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The UN global framework for the immediate socio-economic response to the COVID crisis provides the strategic intent and blueprint for the operationalization at country level of the UN Secretary-General's report on the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis.

The UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) is a UN interagency finance mechanism launched by the UNSG to support low- and middle- income programme countries in overcoming the health and development crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. A first call for proposals to the MPTF was launched mid-April 2020.

Although a global health pandemic, the impacts of COVID-19 are clearly spilling over into many other facets of life quickly increasing unemployment, domestic violence, lack of information and limited opportunities to participate in decision-making including on matters related to the crisis itself.

Based on the MPTF call for proposals UN agencies are to develop Joint Programmes between not more than four recipient UN agencies, to finance prioritized initiatives. UN Country Teams (UNCTs) are tasked to apply the UN approach to gender equality to the proposal, as well a gender lens on the description of the problem that projects aims to address.

COVID-19 and its impacts will be strengthened through the MPTF, it presents an opportunity to increase assistance to those women who are most often left behind.

This note provides a brief overview of the underlying structural inequalities and experiences of violence and discrimination faced by indigenous women and girls. It highlights recommended actions that Resident Coordinators and UNCTs could adopt under Windows 1 and 2 of the MPTF to support government efforts at addressing the health and socio-economic dimensions of the crisis. The note also advocates for measures that can be accelerated in the longer term.

The crisis at hand will exacerbate inequalities especially in vulnerable settings such as indigenous communities. Being born an indigenous woman or girl can be a life sentence of poverty, exclusion and discrimination, largely rooted in historical circumstances of marginalization. Personal and situational circumstances of sex, race, ethnicity, disability and location often combine to place indigenous women and girls on the brink. When one or more of the factors overlap as is often the case the risk of social exclusion and marginalization is not only perpetuated, but also acquires an enduring quality that can span over a lifetime and across generations.

The review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action reveals diverse forms of vulnerability faced by indigenous women and girls. These include disproportionate impacts on well-being resulting from large-scale land grabbing and dispossession because of unequal access to and control over land and natural resources, coupled with limited mobility, access to justice and decision-making power in the household and community.¹

¹ Report of the Secretary General. Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. E/CN.6/2020/3. Available at <https://undocs.org/E/CN.6/2020/3>

are twice as likely to die as a result of pregnancy and childbirth in contrast to the general population.⁹

- x Stay at home orders have resulted in an escalation of domestic violence.¹⁰ In the context of COVID-19, women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are at greater risk of being subjected to violence. For instance, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples finds that indigenous women are significantly more likely to experience rape compared to non-indigenous women and more than one in three indigenous women are raped during their lifetime.¹²
- x Ensure that women and girls have access to COVID-19 public health messages: The public health response must include the formulation and dissemination of targeted messaging on issues that address the different contexts and concerns of indigenous women and girls.
- x Proposals from UNCTs must include interventions which support indigenous women [access to quality treatment, infection control and prevention measures, especially when they lack medical insurance. Simultaneously, financial and human resources should be enhanced to protect the sexual and reproductive health of indigenous women, especially before, during and after childbirth, to help reverse high rates of maternal mortality.
- x National Plans for Combating COVID-19 must include activities and funds for addressing limited access to health, including reproductive health services, that indigenous women and adolescent girls frequently face, as well as the poor health outcomes of those who have experienced early marriage and female genital mutilation.
- x During testing and treatment for COVID-19, health systems must be mindful of the importance of traditions and values in health delivery.
- x Proposals must furthermore include designated safe spaces for indigenous women to safely report abuse. They must also integrate violence prevention efforts and essential services into COVID-19 response plans, while supporting culturally appropriate shelters and other indigenous organizations on the front lines of the response.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ UN Women. 2020. COVID 19 and violence against women girls. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls>

¹¹ UN Women. 2020. Statement of Executive Director. Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic. Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>

¹² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2014, A/HRC/30/41

- x Consult indigenous communities to secure their views on equitable approaches for designing, reviewing and implementing stimulus packages.
- x Address malnutrition among indigenous children and meet their ongoing food and educational needs through school meal programmes and access to learning opportunities. In doing so, take full account of potential discrimination against indigenous girls in the distribution and implementation of such services.

When starting the recovery phase, UN country teams should support governments in accelerating the comprehensive implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, including participation of women in public life; free, prior and informed consent; bodily autonomy; self-

