



Communique **Committee of Experts**

Committee of Experts urges the incorporation of the gender perspective in the measures taken to mitigate COVID-19 and the strengthening of actions for the prevention and care of gender-based violence

Washington DC, March 18, 2020. The [Committee of Experts](#) of the Follow-up Mechanism of the [Belém do Pará Convention \(MESECVI\)](#), notes that many of the measures being taken to mitigate the consequences of COVID-19 may have a disproportionate effect in relation to women and girls, and, in some cases, may exacerbate violence against them. In this sense, the Committee wishes to highlight some measures that are necessary to help prevent and deal with violence against women and girls during this stage.

a. Quarantines as means that force women and girls to coexist for long periods with their aggressors

The Committee notes that a very high percentage of women and girls in the region suffer violence at the hands of partners, relatives or people with whom they share daily life. In this sense, the forced isolation that social distancing and quarantines entail places women at a very high risk of extreme violence by forcing full time cohabitation with their aggressors, as well as exposing children and other vulnerable people to this violence, either directly or indirectly.

For this reason, the Committee urges States to implement all necessary measures to prevent this situation, including the following priorities:

- i) The establishment of decent shelters that women, their children, older adults and anyone else at risk of experiencing violence can access during the quarantines established for the mitigation of COVID-19;
- ii) strategic dissemination, for example, through text messages, webpages, printed materials in pharmacies, supermarkets or any other establishment that can be accessed during quarantine or any other means that does not put the woman at risk, of the means to report gender-based violence;

iii) establishing immediate response teams to deal effectively with complaints and cases of gender-based violence;

iv) strengthening protection measures for women and girls at risk;

v) reducing or avoiding the sale of alcohol, drugs, weapons and any other trigger for gender violence during periods of isolation and quarantine;

vi) maintaining all necessary services and actions to prevent, attend, prosecute and punish violence against women and girls.

b. Caring for the elderly, children, sick people and other vulnerable people, and housework

The Committee notes that women are generally the ones in charge of housework and care for children, the elderly, the sick, people with disabilities and anyone else that is affected by a vulnerability.

For this reason, the Committee urges States to implement measures to address this situation, including the following priorities:

i) Provide female personnel who are in charge in pharmacies, clinics and hospitals or in the care of businesses necessary to supply essential goods or in any other establishment or priority service that requires their active service in quarantine periods, access by themselves or through third parties in a dignified and safe way to care for the people under their care and to satisfy domestic tasks through the creation of affirmative policies according to their specific needs;

ii) establish measures for the care of people who are in charge of people infected by COVID-19;

iii) policies within companies, institutions and organizations so that women and men can take care of their children after the closing of schools without this affecting any of their benefits or labor rights;

iv) flexible healthcare and other policies for those who are in charge of the care of other people, so that they can continue to care for them without it affecting their employment stability or benefits;

v) contingency plans in the event of a generalized quarantine so that the tasks carried out by women and men who are in charge of caring for other people can be assumed by other people or other means without this affecting their income or their labor rights;

vi) guidelines to ensure the care of people who cannot be cared for by those responsible

for them due to the imposition of restrictions on mobility or other measures related to the prevention of COVID-19.

c. Universal access to health and decent life

The Committee recalls that women and girls have less access to social security benefits and decent living conditions due to the structural discrimination to which they are subjected in the workplace, the work they do in the informal economy and the type of activities historically designated to women. In addition, there are many women who cannot access healthcare due to disabilities, their status as migrants or refugees, older persons, or because they belong to historically discriminated groups, among other categories.

In this sense, the Committee requests that measures be taken so that, regardless of working conditions, immigration status or any other category, women and girls can access health services and be treated comprehensively, without this affecting the enjoyment of any other human right or without being considered for deportation or any other action that may prevent them, out of fear, from attending to their health.

The Committee requests that due to force majeure single payment schemes be generated in institutions, organizations and companies that are not part of the daily salary so that families can face isolation without it affecting their basic rights to food, to health and a decent life, among others; as well as government subsidies for women and men who work informally or whose livelihood depends on the revival of the economy.

Finally, the Committee requests that all these measures and those taken to ensure the rights of the population in general and of women and girls in particular be made known to the entire population in such a way that there is no discrimination in their implementation.