



# JUSTICE FOR WOMEN AMIDST COVID-19



**COVID-19  
RESPONSE**



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# FOREWORD

**“Gender equality and women’s rights are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster, and to building a better future for everyone.”**

These words of the United Nations Secretary-General are a strong reminder that our collective quest to achieve gender equality is a critical precondition to solving all types of global problems, including COVID-19, in a manner that leaves no one behind.

Access to justice is an essential ingredient of gender equality and it cannot be denied any woman or girl during this time of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to examine the impact of the crisis through a gender lens – from how lockdowns and stay at home orders can impinge on the rights of women, including increasing the risks of gender based violence – to the economic impact of the crisis on women who are more likely to work in the informal sector and are disproportionately impacted by the economic consequences. In broader terms, the rule of law and access to justice remains the foundation through which people are able to uphold their rights, seek redress for grievances, and protect those who are most at risk of being left behind, regardless of the necessities of our time.

We celebrate the frontline healthcare workers, who are predominantly women, for their dedication and commitment to fight this common cause. At the same time, we need to ensure that even when justice systems are under stress, access to justice and accountability for violations of fundamental rights cannot be undermined. They should be part of the *essential services* that need to continue to function in times of crisis.

It is on this basis that we are pleased to present this publication, *Justice for Women Amidst COVID-19*. Albeit based on limited data, it presents a global synthesis of the state of justice systems in connection with women’s justice needs, ongoing initiatives as well as policy recommendations to address deficits in justice delivery during this critical period. Placing a gender lens on justice impacts, the report documents major threats to women’s lives and livelihoods associated with COVID-19 – namely, curtailed access to justice institutions, rising intimate partner violence, hazards to women’s rights to sexual and reproductive health, growing injustice for workers, discriminatory laws and lack of legal identity, as well as repercussions on forcibly displaced women and those deprived of their liberty.

This publication may be used as a companion piece to an earlier publication, *Justice for Women (2019)*. It presents a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities that women face in their quest for justice in the context of both Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and women’s empowerment and SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It contextualizes them in the current situation where countries and communities are seeking to address the heightened challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis and recover from its devastating effects.

We anticipate that this assessment will help raise awareness of the gender-related impacts of the pandemic. We hope that the policy recommendations will be adopted or adapted by stakeholders across different legal systems to help *build back better* – towards a brighter future that protects and advances the human rights of all women and girls.

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>CGD</b>	Center for Global Development	<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019	<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>CRSV</b>	Conflict-related sexual violence	<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization	<b>US</b>	United States
<b>DRC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo	<b>WAVE</b>	Women Against Violence Europe
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence	<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>GSMA</b>	Global System for Mobile Communication	<b>WPS</b>	Women, Peace and Security
<b>IAWJ</b>	International Association of Women Judges		
<b>ICE</b>	Immigration and Customs Enforcement		
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology		
<b>ID</b>	Identification card		
<b>IDLO</b>	International Development Law Organization		
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization		
<b>INFORM</b>	Index for Risk Management		
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence		
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee		
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights		
<b>UN</b>	United Nations		

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