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# IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON WASH IN RURAL INDIA WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON WOMEN AND ADOLESCENT GIRLS

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unicef  | for every child

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“Most hardships, most crises, most wars, most famines, most economic downturns affect women and girls more than men and boys. And there’s a reason for that: **structural inequality**. ...

- Women do the majority of the world’s work,
- they earn a very small fraction of the world’s salaries,
- and they own even less of the world’s property. ...
- Women and girls have the least access to resources.
- Women and girls are victims of violence, whether it’s domestic violence or mass rape, [and]

..... we know that domestic violence and violence against women spike in any crisis.”

➤ That needs to be front and center in the world’s response

**(Sheryl Sandberg, founder of LeanIn.org and COO of Facebook))**

# UNSG : [Antonio Guterres](#)

April 6

”Peace is not just the absence of war. Many women under lockdown for [#COVID19](#) face violence where they should be safest: in their own homes.

Today I appeal for peace in homes around the world. I urge all governments to put women’s safety first as they respond to the pandemic”

Apr 10

“Covid 19 could reverse the limited but important progress that has been made on gender equality and women’s rights. Women’s leadership and contributions must be at the heart of [#coronavirus](#) resilience & recovery efforts”

# India

## National Commission for Women (NCW)

- More than twofold rise in gender-based violence during the lockdown;. Factors compounding the situation include the confinement, financial worries due to the lockdown, and lack of access to alcohol.
- There has also been a threefold rise in police apathy towards women complaints, with the police busy with lockdown orders.

Childline India helpline received more than 92,000 calls between 20-31 March, asking for protection from abuse and violence.

The extended confinement has also trapped children with their abusers at home.

## Some Instances of Action

- [National Commission for Women](#) relaunched a [WhatsApp](#) number for the duration of the lockdown. This would allow women to contact them for help related to domestic violence through messages.
- [Odisha Police](#) has launched a drive to contact and ascertain the status of all previous cases of domestic violence in the state.
- In [Pune](#), perpetrators of domestic violence will be institutionally quarantined.

and hopefully, ... There is an increasing amount of discussion now happening..

## **Education**

- As COVID-19 forces millions girls out of school, rising drop-out rates will disproportionately affect adolescent girls.
- This will increase gender gaps in education and lead to increased risk of exploitation, early and unintended pregnancy, and child, early and forced marriage

## **Health services**

- Reduced the already limited access of many girls and young women to sexual and reproductive health services
- Increased burden for pregnant women to deliver at home
- Decreased maternal, new-born and child health services
- Protective structures are disrupted and their families and communities are placed under stress by health and economic burdens.
- Children are also at risk of psychological distress at times of crisis as well as increased risk of violence, abuse exploitation and neglect.

# Gender based violence

- Quarantine measures imposed are putting girls and women at heightened risk of violence in the home.
- Social distancing measures affects vulnerable and at-risk children
- Economic stress on families puts children, and in particular girls, at greater risk of exploitation, child labour and gender-based violence.
- Lockdowns is also lock down girls' autonomy, reinforcing the attitudes and practices that hold back girls.

# Child protection and increased burden

- The lockdown increases children's risk of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect.
- Disease outbreaks increase girls' and young women's duties caring for siblings and elderly and ill family members, as well as For Covid. Women are providing the care to the ill, increasing their risk of infection, raising social financial, and psychological burden on them.

## Economic situation

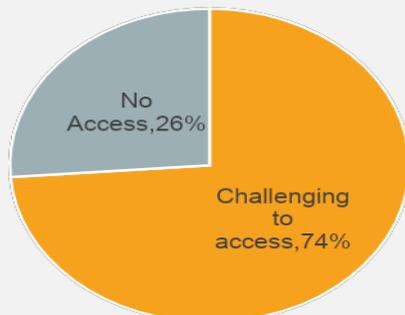
- Economic challenges is a threat to young women's work and business activity and expose them to increased risk of exploitation or abuse.
- Girls and young women facing severe economic shocks are more likely to take on high-risk work for their economic survival.

## Menstrual Hygiene : Disruption in distribution of pads

- Non-availability of Sanitary napkin poses a risk of infection among females.
- Due to shutdown of government schools, sanitary pads are not being distributed to adolescent girls
- Road transport restrictions had constrained wholesale distribution
- New production is likely to be at reduced capacity given the social distancing norms for factories many workers having gone back to villages



Access percentage to menstrual hygiene products



Source: Menstrual health alliance of India - Rapid survey April 2020

- Financial stress may lead families to prioritize other needs such as food or essential utility bills over purchasing menstrual hygiene materials.
- While some local production is happening, Cashflow, especially for SHG units is a looming challenge
- Mask production has taken priority for many small-scale manufacturers

# Water Availability and Sanitation facilities in Rural Homes

- There is restriction on movement due to lockdown. Women are facing difficulties in collecting water for daily cooking and household work.
- Increased handwashing would increase the need for water



- Social distancing norms have led to an increase in the time taken for water collection.
- Making sure drinking water remains safe to drink is an inherent concern
- Increased difficulty for women and girls for availing sanitation facilities if a toilet is not built at home

# Other Issues

## **1. Impact on Women Frontline Workers due to COVID (Nurses, ANM, ASHA AWW, Swachhagrahis)**

- Increased Load of work with meagre support – financial; social; protection

## **2. Women SHGs and their contribution to the Covid fight**

- Local production of masks; sanitary pads, handwash, sanitisers
- Working in community kitchens
- Spreading knowledge and curbing disinformation
- Local banking and financial services
- Social cohesion

# What is UNICEF doing; Some examples

1. **A adolescent vulnerability assessment** . It is available in English and all major Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Assamese, Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada and Odiya.

The rapid assessment seeks to understand the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by adolescents and youth across India during the ongoing lockdown in the fight against COVID-19. The assessment comprises of nine questions designed to give real-time grassroots data - spanning issues pertaining to healthcare, education, social security, employment, mental health, gender etc.

2. To ensure **continued access and consumption of Iron Folic Acid (IFA) tablets** is working with the Department of Women and Child Development and Department of Health and Family Welfare to ensure adequate supply of IFA tablets for children.

3. **Supporting States in issuing guidelines for continuity of essential health & Nutrition services**, including on NRCs, and community services.



#### 4. **Supporting Healthy Pregnancies and Safe delivery Counselling services`**



5. **UNICEF has supported the continuity of learning of students** through various digital and non-digital platforms. Around 21 million children have been reached in nine states.
6. **Daily tracking systems put in place in several states** (Bihar, Karnataka and Jharkhand) to track children who have been sent home from Institutions. States have initiated follow up of children in foster care and kinship care arrangements.
7. **Children on the Move:** Assam, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Bihar have started to conduct assessments and provide support to the administration for relief camp guidance. In Uttar Pradesh, around 1,000 children victims or at risk of child labour have received funds through the cash transfer scheme.

Thanks