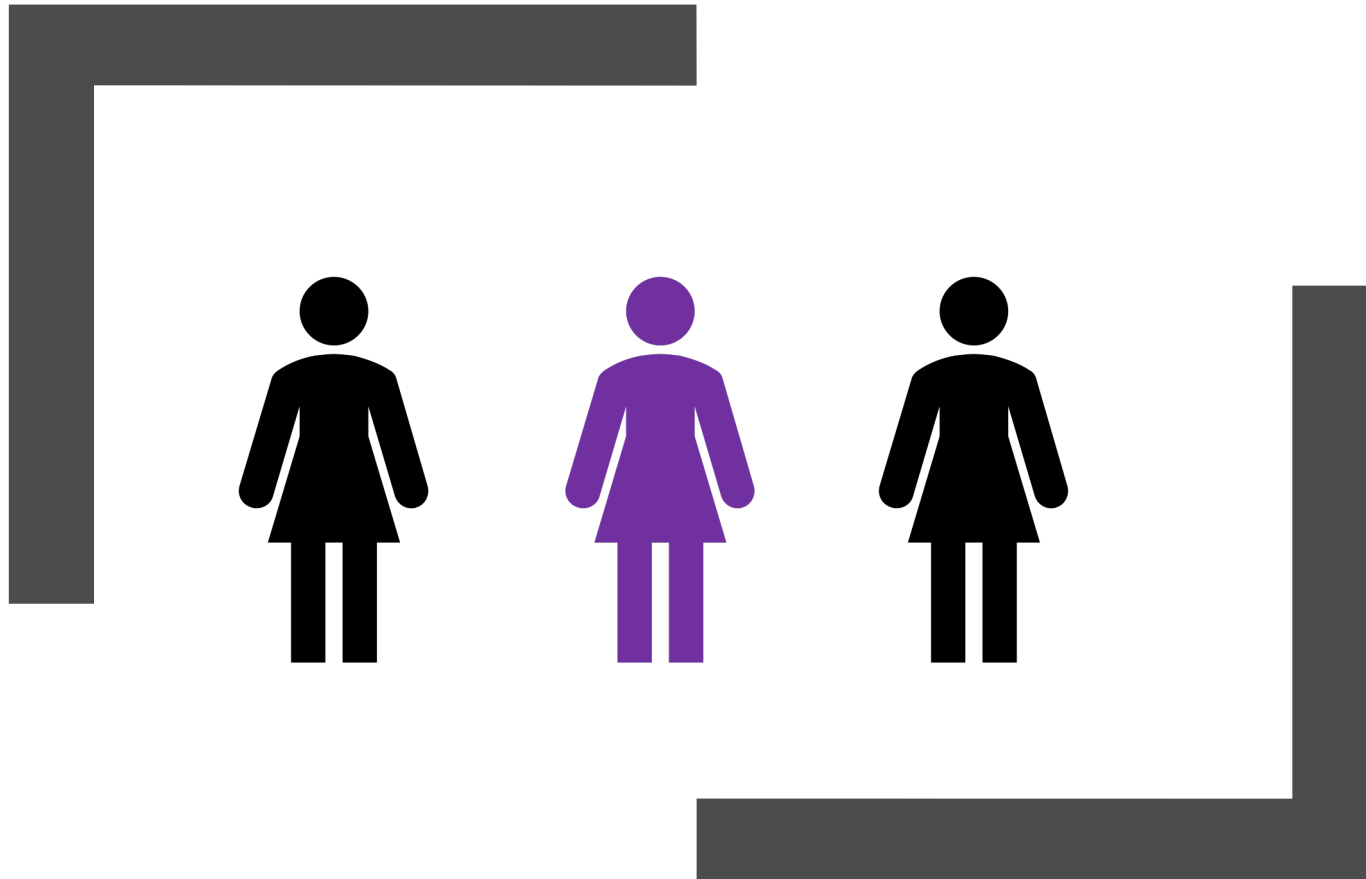


Violence Against Women and their children in the context of COVID-19

What the Health Sector/System Can Do

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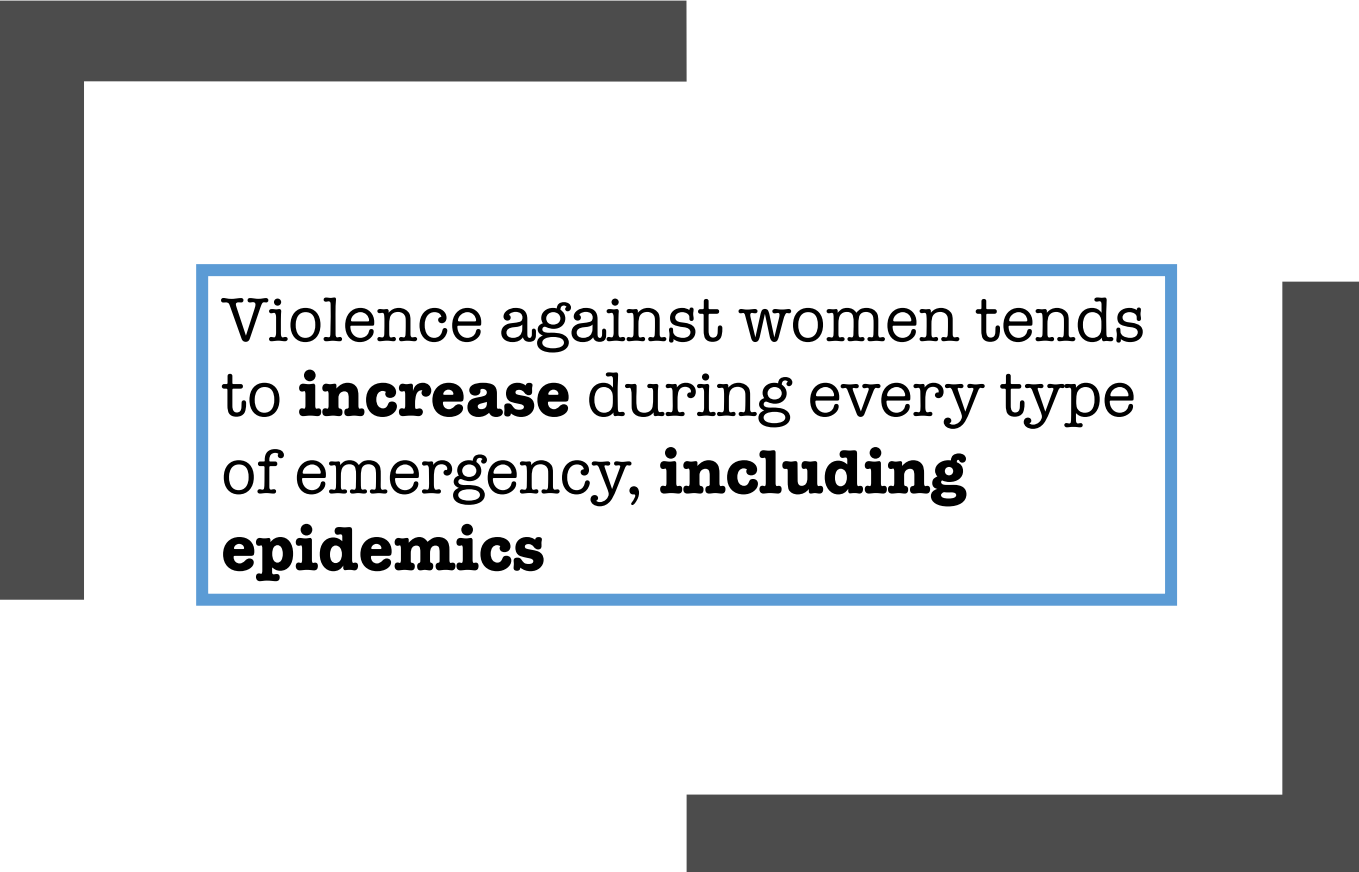
Why does it matter?



- Globally, 1 in 3 women have experienced lifetime physical and/or sexual violence.
- Most common form of violence against women is intimate partner violence
- Health consequences are substantial (physical, mental, reproductive, sexual etc).



Why does it matter?



Violence against women tends to **increase** during every type of emergency, **including epidemics**

- In the case of COVID-19, isolation and physical distancing measures have a particularly acute impact on women and their children experiencing family violence.
- Risk factors (e.g. stress, economic worries, alcohol) increase, while protective factors (e.g. social support, access to protection services) decrease.



What can the health sector do?

1. **Government and policy makers:** include essential services to address violence against women in preparedness and response plans for COVID-19, fund them, and identify ways to make them accessible in the context of physical distancing measures
2. **Health facilities:** identify and provide information about services available locally for survivors, including opening hours, contact details, and whether services can be offered remotely, and establish/update referral linkages;
3. **Health providers:** be aware of the risks for increased VAW during this time, identify survivors of violence and offering first-line support and relevant medical treatment;
4. **Humanitarian response organizations** need to include services for women subjected to violence and their children in their COVID-19 response plans and gather data on reported cases of VAW;



Examples of action in countries

1. Framing VAWC services as essential services that must continue during the COVID19 response
2. Strengthening online service delivery – including mHealth and telehealth
3. Trialing new emergency alert systems e.g. in pharmacies, supermarkets etc.
4. Addressing risk factors of violence
5. Strengthening information and mobilizing communities

HOW HEALTH PROVIDERS CAN SUPPORT WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE



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Listen closely, with empathy and no judgment.

Inquire about their needs and concerns.

Validate their experiences. Show you believe and understand.

Enhance their safety.

Support them to connect with additional services.

Do no harm. Respect women's wishes.



Messages for providers

- Know the risks and consequences of violence in the context of COVID19 and how to identify women and children subject to violence
- Provide first line support and appropriate medical treatment
- Consider mental health assessment and care



Messages for survivors

- Be aware that social isolation, quarantine, and distancing can affect you and your family's psychological well-being. Violence is never acceptable.
- As much as possible, consider:
 - Seeking information from reliable sources and reducing the time spent consuming news.
 - Seeking support from family and friends via phone, email, text, etc.
 - Trying to maintain daily routines and make time for physical activity and sleep.
 - Using relaxation exercises (e.g. slow breathing, meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, grounding exercises) to relieve stressful thoughts and feelings.
 - Engaging in activities that in the past have helped with managing adversity.
 - Developing a safety plan for their and their children's safety in case the violence gets worse.
 - Collecting information on support mechanisms (e.g. hotlines, shelters, contact points) - be discreet so that your partner or family members do not find this information.



Messages for communities

- Be aware of the increased risk of violence against women during this pandemic and that violence is never justified.
- Reach out, keep in touch and support women and their children at risk of violence
- Be aware of the risks i.e. ensure that it is safe to connect with survivors when the abuser is present in the home.
- Make sure you have information about where help for survivors is.



#HealthyAtHome

Messages and resources for parents

1. One-on-one time

2. Keeping it positive

3. Structure up

4. Bad behaviour

5. Keeping calm and managing stress

6. Talking about COVID19

Additional resources

