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“Endorsing Accountability: Reapproaching Neglected Urgencies”

General Assembly: GA4,
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*The Rise in Domestic Violence Cases
Since the Pandemic*

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Forum: GA4 (General Assembly - Humanitarian)

Issue: The Rise in Domestic Violence Cases Since the Pandemic

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Introduction

According to the UN Women, one in three women over the world experience domestic violence in different forms. By definition, domestic violence is a pattern of behavior aimed at gaining power or control over an intimate partner. Over the COVID pandemic, according to recent data received by the UN agencies, violence against women has followed an increasing trend. Hence, recent UN Women data shows that the exacerbating factors of the rise in domestic violence cases against women include security/health worries, cramped living conditions, isolation with abusers, movement restrictions, and deserted public spaces¹. From the reasons listed, it is indeed seen that the correlation between the limitations due to the pandemic and the rise in domestic violence cases against women are significant and a must to take precautions for.

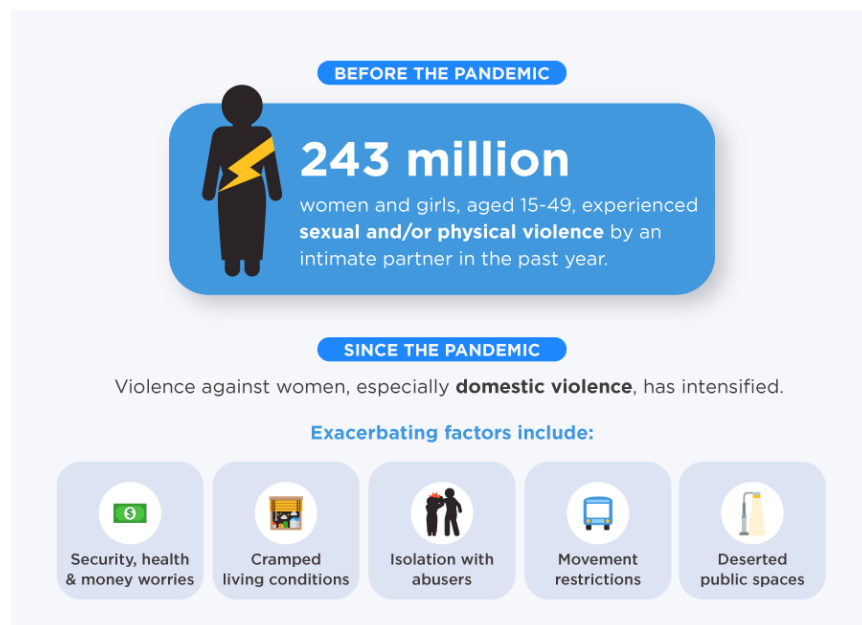


Figure 1: Exacerbating factors behind the rise of violence against women

¹ “The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during Covid-19.” *UN Women – Headquarters*, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.

At first glance, it is understandable that the delegates might not be able to find a strong and direct correlation between the pandemic and the rise in domestic violence cases. However, it is important to note that many political, humanitarian or economic issues that are often overlooked are getting more significant day by day, especially with the unusual bringings of the pandemic conditions. Thus, it is essential to reinforce accountability and re-approach such issues with utmost urgency. Regarding the rise in domestic violence cases against women, delegates are expected to analyze the exacerbating factors well and come up with proactive measures.

Definition of Key Terms

Domestic violence: The social and legal concept that, in the broadest sense, refers to any abuse—including physical, emotional, sexual, or financial—between intimate partners, often living in the same household. The term is often used specifically to designate physical assaults upon women by their male partners, but, though rarer, the victim may be a male abused by his female partner, and the term may also be used regarding abuse of both women and men by same-sex partners.

Abuse: Abuse is an action that intentionally causes harm or injures another person. This can refer to physical abuse, psychological abuse, mental abuse, or child abuse

Exacerbate: To make something more violent, bitter, or severe.

Proactive: To act in anticipation of future problems, needs, or changes.

General Overview

The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously affected all social, political and economic mechanisms in the most unexpected way possible. In just a short period of time, all economic activities had come to a stopping point, countries had gone into complete lockdowns, resulting in both social and economic isolation. However, among the unexpected bringings of the COVID-19 pandemic, the rise in domestic violence cases against women seems to be often neglected by many, even though the affected population constitutes a great proportion of society. As it has been also stated in the introduction, the causes of this vary greatly. However, the most prominent ones include cramped living conditions, restricted movement and isolation with abusers. Before having a concise discussion over the factors affecting the issue, it would be best to have a concrete understanding of domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse towards women includes both physical and psychological violence, and is also often seen in form of sexual violence. It is mostly reported by heterosexual women, however, it would be good to keep in mind that it is likely to be underreported in transgender and same-sex relationships. Data presented by the UN shows that there is a significant increase in such cases since the beginning of the pandemic, and that many countries have diverted their attention from preventative measures for this issue

to immediate COVID-19 relief. Therefore it is important to do proactive research and work on this issue, so that it regains its deserved attention back.

It has been stated that the major contributors of the issue are cramped living conditions, restricted movement and isolation with abusers. As countries declared temporary lockdowns, everyone was obliged to stay at home, and many women were left alone with their intimate partners. Hence, as the time partners had spent together increased, disagreements and unpleasant discussions had likely increased between partners. As a result, according to data emerged from different agencies around the world, violence against women have significantly increased during this last two years. Combining these factors with the adverse psychological effects of the pandemic, it is more than likely that many women continued to get abused by their partner, and couldn't find a way out due to movement restrictions.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

UN Women

UN Women is a subsidiary UN organization that aims to protect the rights and enhance the living conditions of women. UN Women has been actively collecting information from other agencies regarding the rise in domestic violence cases against women, and brought the issue to the attention of other UN organs. According to the surveys conducted by the UN Women, nearly 7 out of 10 women think that COVID-19 pandemic made things worse in terms of the rise in domestic violence cases against women.

United Nations Development Programme

UNDP is another subsidiary organization UN organization that aims to lay out sustainable and egalitarian development approaches for the member states. In this context, UNDP is also another important organization regarding data collection and possible solution attempts of the issue at hand. UNDP also issued reports in collaboration with UN Women regarding the increase in domestic violence cases against women during COVID-19.

Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights

OHCHR is a branch of the United Nations that has the core aim of protection of human rights of all people. Hence, OHCHR is in a key position regarding all strategies to prevent domestic violence against women.

Timeline of Events

17 November 2019	<i>The COVID-19 pandemic started.</i>
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2020	<i>Many countries declared complete lockdown in high hopes of curbing the spread of the virus.</i>
2020	<i>Emerging data drew attention to the rise in domestic violence cases against women since the beginning of the pandemic.</i>
2020	<i>UN Women published "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: Report of the Secretary General."</i>
2021	<i>UNDP established "COVID-19 Global Response Tracker" in order to monitor governments' responses to the pandemic conditions worldwide.</i>
2021	<i>The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime publishes "Killings of women and girls by their intimate partner or other family members, Global estimates 2020."</i>
2021	<i>UN Women publishes "Online and ICT facilitated violence against women and girls during COVID-19."</i>

Treaties and Events

Istanbul Convention: The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is a comprehensive treaty aiming to ensure women's total liberation from any and all kinds of violence. The European legal instrument has been lobbied by 47 member states, and opened for signature on 11 May 2011. In 2014, it went into force following its 10th ratification. On 20 March 2021, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the president of Turkey, announced that Turkey had withdrawn from the treaty by presidential decree. This collected criticism around the world, as rates of violence against women especially soared in Turkey in the last two years.

Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women: The declaration that has been proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993 has the core aim to eradicate any and all kinds of violence against women, In that sense, the resolution is proactively issued.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

As the countries have faced the significant challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, they have also started to see the prominence of the rise in domestic violence cases against women, However, it is safe to say that many governments have failed to respond swiftly to the emerging reports, and that they instead concentrated resources on immediate COVID-19 relief systems. After the harsh realization, again, countries often trusted their current legislative instruments on the matter, however, those also proved to be ineffective, mainly because of underreporting. Thus, governments should now see

that trust in already established treaties and conventions were ineffective. With the situations of active lockdowns, meaning restricted movement, and economic and political concerns governments basically didn't put the required attention into the issue.

Possible Solutions

Possible solutions for the issue vary greatly, from social approaches to economic approaches. First of all, it is essential to put women at the heart of the solutions and policy changes. Ensuring women's equal representation in all task forces regarding COVID-19 is therefore a crucial step in making sure that their voice is equally heard. Additionally, delegates should strive to create solution alternatives that provide resource to address violence against women in COVID-19 recovery plans. Evidence-based and holistic measures must be taken, so that the accountability principle is held upright.

At this point, delegates are also highly encouraged to research in-depth regarding the roots of domestic violence against women and come up with middle-long term solution proposals that are meant to eradicate violence against women, In such efforts, past treaties should be analyzed and their incomplete parts should be detected. Delegates may then try to address these incomplete aspects of the treaties in the best way they can. It is also important to note that providing financial freedom to women is another key in indirectly cease domestic violence against women. Delegates should bear in mind the fact that many women cannot leave their abusers simply because of financial dependence.

Moving forward, delegates are also encouraged to establish specialized and local data collection centers regarding the rise in violence cases, such that effective monitoring could be put in place and local organizations may work in collaboration with the UN Women.

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