The effects of COVID-19 on Sexual and Reproductive Health and its impact on Gender Based Violence

SRH and GBV lifesaving response plan –by UNFPA Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean

Aurora Noguera-Ramkissoon, Liasson Officer for Trinidad and Tobago
Pilar de la Corte Molina, SRH Advisor, SROC
May 29, 2020  PANCAP-PAHO Webinar
SRHR/GBV and COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 Pandemic response

Continuity of essential SRH and GBV services
SRHR and GBV during COVID-19 pandemic

- Scale down/closing of SRH/GBV case management services and safe shelters
- Supply chain disruptions (shortage of contraceptives & other SRH commodities)
- Equipment and SRH staff diverted to fulfill other needs
- Limited access to maternal and newborn care, family planning, STI/HIV and GBV services (care and referrals)
- Lockdowns or restrictions to movement resulting in limited or no timely access to HFs and an increase in GBV
- Fear to go to HFs for SRH services
- Women and girls living with perpetrators
SRHR and GBV during COVID-19: the impact

Unintended pregnancies
Unsafe abortions
Increase incidence of STIs including HIV
Increase in GBV and SEA
Inc. Pregnancy complications
Inc. Maternal and newborn deaths

Most affected?

Women, adolescents, migrants, refugees LGBTQI, PLVIH, sex workers, people living with disabilities, lowest wealth quintiles
UNFPA’s and COVID-19

UNFPA’s priorities
1. Continuity of SRHR services and interventions, including protection of SRH health workforce
2. Addressing gender-based violence
3. Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and reproductive health commodities
Continuity of SRH services and interventions, including protection of the health workforce- response to date

- Agreement with the Caribbean Regional Midwives Association (CRMA) for technical capacity strengthening of its Members across the region with focus on maternal and new-born care
- Agreements with IPPF Affiliates (Caribbean Family Planning Association, Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago) to reorganize their service delivery model and ensure the continuity of SRH services through remote counselling, in-person consultations and home deliveries of methods. Interventions: FP, HIV counselling and testing, STI syndromic treatment, GBV safe identification, care and referral, awareness raising
- Agreement with Reprolatina- technical guidance of IPPF affiliates
- Procurement of PPEs for IPPFs and MoHW (Jamaica)
Ensuring the supply of modern contraceptives and other reproductive health commodities - response to date

- Support to Ministries of Health to assess and manage the risks of stock outs of contraceptives to ensure the continuous supply of these products in the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Through the UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund (UN COVID-19 MPTF) UNFPA will procure contraceptives (injectables) in order to ensure the availability of this contraceptive in Jamaica.
Addressing GBV- Response to-date

- UNFPA is enhancing current **inter-agency coordination mechanisms**, while taking the lead in advising national authorities on GBV mainstreaming into their COVID-19 responses.
- The SROC is conducting a **mapping of GBV and SRH services** in all the countries to inform rapid needs assessments and the development/update of **GBV referral pathways**.
- UNFPA collaborated with UN Women and PAHO on the development of **Guidelines on Infection Prevention and Control Measures for Shelters for GBV survivors in the Caribbean** and is in the process of procuring PPEs for service providers and beneficiaries of assistance.
Addressing GBV- Response to-date

- In collaboration with LACRO, the SROC has been part of the development and revision of **Guidelines for the Provision of Remote Services for GBV Survivors**.
- The SROC is collaborating with LACRO on the development of an **Advocacy Brief on the criticality of GBV Service Provision during COVID-19**
- The SROC is working towards ensuring that **SRH responses throughout the region integrate GBV service provision**, by providing technical support to implementing partners and governments, and ensuring health frontline workers will be trained to safely identify and refer GBV survivors.
- **Suriname** has started collaboration with UNDP toward ensuring a coordinated response to GBV during COVID-19 by providing financial and technical support to the Ministries of Justice, Police and home Affairs.
- **UNFPA** is providing technical support to the National Task Force for the Prevention of Sexual Violence in **Guyana**.
Addressing GBV- Response to-date

- The SROC hosted a webinar session on GBV during COVID-19, service mappings and referral pathways for Belize, Guyana and Barbados and OECS, enhancing coordination to respond effectively.
- In the Bahamas, UNFPA is updating existing GBV referral pathways and continuing to support in the response to GBV in line with the response plan to Hurricane Dorian in 2019.
- In Jamaica, UNFPA is supporting the existing helpline response, with different actions including capacity building and, in collaboration with UN Woman, the operationalization of a new toll-free hotline number; updating existing GBV referral pathways; and supporting the operationalization of shelters.
GBV response in Trinidad and Tobago

• On March 12, 2020, Trinidad and Tobago recorded its first case of COVID-19. The borders were subsequently closed and Social Distancing measures were put in place in response to COVID-19.

• With the implementation of these social distancing measures, all first responders to GBV, including the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service noted an increase in the reported incidence of GBV, including increased reports of abuse of children.

• UNFPA responded by conducting a rapid assessment of service provision looking specifically at who is doing WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and for WHOM:

• Service Mapping
GBV response in Trinidad and Tobago

The mapping of the services and the identification of the needs resulted in the mobilization of resources through the Spotlight Initiative. This included:

• The provision of telemedicine services by the Family Planning Association of Trinidad and Tobago (FPATT).
• Personal Protective Equipment and telecommunication support to the Medical Research Foundation.
• Telecommunication support to Rape Crisis Center to facilitate tele-psychology services.
• Telecommunication support to the Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CADV) to facilitate Hotline and GBV Case Management services.
• The implementation of UNWomen’s Women’s Small Grants to support CSO first responders, particularly the shelters
GBV response in Trinidad and Tobago

The mapping of services also resulted in:

- The provision of computers for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Services’ GBV units by UNDP
- Support from UNWomen and the IOM to address hygiene supplies for over 101 local sex workers
- Support from the Pan American Development Foundation and Living Waters Community in the provision of food support for 44 migrant sex workers
- Food support and hampers for local sex workers and people living with HIV by the Catholic Church and the National AIDS Coordinating the Committee
- Direct technical support in the **development of Referral Pathways**, GBV Referral Pathway can be found here: Referral Pathway
SRH and GBV-risk communication

- The **dissemination of key messages** through social and traditional media containing contextualized messages on GBV prevention, mitigation and response as well as SRHR is taking place in collaboration with key partners (76 products which included podcasts, radio clips, leaflets and cue cards, illustrated posters and video animations)

- Agreement with the Barbados Council for the Disabled- adaptation of the communications materials for PWD aiming to increase awareness of PWD on SRH, GBV and COVID-19 and impact on the disabled community (regional reach)
SRH and GBV communications

#COVID19
A state of emergency, the quarantine and self-isolation restrictions, are not an excuse for violence. Say no to violence and keep your community safe.

COVID-19
If you were forced to have sex... go to a health facility as soon as possible. They can offer you counselling and care and help you to prevent a pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. Services are safe and guarantee you privacy.
SRH and GBV-upcoming response

● UNFPA is in the process of developing integrated SRH/GBV Guidelines for Shelters and Safe Houses for GBV Survivors in the region

● UNFPA is currently developing an online capacity building tool in the form of a Webinar Series. Topics will include remote GBV Service Provision, Safe Identification and Referral of GBV Survivors by Non-GBV Specialists/Psychological First-Aid, as well as a launch of the Regional Shelter Guidelines

● Continue the developing/updating Referral Pathways (SRH/GBV) across the region

● Increased GBV technical support for the Response for Venezuelans (R4V) Platform, ensuring coordination and visibility for the Caribbean region

● Adolescents and Youth Rapid assessment in the Caribbean (comprehensive SRH/HIV/GBV needs and risks)
“Now is a time for solidarity, resolve and selflessness. We must not forget that there are people we may not immediately see, who are at great risk as a result of the consequences of the crisis”

Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director
Thank you for your attention

The United Nations reproductive health and rights agency