APWLD Survey on COVID-19
Introduction

APWLD conducted a survey with the objectives to better understand the challenges that have emerged from the diverse range of contexts of our members, partners and their communities in the COVID-19 pandemic, how we are responding to the crisis, and what collective actions we can take as a feminist network to contribute to addressing it. This document aims to present the diverse responses we have gathered from across the region.

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Key Findings

- The most marginalised groups are bearing the hardest hits of the crisis; people depending on daily income are losing livelihoods across the region, facing increasing food insecurity
- Women and girls are facing increasing care work burden and rising cases of domestic violence
- Evidence from Philippines and India are signaling particularly militaristic and authoritarian responses from the governments
- Public health systems across the region are under significant pressure, with many of them operating beyond capacity
- The peoples’ movements are facing unprecedented challenges, with limited mobility and looming recession
- APWLD member and partners have been providing vital support to local communities, from information distribution, to direct relief packages, to innovative solutions such as neighbourhood resource exchange systems
Basic Information
65 Responses
From 20 countries
Responses with subregional breakdown

- South Asia: 38.5%
- Southeast Asia: 33.8%
- East Asia: 7.7%
- Central Asia: 16.9%
- Pacific: 3.1%
Limitations

- **Timing**
  - 23 March - 3 Apr: the beginning of the waves lockdowns in most countries in the region

- **Constituencies**: some constituencies, such as women with disabilities, dalits women, indigenous women, and LBTQIA+ peoples, have not responded to the survey; we will ensure the inclusion of their voices in following steps.
2 Concerns & State Responses
Vulnerable Groups

Sex workers
Informal workers
Women and girls
Farmers
Unorganised workers
Women with disabilities
Daily wagers

Homeless people
Indigenous peoples
Migrants
Domestic workers
Children
Pregnant women

LGBTQIA+ persons
Urban poor
Undocumented persons
Refugees
Domestic violence survivors
The elderly
Small business owners
Healthcare workers
Main concerns: personal level

- Work-difficulties
- Immobility
- Mental-health
- Uncertainties
- Livelihood
- Healthcare
- Essentials
- Information
- Mental-health

- Food-security
- Mental-health
- Work-difficulties
- Healthcare
- Debt
- Care-work
"Even (though) the Government has made a decision to postpone the payment of bank loan and its interest by 90 days, the banks responded that they haven't received any resolution regarding the decision of delay. Which was confusing for the people...there was a case that a woman who is a wholesaler at the market, couldn't pay the utility cost and (the) owner stopped the electricity. This would be very common."

Sarankhukhuu Sharavdorj, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia
Main concerns: community level

SEA

SA

CA

EA

Pacific
“...many migrants were infected even to the extent of their health. Many those exposed to COVID19 were afraid to come forward to be tested due to the documentation status which then impacted others”

© Prema Arasan, Tenaganita, Malaysia
Main concerns: state level
“Government gives suggestions for work from home to all people, but not all of the companies allow that, so for the workers they stay at work, because if they do not, they will not be paid. I think it's good, government to give suggestion of Stay at Home but they also has to think the possibility what would happen next such as they supposed to be also suspension utility payment/credits, distribution food for free, spray disinfectant everywhere including people's house, distribute mask and hand sanitizer, give more attention for healthcare professional, etc”

鳉 Kartika Sari, Indonesia
“All women and girls (will be impacted) - as GBV will increase. Access to justice will be severely curtailed as mobility of women is decreased due to lock down or reduced services. Women living with disabilities, LBT, rural women, urban poor women-all those who are experiencing discrimination and violence will face further hardships. Most of the women are working in the informal or formal sector-they will be impacted. Women are in the medical services sector- they will be impacted the most. Working from home options will not work for all”

 mê Nalini Singh, FWRM, Fiji
Major measures taken by governments to address COVID-19

- Travel restriction and movement (85%)
- Lockdown (75%)
- Additional COVID-19 budget (65%)
- Free test and contact tracing (50%)
- Food distribution (30%)
- Suspension in utility payment or credits (25%)
- Cash distribution (20%)
- Paid leave to all workers as a policy (15%)
- Others (25%)
Rating of government responses

Subregional Averages

Central Asia
Southeast Asia
East Asia
South Asia
Pacific

1 (highly insufficient and ineffective)
3
4 (very sufficient and effective)
5
“...the local government of Pasig has (good practice of) a comprehensive response through participatory and evidence-based governance. Food packs for the poor, mobile kitchen, mobile markets, transportation for frontliners, drones for mass disinfectant etc. Marikina LGU has a molecular laboratory for mass testing even from adjacent provinces and has both of locally produced testing kits. Both initiatives were disliked / or disapproved by the national government. Pasig lgu is subject to investigation of natl govt. there are others slightly like them but doing their best to respond, Mandaluyong feed its constituencies with fresh veggies from farmers instead of noodles and canned goods..”

◇ Daisy Arago, Philippines
“(the government’s responses have been) random unplanned uncoordinated insensitive fiats”

Albertina Almeida, India
"Just yesterday after the Prime Minister announced a BDT 5000,00,00,000.00 compensation for wages, jute mill workers whose factory was suddenly shut off without payment, led to the workers obviously demanding wages for the days they worked. The police fired on the demonstrators, killing one and injuring others. My fear that neither the administrators nor the politicians will ensure (the) well being of the most marginalised, specially women."

Khushi Kabir, Nijera Kori, Bangladesh
3 Local Response & Feminist Response
Local responses from members and partners

- Providing immediate relief and support for local communities
- Documentation of human rights violations e.g. rising domestic violence
- Awareness-raising campaigns
- Addressing mental health concerns of staff as well as community members
- National policy monitoring and advocacy
Feminist Response to COVID-19

should be:

- **Women and People-centered**, using intersectionality analysis to map differentiated impacts of vulnerable groups that are already affected by intersecting power of globalisation, fundamentalism, militarism and patriarchy
- **Create women’s spaces** and ensure women meaningfully engage in decision making process
- Ensuring all messages, measures and policies in tackling the pandemic are **gender sensitive and responsive**
- **Aims for structural change**, including dismantling neoliberal capitalism that prolong the pandemic crisis. Redefine economies that work for the people, including tackling the underlying issues of women’s burden to paid and unpaid care works, as well as providing sustained and long-term economic relief for the most marginalised such as universal access to public services and universal social protection
- Continuously monitor and document situations in the community, including **monitoring of human rights violations and building collective actions** to expose and address the issue.
- Proactive in thinking through **community-based solutions** rooted in feminist organising.
- Psycho-social intervention are needed to **address the issue of emotional distress and mental well-being** and to uplift the morale of women region-wide who may feel isolation due to narratives of governments and corporations
- Strengthening **solidarity and care** within feminists movements and between peoples movements
“Feminist response to COVID19 should take into consideration or map out the most "vulnerable" or most affected communities doubly impacted by the crisis, on top of what they have been experiencing because of neoliberalisation, fundamentalism and militarisation. It should look at the needs of women, their families and communities in a comprehensive manner, while at the same time based on scientific analyses and solutions. There is a need for a Asia Pacific wide advocacy for general and specific demands, and we should implement them asap to not only foster solidarity but also to uplift the morale of women region-wide who may feel isolation and helplessness, due to the narratives of governments and corporations.

 расположен Cristina Palabay, Philippines
4 Suggestion for APWLD & Follow-up actions
APWLD can support its members through promoting solidarity as well as collectively build and implement evidence-based advocacy in national, regional and global level.

- Monitor and document the evolving situation of women’s human rights in this pandemic crisis throughout Asia and the Pacific region to further expose the authoritarian regime and capitalist response to the crisis. Further highlight this situation in international and regional fora or to appropriate institutions.
- Supporting APWLD members through providing guidance to members through statements and position papers, augment the efforts of members at local and national level, supporting and highlighting activities of APWLD members regarding COVID-19 and build collective strategy.
- Conduct Regional activities to include members’ assessment, lessons learned and recommendations in dealing with COVID-19 crisis. This activity can facilitate spaces for women to share concerns and strategies to keep themselves safe within the family and communities, and form as therapy and solidarity for participants. The result of lesson learnt can be published or can be a form of therapy for participants.
- Make educational materials regarding the virus and other socio-economic rights that are connected to the crisis that can be easily understood by ordinary people.
- Provide economic relief to the communities. APWLD can support vulnerable women by providing mini-grants to organizations that work on the protection of women’s rights in the time of COVID-19.
- Build conversation with donors to ensure grassroots women’s rights organisations can be supported and not furtherly burden due to this COVID-19 crisis.
• Working Groups on
  ○ Feminist organising
  ○ Policy monitoring and evaluation
    All APWLD members are invited to join these working groups. Please contact the secretariat via email.

• Feminist COVID-19 storybook (documentation and policy advocacy)
• Online consultations with UN mandate holders (documentation and policy advocacy)
• Participation in global feminist networks’ COVID-19 responses (solidarity and collective actions building)
In solidarity.

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