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1.) What is happening and what needs to happen to build a fairer society after this pandemic?

We have to look at the impacts of the pandemic crisis much closer under a gender-lens. There is no crisis that is gender-neutral. Crises reinforce all existing inequalities. There is evidence that particularly women and girls were hard hit by covid-19 crisis.

Economic impacts

Economic consequences are especially felt in the professions in which women are over-represented. 70% of the personnel in social and care professions are women and they work in lower-paid jobs than men. Additionally women perform three times as much unpaid care work as men. This in itself is a discrimination. But during the time of lockdown many working women, also shouldering home schooling for the children and caring for the elderly at home, are threatened with a loss of earnings. They were no longer able to pursue paid work to the full extent which can have considerable economic long-term consequences, like less social security protection, less savings, more old age poverty. It also could mean a step down in the career.

Therefore a compensation for loss of earning would be a crucial measure for those who suffered from school closure and caring for relatives at home.

The next possible step can only be that the professional care work must be upgraded by adequate salaries and the working conditions of the employees must be improved. Informal care work has to be financially recognized, the stimulus package has to target women more clearly.

Covid-19 response policy

Another point is to include women in the pandemic preparedness and response policy, to ensure women's representation at national decision-making. In Germany the famous expert council for recommending a gradual return to social normality after the lockdown period was a team of 29 men and only 2 women. Gender-based needs have to be taken in consideration to overcome the crisis in all parts of society.

Learning from Corona must therefore mean reducing the systematic gender inequalities.

2) What needs to be put in place so that in future pandemics and other crisis, the most fragile in our communities are protected?

Existential worries, quarantine and restricted freedom of movement lead to a significant increase in domestic violence. In most cases, the victims are women. Since they were only able to leave the house with restrictions, they were also more at the mercy of the violent family member and could not get help because they were cut off from helplines and public services. Additionally they were more dependent to the abusers due to financial loss.

The pandemic brought evidence e.g. that in some areas the capacity of Women's Shelters were too low or that shelters had closed down to avoid the spreading of the disease. Therefore additional resources are needed. This also applies to the psychological and medical care of those affected by sexualized violence and also for sexual and reproductive health services for pregnant women. Additional resources

are also needed for women and girls with disability because they are at greater risk during Covid crisis and had to face more discrimination and violence and barriers accessing education and services related to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health. They would need accessible hotlines to reach family members and care personal to check routinely on them to ensure their safety. They suffer the most from the isolation and would need a network of caregivers who support them even it is only on digital calls.

Overall, it has to make clear to the state parties that the Istanbul Convention continues to be valid in times of crisis, and that they are obliged to make sure that the infrastructure for the requirements and measures of the Istanbul Convention are put in place in an increased capacity to meet the heightened demand during a pandemic crisis. This analysis should be part of the response to the crisis preparedness.