

A wide range of S&J actors play important roles in pandemic response, beyond normal mandates, which brings new risks, challenges and opportunities for VAWG prevention and response in different roles. Given projected increases and new forms of VAWG related to COVID-19, and potential roles of S&J actors in driving and responding to it, all S&J programmes should consider their impact on VAWG and potential contributions to addressing it during COVID-19 response. HMG should undertake the following key steps and support governmental and non-governmental S&J partners to do the same.

Conduct a rapid gender and social inclusion analysis with an emphasis on intersections of VAWG, S&J and COVID-19

This involves [desk review of existing assessments](#) and additional data gathering where needed¹, drawing on [S&J specific gender analysis tools](#)². Key questions relating to VAWG are:

- What are pre-existing patterns of VAWG in the country/region? What are the current and expected changes in VAWG due to COVID-19 in the area?
- How are men, women, boys and girls affected differently by security and justice issues, institutions and programmes in the geographic context? How do other lines of exclusion intersect for these groups?
- How does VAWG intersect with S&J normally and how does COVID-19 impact on this?
- How are S&J actors currently engaged in preventing and responding to different forms of VAWG? Have these roles and services been affected by COVID-19? What adaptations offer potential to restore and expand services to meet needs under COVID-19.

Comply with the [International Development \(Gender Equality\) Act 2014](#) and rate new and adapted programming in response to COVID-19 according to the [OECD-DAC Gender Equality Marker \(GEM\)](#)

GEM 1: Gender equality is not the primary objective but there are gender-related secondary objectives and the project is gender-(and VAWG) sensitive, for example:

- Where military personnel help deliver healthcare responses to COVID-19, power imbalances mean that risks of SEAH perpetrated by the military are high whilst legacies of historical VAWG perpetrated by security forces or fear around a militarised environment further deter women from accessing treatment for COVID-19 or VAWG related health issues. Instituting reporting and accountability mechanisms, training for military personnel, appointment of safeguarding champions and female military staff in key roles can all reduce SEAH risks, whilst public information campaigns, civil-military engagement and alliances with local women's rights groups can provide reassurances to ensure that women benefit from health services provided.
- Security actors may be deployed to new roles under new emergency legislation and may be unaware of SEAH risks or their own roles in safeguarding. Female personnel may also be exposed to SEAH risks in performing these new roles. Security personnel can be more effective, reduce risks to themselves and help to reduce SEAH if they receive training on the implications of new legislation for VAWG and best practices in preventing SEAH within their new roles. Training may need to be designed and rolled-out with specific measures to ensure women's participation.

GEM 2: The main objective is to promote gender equality through targeted action (directly or indirectly addressing VAWG), for example:

- Programmes focussed on increasing women's participation in formal and community policing may face challenges in recruitment and retention due to COVID-19 as women have increased domestic caring responsibilities and face risks of VAWG at home and at work. Introducing additional safeguards for women undertaking policing could help overcome these challenges, including flexible working, reporting mechanisms and services to support survivors as well as measures to keep women working within S&J safe at work.
- Provision and uptake of S&J services for VAWG survivors may reduce due to restrictions on movement, diversion of funds and reduced staffing. Adapted programming can include innovative solutions to meet new needs and challenges, such as: legislation requiring perpetrators to leave home rather than survivors; increased helpline capacity and provision for online reporting to the police; creation of safe spaces and reporting mechanisms in accessible spaces like markets; online support for prosecution of VAWG-related crimes.

Apply international standards on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH), including zero tolerance, across all S&J programmes during the COVID-19 response.

A **gender and social inclusion analysis** should be conducted at implementation level to understand who is most at risk of SEAH during the COVID-19 response and steps needed to prevent and respond to SEAH, based on international safeguarding guidelines³ and [principles adapted specifically to the COVID-19 context](#)⁴. **This should include encouraging S&J partners to implement the standards. Safeguarding measures within S&J institutions and programmes could include:** monitoring, reporting and disciplinary mechanisms to counter impunity for VAWG perpetrated by S&J actors and to monitor S&J sector responses to counter SEAH more broadly; engagement with women's rights organisations; training for security staff on frontlines of COVID-19 response covering SEAH risk identification and mitigation in the context of health service delivery and enforcement activities; supporting female military personnel to play key roles in prevention of SEAH.



Reflect and report on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) commitments across COVID-19 response

[Security Council resolution 2242 \(2015\)](#) specifically recognized **health pandemics as part of the peace and security landscape**. S&J interventions should align with the relevant National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS as well as the [UK NAP on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2022](#). The pillars of **prevention of conflict, protection of women and girls, women’s leadership decision-making and participation in humanitarian response** are crucial. **UK NAP priority countries (Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan and Syria)** should continue significant work on WPS during COVID-19 response. HMG and partners should **consult and partner with women’s rights and women-led civil society organisations** so they can continue to take on critical roles in COVID-19 responses, influence provision of services and hold security and justice actors to account. **Exclusion of women from response planning and implementation would reduce the effectiveness of COVID-19 response generally as well as reducing its impact on VAWG⁵.**



Draw on emerging literature on VAWG in relation to security and justice and VAWG during pandemics/COVID-19

A [UNODC thematic guide on COVID-19, criminal justice and VAWG](#) identifies specific risks and adaptations needed across a range of S&J roles⁶ and is an essential guide in considering the range of related issues. Several other **key resources offer pandemic, health crisis or COVID-19 -specific lessons in specialised areas of S&J:**

- Military forces have worked to construct, supply and operate hospitals. [Recent work on militarisation of healthcare during emergencies](#) and [lessons from previous health emergencies, particularly Ebola](#), are key to identifying challenges and good practices⁷.
- ICRC has produced guidance on addressing VAWG related to the [management of COVID-19 quarantine centres](#)⁸
- [Emergency laws should be scrutinised](#) for impacts on VAWG and laws protecting women need to be implemented alongside these⁹. Legislative bodies and parliamentary oversight committees in affected countries should be supported to consider the gendered impacts of public health emergency laws and their impacts on drivers of VAWG
- **In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, patterns of VAWG may have more complex drivers whilst [security and justice institutions can address both conflict-related and other forms of VAWG during statebuilding and peacebuilding processes](#)¹⁰ and these remain relevant where COVID-19 response takes place in FCAS**



Consider the potential for long-term transformation within S&J due to COVID-19 and implications for VAWG

Emerging analysis presents some common challenges and opportunities across S&J that could have long term impacts on VAWG prevention and response.¹¹ The **legitimacy of security actors** is relevant more than ever under COVID-19, as they maintain law and order whilst ensuring essential goods distribution and implementing unpopular measures such as lockdowns, quarantines, separation of patients and prisoners, or contact tracing. This requires trust-building, engagement with a wider range of non-state actors, community-based approaches and cooperation with civil society, including women’s rights organisations. **This offers the prospect of a lasting shift towards collaborative and accountable S&J systems centred on people’s needs, including response to VAWG and this shift can be deliberately nurtured through S&J programming**, through community-based monitoring and policing, outreach and communication, developing non-coercive strategies for crowd management, and crucially **promoting roles of women within S&J to implement these**.

At the same time, **sweeping emergency powers raise prospects of curtailed freedoms in some countries and may be associated with new forms of VAWG as well as reduced capacities to respond**. S&J programming should engage at a policy level from an early stage to reduce the risk that COVID-19 is instrumentalised for in FCAS and develop programmes to mitigate negative impacts where possible.

¹ CARE Guidance Note on Rapid Gender Analysis

² Serrano, L. (2019) “[Integrating Gender in Project Design and Monitoring for the Security and Justice Sector](#)”, in Gender and Security Toolkit, DCAF (2010), [Gender in the criminal justice system: Assessment Tool](#), Criminal Justice Assessment Toolkit

³ The international safeguarding response since 2018 is based on adherence to one or both of the following sets of safeguarding standards: The IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/documents-public/guidelines-implement-minimum-operating>, underpinned by the IASC Six Core Principles Relating to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-six-core-principles-relating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>; The Core Humanitarian Standard <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

⁴ IASC (2020), [Interim Technical Note: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse \(PSEA\) during COVID-19 Response](#), Inter-Agency Standing Committee, WHO, UNFPA, UNHCR, WFP, IOM, OCHA, CHS Alliance, InterAction and the UN Victims Rights Advocate; Core Humanitarian Standard during COVID-19 <https://www.chsalliance.org/get-support/article/seah-in-the-covid-19-response/>.

⁵ Robertson, D (2020), [How to Make Women Count in the Response to Coronavirus: Lessons from the Women, Peace and Security agenda show the importance of women’s inclusion in the fight against COVID-19](#), USIP; GAPS-UK (2020), [Call to Action: Now and the Future COVID-19 and Gender Equality, Global Peace and Security: Immediate and Long-term Gender, Peace and Security Impacts](#), Gender Action for Peace and Security, UK

⁶ UNODC (2020), [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) Response: UNODC Thematic Brief on Gender-Based Violence Against Women and Girls](#), UNODC

⁷ Kamradt-Scott, A and Smith, F., (2020), [Military Assistance During Health Emergencies in McInnes, M., Lee, K., and Youde, J. \(2020\) The Oxford Handbook of Global Health Politics](#), Oxford University Press; Sandy, J., Schnabel, A., Sovula, H., Trepp, U., and Zumsteg, R. (2017), [The Security Sector’s Role in Responding to Health Crises: Lessons from the 2014–2015 Ebola Epidemic and Recommendations for the Mano River Union and Its Member States](#), The Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

⁸ ICRC (2020), [Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in COVID-19 Quarantine Centres: Recommendations and best practice](#), ICRC

⁹ Ndedi, A, (2020) [Framework in Ending Violence Against women and Girls with the Advent of the COVID 19 from an African Perspective](#), SSRN

¹⁰ Swaine, A., Spearing, M., and Murphy, M. Contreras, M. (2019) [Exploring the Intersection of Violence Against Women and Girls With Post-Conflict Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Processes: A New Analytical Framework](#), Journal of Peacebuilding and Development

¹¹ Csordas, V., [What is Security Sector Reform going to look like after COVID-19](#), Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF); Trenkov-Wermuth, C (2020), [How to Put Human Security at the Center of the Response to Coronavirus](#). USIP