systems at the centre of the response to COVID-19. With health systems overwhelmed and schools closed, care tasks, including for sick family members, children and the elderly, fall mainly on women, worsening existing gender disparities. UN Women regional and national economic experts, funded almost entirely by regular resources, are leading this agenda, mobilizing UN Women's partners to ensure that national response and recovery measures account for care, and help redistribute and reduce the workload.

UN Women, the International Labour Organization and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) have collaborated with the International Federation of Domestic Workers to issue a [policy brief](#) advocating for the rights of domestic workers, who are particularly affected by the COVID-19 crisis. In the Regional COVID-19 Observatory, through a partnership with ECLAC, a gender window tracks gender-responsive policy measures, including those relating to care. A [policy brief](#) on care systems to strengthen the crisis response and recovery has provided recommendations, while a [brief](#) on cash transfers and gender equality has emphasized the centrality of care issues in social protection measures.

Argentina, Ecuador and Uruguay have implemented rapid surveys to measure the impact of time used for unpaid care work, and in **Ecuador**, UN Women supported “cash for care” programmes as part of emergency cash transfer packages. Work with the Ministry of Labour and trade unions in **Colombia** helped develop targeted informa-

tion on labour rights for employers of domestic workers. In the Caribbean, using regular resources, UN Women is working with the Inter-American Development Bank and Caribbean Community to integrate gender considerations into economic stimulus packages, stressing the urgency of addressing the shortfalls in the care economy and their impact on women.

Regionally, a series of creative campaigns have stressed co-responsibility for care in the context of confinement. For instance, in **Argentina**, the #CuidarEsTrabajo (“Care is work”) campaign increased the visibility of the women and diverse groups working in health care and other care tasks. In **Mexico**, “HeForShe at Home” called for new concepts of masculinity, peaceful coexistence and shared responsibilities at home during the quarantine and beyond.

UN Women is partnering with the Ibero-American Union of Municipalities to build the capacities of local women leaders in shaping local gender-sensitive agendas in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This collaboration is providing scholarships for virtual trainings focused on gender-sensitive public policies and budgets, women's entrepreneurship for post-crisis economic recovery, innovation and inclusive digitalization. Courses prioritize women leaders who are indigenous, of African descent, young, LGTBQI+ and/or have disabilities.

Work with governments and businesses across the region has launched initiatives that reflect the “new normal” of the pandemic in responding to violence against women. In **Bolivia**, UN Women supported the police, shelters and the judicial sector to improve reporting of violence, and widely shared a guide for survivors on how to report cases and access services. In **Mexico**, UN Women launched two publications for the private sector to help address domestic violence during the period of confinement and beyond.

UN Women is an active voice for gender in key regional humanitarian platforms, including the Regional Group on Risks, Emergencies and Disasters for Latin America and the Caribbean. [Gender recommendations](#) cover all dimensions of humanitarian response. Over 400 shelter and camp workers participated in webinars on best practices in responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls. In **El Salvador**, UN Women took part in delivering COVID-19 protection kits for women in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Amanda.

Photo: UN Women/Ryan Brown



ARAB STATES

Across the Arab States region, UN Women has used regular resources to support women in local communities, while working with national and regional decision-makers to ensure gender issues feature prominently in pandemic responses. Within the region, a [policy brief](#) has been disseminated through websites and social media outlining the impacts of the pandemic on gender relations. For example, women will undoubtedly bear a disproportionate burden in terms of the health risks posed by the virus in the Arab region. The brief, designed with UN entity partners, proposes policies and programmes to mitigate impacts on women.

UN Women has been instrumental in monitoring violence against women and girls and providing up-to-the-minute situation reports. Assistance helped **Jordan, Lebanon** and the **State of Palestine** produce some of the region's first reports about gender-based violence during the pandemic, along with guidance on national response strategies and factsheets on services for survivors. A leading priority looking forward is to extend essential services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, especially among women and girls already caught in conflict and other humanitarian crises. Coordination with UNFPA in **Iraq** is sponsoring capacity-building on gender issues in the context of COVID-19 with a focus on gender-based violence. Virtual trainings rolled out in **Kurdistan** specifically target government officials.

In **Lebanon**, UN Women and the National Commission for Lebanese Women published a joint policy brief outlining actions to implement the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security during the COVID-19 lockdown.

UN Women assessed **Egypt's** overall national response to the pandemic with a gender policy tracker, pinpointing

specific issues for scaled-up interventions. Continued partnership with the ILO on decent employment has provided an online training package for women in corporate executive positions, an exercise sustained during COVID-19 through collaboration with the International Finance Corporation and Women on Boards Observatory.

Tracking pandemic impacts on women in **Libya** has included a study on economic fallout, accompanied by recommendations for economic recovery, legal reform and gender-responsive peacebuilding. A flash online survey of women entrepreneurs in the **State of Palestine** raised awareness of women's business needs among government and other stakeholders implementing mitigation measures and preparing recovery packages.

Regionally, targeting the G-20 Finance Track, UN Women has worked with Women20 to define policy recommendations required to develop gender-responsive economic stimulus packages, which will be presented to Ministers of Finance for consideration and discussion prior to the Group of 20 summit. Close work with a variety of UN partners has assessed multiple dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis from a gender perspective, and defined and disseminated policy recommendations through South-South dialogues at the ministerial and technical levels.

UN Women mobilized an Arab regional civil society network to inform ongoing COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. The network comprises 25 civil society and women's grass-roots organizations from **Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the State of Palestine, Tunisia** and **Yemen**, and involves groups working with persons with disabilities, women migrants, LGBTQI populations and youth, and on women, peace and security issues.

Photo: UN Women/Ibrahim Dirani





ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Starting in **China**, UN Women has been at the forefront of providing technical and policy advice to countries in Asia and the Pacific. As the pandemic escalated, UN Women used regular resources to work with the United Nations system and governments across the region to keep the needs of women and girls, especially those most marginalized, at the forefront of preparedness, response and recovery. UN Women has led the way in providing gender analysis, data and expertise informing decisions about health care, the economy and safety. It has drawn on its unique capacity to back a collective regional response as well as tailored national actions reflecting diverse needs and priorities. In a fast-evolving crisis, continuous collaboration and exchange has ensured that the best strategies are widely shared.

With regular resources, UN Women led the development of key messages on gender-related concerns, based on lessons learned from the earlier Ebola and Zika crises. Regional advocacy materials urged attention to gender impacts, while a risk communication and community engagement package delivered life-saving messages to diverse audiences. Other regions translated these into Spanish, French and Arabic, helping shine a spotlight on gender from the first days of response. Specific communication resources supported outreach to vulnerable women, such as migrants, displaced women, refugees and women in quarantine centres.

Early and continued support from the regional office helped UN Women country offices come quickly up to speed in tackling COVID-19 preparedness planning, response and recovery strategies to protect women and promote their roles as active agents in preparedness and response efforts. A short report, [The First 100 Days of COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific: A Gender Lens](#), was widely disseminated among civil society actors and development partners.

In a similar vein, UN Women country offices have led the development of gender profiles and analyses, such as in **Afghanistan**, where 11 “gender alerts” on women’s empowerment have fed into development of the Humanitarian Response Plan as well as the overall national response. UN Women’s leadership in humanitarian coordination has embedded gender in plans guiding the delivery of COVID-19 prevention and response actions.

Regular resources have enabled UN Women to ensure diverse civil society participation in monitoring govern-

ment responses. In **Bangladesh**, UN Women drew attention to the experiences of women and gender-diverse people, using regular resources to analyse data and information from the Gender Monitoring Network, which links women’s networks and community-based organizations across the country. In **Timor-Leste**, UN Women is supporting women’s groups to monitor government social protection schemes, and highlighting issues faced by LGBTI, persons with disabilities, domestic workers and other marginalized groups.

With regular resources, cash and cash-for-work initiatives have been implemented in **Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines** and **Viet Nam**. In **Bangladesh**, a cash distribution initiative targeted the most vulnerable groups, including gender diverse people, women living with disabilities, widows, sex workers, and women residing in districts particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and affected by the worst flooding in a generation. To complement broader efforts by the **Government of Nepal**, UN Women put forward a comprehensive package of cash transfers and in-kind support for women from excluded groups, covering access to food, clean energy, essential supplies, information, health care, and financial and digital services.

In **Myanmar**, women affected by conflict and returnee women migrant workers have been engaged in livelihood initiatives to produce masks procured by government and humanitarian agencies.

In the Pacific, UN Women’s longstanding work with women market vendors has provided some immediate relief, catalysing donor and government attention. In **Papua New Guinea**, emergency funds doubled the number of women vendors accessing social protection assistance, easing the crisis for 26,000 women in 16 markets.

With diverse partners, UN Women has called attention to and catalysed scaled-up action to end violence against women. In **India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Thailand** and **Viet Nam**, a UN Women initiative ensures that when a Twitter user searches for terms associated with violence against women (“abuse,” “sexual assault,” “domestic violence,” etc.), the top search result will be a notification in their language: “If you are experiencing violence, help is available.” It is followed by a relevant hotline number and the Twitter handle of that service.



EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

UN Women led a regional assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on services for survivors of violence in the **Western Balkans** and **Turkey** that unveiled weak spots in prevention and response systems, and offered recommendations for innovative delivery. A separate assessment of eight safe houses in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has highlighted struggles in providing adequate protection to women survivors and their children, against rising cases of domestic violence during COVID-19 lockdowns.

In **Albania**, UN Women launched an “Isolated but Not Abandoned” online awareness campaign urging neighbours who overhear abuse to report cases, and has worked with the Government to ensure shelters function without disruption during the emergency. Building on a study on femicide in Serbia that indicated that the most dangerous place for women is their own home, UN Women is advocating for special measures to protect women and girls at risk of violence and to outlaw sexual harassment that may stem from pandemic-related restrictions and increased tensions.

In **Kosovo**,² UN Women helped open quarantine safe spaces with UNFPA, equip existing shelters to reach more survivors of gender-based violence, and launched a major online awareness-raising campaign, “Report Violence, Save Lives!”. Support for NGOs is helping them develop new strategies to support survivors in the **Republic of North Macedonia** and call for access to justice and stronger penalties for perpetrators despite the physical closure of courts and prosecution offices during quarantines in **Kazakhstan**.

In **Ukraine**, UN Women mobilized grass-roots women to create safe virtual spaces for domestic violence survivors. To bring women’s views and solutions to the forefront of discussions and decisions on the COVID-19 response, UN Women initiated rapid consultations across the Europe and Central Asia region with a diverse group of women civil society leaders and activists and representatives

of gender equality mechanisms, resulting in a clear set of priority recommendations and analysis to effectively provide a gender perspective to COVID-19 response and recovery frameworks.

In **Moldova**, food and hygiene packages were distributed to 4,000 women affected by domestic violence, living in shelters, who are HIV positive or who live with disabilities. UN Women in **Kyrgyzstan** sent hygiene kits to 700 vulnerable women and girls in 27 communities, and with UN partners provided equipment for 30 women from nine municipalities to sew face masks from their homes.

In **Tajikistan**, UN Women facilitated creation of a multi-partner working group on COVID-19 and HIV, which monitors and provides accurate information to civil society groups, health-care providers and others. The first civil society consultation with the Eurasian Network of Women Living with HIV took place in July.

The “Gender-sensitive Impact Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 on the Private Sector” was developed in **Turkey** in partnership with the Turkish Industry and Business Association and the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation. Results will feed into a policy paper to advocate for gender-sensitive actions and policies as part of the COVID-19 crisis exit strategy for businesses, and for increasing the resilience of businesses owned by women and/or with a large proportion of women employees.

In **Kazakhstan**, UN Women and United Nations partners raised awareness of gender stereotypes in family relationships and responsibilities through a press release, #EqualPartners. It highlighted key findings in a rapid gender assessment of COVID-19 and emphasized shared family responsibilities in conditions of lockdowns and isolation.

ENDNOTES

1 A South African multinational mobile telecommunications company.

2 All references to Kosovo in this report shall be understood in full compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).