



[SDDirect COVID-19 Pandemic Blog Series](#)

Why we can and must continue to provide GBV case management services during the COVID-19 pandemic

Laura Martineau-Searle, GBV AoR Helpdesk Manager, introduces a new [GBV AoR Helpdesk report](#) authored by Robyn Yaker and Dorcas Erskine, which provides practical guidance on how we can continue to provide compassionate care and critical life-saving support to women and girls at risk of intimate partner violence during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We are in a global health emergency. As more countries around the world adopt aggressive measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), there is growing alarm that self-isolation and social distancing might inadvertently trigger a rise in another global pandemic – violence against women. According to the World Health Organisation, [one in three women worldwide experience physical or sexual violence](#). This violence is most often perpetrated by intimate partners behind closed doors in the home. While social distancing, quarantining and other stay-at-home measures will save many lives, for women who are experiencing intimate partner violence, the prospect of isolating indoors with a perpetrator, cut off from outside sources of support, can be terrifying.

It is possible, however, for survivors and those at risk of intimate partner violence to receive compassionate care and critical life-saving support during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Drawing from work on the frontline of humanitarian crises, the GBV AoR Helpdesk has published a practical paper – [GBV Case Management and the Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#). The authors present strategies for service providers to adapt their delivery modalities according to three levels of COVID-19 management strategies: containment, delay and mitigation.

- **Containment:** There is minimal disruption to public life, as governments focus on early detection, isolation and care of people infected with the virus. Face-to-face support for women at risk of/or experiencing intimate partner violence can continue under this strategy, provided there is strict adherence to infection, prevention and control protocols.

- **Delay:** There is significant disruption to public life, as governments call on symptomatic people to self-isolate and introduce social distancing strategies, such as asking people to work from home and closing recreational and leisure facilities. Face-to-face support for women at risk of/or experiencing intimate partner violence may only be possible in clinical facilities. This requires healthcare workers be trained to identify indications of GBV risk and exposure, handle disclosures in a confidential and compassionate way, and be prepared to provide

survivors with referrals for additional support. GBV service providers can facilitate this training, and also update referral pathways to support coordination and referral across health services, security and justice response, psychosocial care, and safe shelter. GBV service providers can also provide direct survivor support through safe and secure forms of telecommunications, e.g. prepaid mobile phones.

- **Mitigation:** As seen in China, Italy and Iran, aggressive strategies are deployed by governments seeking to stem widespread infection, which can include severe restrictions on freedom of movement. Maintaining face-to-face support is likely to be impossible, so GBV service providers can switch entirely to remote service modalities and liaise with the governmental authorities to ensure women are protected from GBV and can still leave the household if they experience violence or are at immediate risk.

For a more detailed exploration of how the humanitarian community can continue to provide compassionate care and critical life-saving support to women at risk of intimate partner violence during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, read the latest [GBV AoR Helpdesk report](#), and share as widely as possible. Please note this paper is a “living document”, which will be updated as the situation evolves. We invite GBV service providers to share their strategies for enhancing the safety of women and girls who are affected by this pandemic.

Contact the GBV AoR Helpdesk by emailing enquiries@GBViEHelpdesk.org.uk.

We welcome constructive feedback on this blog and are keen to collaborate with organisations that share our values and our commitment to ensuring no one is left behind as part of the COVID-19 response. If you would like to share feedback or explore opportunities for collaboration, please email laura.martineau-searle@sddirect.org.uk.