



**Thematic Dialogue**  
**The crisis of gender-based violence against women and girls in the context of COVID 19**

**Concept Note**  
**March 29th, 2021**  
**10:00 – 11:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)**  
**19:00 – 20:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)**

**Background**

In 1995, during the Fourth World Conference on Women, 189 governments, representatives of intergovernmental organizations, thousands of activists, and civil society members identified violence against women as one of the main obstacles to achieving gender equality worldwide. In order to guarantee a life free of violence for all women and girls, concrete objectives were defined in the fourth area of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Despite the effort mentioned, gender-based violence still represents a significant threat against women and girls' physical, emotional, sexual, and economic well-being.

Beijing Platform for Action defines violence against women as “that [which] results in or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.” The Generation Equality Forum is part of the Beijing +25 review process and calls for urgent and expanded action through the realization of specific alliances focused on achieving commitments and specific solutions (Action Coalitions), focused on key issues for achieving gender equality, which one of them is gender-based violence.

Globally, 35 per cent of women have experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, or sexual violence by a non-partner.<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that of the 87,000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017 globally, more than half (50,000)

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence, p.2



were killed by intimate partners or family members.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, 15 million adolescent girls worldwide, aged 15–19 years, have experienced forced sex and based on data from 30 countries, only one per cent have ever sought professional help.<sup>3</sup>

As figures have shown, during the past decades, there has been an intensification of violence against women. Femicides, sexual and domestic violence, among other expressions of gender-based violence, are still suffered by millions of women and girls worldwide. Concerned about this situation, feminist groups, and women human rights defenders (WHRD) have challenged violence against women and have promoted a progressive agenda to achieve gender equality. Their efforts continuously face threats such as surveillance, false charges, sexual abuse, harassment, and even murder. This situation is exacerbated when WHRD challenges the cultural or religious stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality. We are perceiving the expansion of repressive measures by state and non-state actors - including organized crime, business groups and religious fundamentalisms – that attack women, people who question gender mandates and women human rights defenders. Hate speeches and public calls for violence against these groups are increasingly normalized under authoritarian regimes and by fascist actors in different regions.<sup>4</sup>

Gender-based violence is related to the unequal distribution of power and to the asymmetrical relationships that exist between men and women in our society: sociocultural and economic factors nurture a culture of violence against women and girls (VAWG); historical, social norms support male authority, control over women, and tolerance of VAWG. Gender inequalities in access to resources, formal employment, discriminatory national or family laws, and childhood exposures to violence are essential risk factors that threaten sustainable development achievement.

Violence is exacerbated by growing inequality, climate and ecological crisis, and economic policies that deepen the social and economic vulnerability and marginalization of women and their communities, particularly black, Indigenous, ethnic minorities, and those experiencing work-based discrimination. Due to an

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019). [Global Study on Homicide 2019](#),

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF (2017). [A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents](#), p. 73, 82.

<sup>4</sup> *Mujeres Transformando radicalmente un mundo en crisis*, Un Marco de referencia para Beijing+25 elaborado durante una reunión estratégica de activistas feministas en la Ciudad de México, del 22 al 24 de agosto de 2019.

apparent rise in sexism and misogyny, violence against women has increased, including extreme forms of violence such as disappearances, torture, and femicides, which are widespread and happen with alarming impunity. Although we see an unprecedented level of awareness globally due to women survivors' mobilization of various forms of violence, violence has persisted and even deepened as the structural issues related to women's oppression have not been seriously addressed.

It has been demonstrated that gender-based violence increases in times of crisis, and 2020 was defined by one that had a significant impact in all countries: the COVID-19 pandemic. The rights of women and girls must be guaranteed in all circumstances and, with special emphasis, in these types of situations. However, the confined living conditions, in-personal social contact, mobility restrictions and tensions generated by significant insecurity, health and money worries are exacerbating experiences of violence that already constituted a serious gendered social and public health problem. Moreover, it has also increased women's isolation from their support networks; all this has created additional barriers in accessing health, protection, and justice services.

Globally 243 million women and girls aged 15-49 have been subjected to sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in Covid-19 times.<sup>5</sup> In the current 'digital age,' cyberviolence is also all too common: 73% of women worldwide have been exposed or have experienced some type of online violence.<sup>6</sup>

By September 2020, 48 countries had integrated prevention and response to violence against women and girls into COVID-19 response plans, and 121 countries had adopted measures to strengthen services for women survivors of violence during the global crisis, but more efforts are urgently needed.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> UN Women. COVID-19 AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: ADDRESSING THE SHADOW PANDEMIC. Consultado en:

<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/policy-brief-covid-19-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=640>

<sup>6</sup> ONU Mujeres. Violencia contra mujeres y niñas en el espacio digital. Consultado en

<https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20mexico/documentos/publicaciones/2020/diciembre%202020/factsheet%20violencia%20digital.pdf?la=es&vs=1331>

<sup>7</sup> UN Women and UNDP (2020).



Effective measures to deal with this problem cannot be adopted without considering the dominant cultural model and symbolic reproduction processes that confer legitimacy on gender-based violence. Because the roots of the problem are structural, it is essential to implement public policies that will modify the mechanisms that lead to the perpetuation and propagation of gender-based violence and will engender an environment that is conducive to equality between women and men and respect for women's dignity and their human rights. In the same sense, strengthened women's movements are fundamental, but also legislative changes as timely statistics, and, of course, the support of society.

Without any doubt, violence against women is an obstacle to achieving equality, development, and peace. Overcoming gender-based violence against women and girls requires the involvement of several key actors such as the State, the private sector, civil society organizations, media, and academia, among others. The implementation of policies that address the structural roots of inequality, mainly those derived from discriminatory and violent patriarchal cultural patterns. For this reason, the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence can transform society and some of the most critical areas of work of the Beijing Platform regarding women and girls, are being reconfigured by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore with this action coalition we have a unique opportunity to set concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within the period of 2020-2025 to deliver tangible impact on gender equality and girls' and women's human rights.

### General objective

Create global and innovative multi-stakeholder recommendations related to the prevention and response to gender-based violence against women and girls worldwide, and to promote access to justice for victims and survivors, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Specific objectives

- To identify and make visible the main expressions of violence against women and girls in all their diversity and the current measures taken by the actors involved to eradicate them.
- To discuss the impact of multiple and intersecting forms discrimination against women and girls such as discrimination based on sex, disability, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, migrant status, geographic

location, and other socio-economic dimensions impact experiences of gender-based violence.

- To share local strategies and good practices related to the creation of enabling policy, legal and resource environments, implementation of evidence-driven prevention programming, provision of comprehensive services for survivors and ensuring that women’s rights organisations working to address GBV are financed, empowered, and enabled.

## Participants

- 1 moderator + 2 government representatives at ministerial level
- 4 representatives from civil society
- 2 international organizations (UN agency)
- 1 representative from the private sector

## Format

This virtual dialogue will be held on March 29 from 10:00 – 11:30 am (MEX time) and from 19:00 – 20:30 (MEX time). The discussion will be driven by an experienced feminist moderator who will direct the conversation between nine different stakeholders and the audience to ensure a diversity of views. The audience will be able to interact by using the chat on the platform. Simultaneous interpretation will be available.

Suggested time	Proposed activity
10:00 – 10:05 19:00 – 19:05	Welcome and panelist’s presentation.
10:05 – 10:45 19:05 – 19:45	Moderated discussion around 3 guiding questions. Participants have between 3-4 minutes to answer each question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the gender-based violence context changed since the creation of the Beijing Platform of Action?</li> <li>• Which are the current priorities related to violence against women? What urgent actions do we need to promote between governments, movements, and society, to prevent violence against women and girls?</li> <li>• What are some innovative interventions at the local level to transform social norms that perpetuate GBV? Which</li> </ul>

	<p>concrete solutions or alternatives can be proposed to overcome the gender-based violence crisis in the COVID-19 context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What actions on cultural transformation are central so that existing laws and public policies are effective to address, sanction and eradicate violence?</li> </ul>
<p>10:50 – 11:20 19:50 – 20:20</p>	<p>Q&amp;A session. Moderator reads selected questions from the chat.</p>
<p>11:20 – 11:30 20:20 – 20:30</p>	<p>Closing: moderator thanks participants and audience.</p>