



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

### **Why we need to talk more about the potential for COVID-19 to increase violence against a women and girls**

[Dr Erika Fraser, Senior Technical Expert at SDDirect](#), introduces a [new report](#) exploring the impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic might have on violence against women and girls (VAWG).

Since its outbreak, the COVID-19 pandemic has infected hundreds of thousands of people across the world. We at [SDDirect](#) care deeply about the disproportionate effect the pandemic is likely to have on the lives of women and girls, and the potential for COVID-19 to increase their vulnerability to acts of violence.

Following a request from the UK Department for International Development, [the VAWG Helpdesk team](#) has undertaken a [rapid review of the evidence](#) of how the coronavirus might impact on violence against women and girls and lessons learnt from recent epidemics such as Ebola (in West Africa and DRC), cholera (in Yemen and Haiti) and Zika (in the Americas).

Emerging evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to increase the risks of:

- **Domestic violence**, with police reports in China showing that [domestic violence tripled](#) during the epidemic.
- **Violence against healthcare workers**, due to the serious stress that the pandemic places on patients, their relatives and other healthcare workers.
- **Racial and sexual harassment** (both online and offline), with anecdotal reports of targeted sexualised attacks against women of East Asian appearance.
- **Abuse and exploitation of vulnerable women workers**, including street-based sex workers and migrant domestic workers.
- **Sexual exploitation and violence** by state officials and armed guards.

We are particularly concerned at the impact the COVID-19 pandemic might have in development and humanitarian settings, where high-population density, poor water, sanitation and hygiene provision, and the inability to self-isolate make it extremely difficult to contain the spread of the virus. Women and girls are already vulnerable to [intimate partner violence in humanitarian settings](#), and the fear, tension and stress related to the COVID-19 outbreak will only intensify the risks they face in affected communities.

Evidence from [past epidemics](#) suggests the importance of a ‘twin track’ approach that combines support to organisations so they can continue their work to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, and integrating VAWG risk mitigation measures into sectoral responses (e.g. health, education, child protection, security and justice, social protection and job creation, and humanitarian responses).

The report also highlights examples of innovative practices to support survivors including through technological solutions in China and Italy, for example an [online manual](#) (in Chinese) with resources on how women can protect themselves from domestic violence during lockdowns.

For a more detailed exploration of the evidence on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on VAWG, please do read the report on the [Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on VAWG](#).

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](mailto:laura.martineau-searle@sddirect.org.uk).