Women's Political Participation: Guidance on COVID-19 Policy and Programme Responses

This document presents policy and programme opportunities for country offices, regional offices and headquarters to support women’s political participation and leadership during the COVID-19 crisis.

1. Conduct Global, Regional and Local Outreach, Advocacy & Experience Sharing

Convene and facilitate online discussions to share information, challenges and experiences in COVID-19 response and lessons learned (including from a gender perspective) between different stakeholders, including women in political decision-making (e.g. mayors, MPs, local councilors) and/or CSOs and women constituents. Collate different experiences and good practices.

- **Global level**: Leverage existing global networks and partners:
  o Convene webinars or remote discussions to facilitate exchanges between different groups on women’s political leadership and how decision-making forums are responding to C-19, including facilitating an e-discussion and live Twitter Chat on gendered impacts of C-19 on iKNOW Politics.
  o Convene webinars or remote discussions targeting country offices and partners on relevant and topical issues, including how parliaments and/or local governments from around the world are responding to C-19.
  o As a principle, ensure accessibility of webinars and communications by offering a variety of accessible formats (e.g. closed caption, braille, large print, audio, hotlines, text messaging, etc.).

- **Regional level**: Convene discussions in partnership with regional organizations bringing together different stakeholders, e.g. the Ibero-American Union of Municipal Leaders (UIM), UN Regional Commissions (ECOWAS; ESCWA), Parlatino, African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), the Arab Network for Women in Elections, or regional women’s parliamentary caucuses such as Ra’edat; and develop joint communication and advocacy tools on women’s leader’s role and contribution to the response (e.g. Latin American Task Force on Women’s Leadership).

- **Country level**: Country Offices may:
  o Convene remote national dialogues bringing together decision-makers and constituents/stakeholders, e.g. women in local councils, parliaments, CSOs, representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities, relevant line ministries/departments and constituents through virtual town halls (e.g. the Colombia CO, jointly with the network of women political leaders, will to identify specific needs for support through surveys).
  o Assess/promote women’s participation in high level task forces and provide data on representation of women ministers and other leaders in those groups.
  o Produce communication tools to increase the visibility of women legislators and leaders in responding to C-19 both at the national and the local level.
  o Share information and analysis produced by UN Women on C-19 with women leaders and elected members, such as knowledge products and policy briefs on the social economic impact of COVID 19.
and on increased violence against women, to inform and guide their gender sensitive interventions, policies and legislation.

2. Support Decision-Makers on Gender-Sensitive C-19 Responses with Knowledge Products

- Produce a primer outlining key issues for parliaments to consider when working on gender-sensitive C-19 responses including a simple list of concrete actions and messages.
- Develop corporate key messages on Women’s Political Participation & Leadership in C-19 response.
- Incorporate UN Women’s global and regional messaging into pledges and statements by political institutions (e.g. recent Parlatino Declaration).
- Incorporate key messages in Leadership and Governance’s COVID-19 Policy Brief and Programme Package; and all UN Women corporate and strategic positioning.
- Disseminate knowledge products to help mobilize political women leaders, parliaments or local governments to promote and commit to gender-sensitive responses to C-19 through initiatives and/or pledges (e.g., the Beijing+25/Generation Equality, Action Coalitions, WPL, AWLN, IPU).
- As a principle, ensure consideration for accessibility of knowledge products and communications for those with visual or hearing disabilities.

3. Amplify Women’s Voices in C-19 Response Through Social Media Initiatives

- Through global media monitoring, track statements by women Heads of State and Government, women leaders quoted, women’s representation in public appearances, cabinet teams communicating and working on C-19 response (e.g. undertaken weekly by WPP team and shared widely).
- Profile women Heads of State and/or Ministers/mayors (where possible) and C-19 response (e.g. on UN Women social media platforms and/or iKNOW Politics).
- Facilitate regular, virtual knowledge exchanges between colleagues in UN Women’s Community of Practice on women’s political participation (e.g. via Zoom meetings, Sharepoint, COP email list) to maintain connections between staff in different regions, share innovations and document good practices/lessons learned resulting from C-19 disruptions, collaborate on new initiatives, and strengthen UN Women’s capacity to respond to the needs of partners through programmes and partnerships.
- Support social media campaigns led by women political leaders with key messaging and dissemination of existing legislation and policies and available resources for women and their families during confinement on, e.g. self-care, prevention of and attention to violence against women during the crisis (e.g. a recent campaign in El Salvador jointly implemented by the Parliamentary Women Caucus and the National Association of Female Political Leaders of the Local Level, ANDRYSAS).

4. Provide Technical assistance on Gender-Sensitive C-19 Responses

- HQ and Regional Policy advice and technical assistance is available to COs and partners, upon demand, including on reprogramming or adapting ongoing programmes to support women’s political participation. Please reach out to the HQ team or your respective Regional Advisor for support.
- Provide on demand technical support to countries eligible for the MPTF window on women’s leadership in C-19 response as part of the country team proposal.
- Provide support to all UN Women corporate processes on C-19 and political participation as needed.
- At country level, technical support to be made available to women elected at all levels on gender analysis of executive decrees and bills related to state emergencies (e.g. Colombia CO is collecting decrees, laws and public statements to review and inform women political leaders’ response).
• Technical experts are available to support decision-making bodies with gender-responsive budgeting for economic relief/aid packages as part of C-19 prevention and response as needed (e.g. Colombia CO to tailor UN Women’s GRB training curriculum for C-19 response and public procurement).
• Virtual trainings made available to decision-makers on gender-sensitive C-19 response (e.g. Argentina at Cabinet level and Cameroon with MPs and mayors).
• COs/ROs to help compile good and innovative practice examples of gender responsive C-19 responses and action to promote and protect women’s political participation and share with other regions.

5. Coordination on Electoral Assistance in COVID-19 Response and Programmes

• HQ to co-convene UN partners to ensure gender dimensions are included on corporate messaging and country re/programming on electoral assistance (e.g. through ICMEA).
• Provide gender analysis on UN partner’s assessments of Covid-19 impact on electoral operations and formulation and impact on electoral support activities in the Covid-19 context (on demand).
• COs to help assess and address political repercussions by encouraging dialogue and consensus building among electoral stakeholders around elections including with CSOs and women’s organizations.
• When elections take place, in coordination with UNDP, UN DPPA/EAD and other UN Agencies involved in EA, CO teams to ensure compliance with protocols from national authorities charged with the health/security/logistics when providing support to electoral stakeholders including:
  o Minimize spread of COVID-19 during through strict protocols and by encouraging the adoption of election-specific sanitary and health regulation. For example, direct operational costs to include procurement of masks and hand sanitizers to ensure safety of staff and partners (e.g. in Cameroon and to be replicated in other countries supported); and ensure social distancing measures applied during meetings and/or capacity building activities (e.g. BRIDGE training held in CAR).
  o Enhance advocacy and communication to remote areas and underrepresented groups of women (e.g. community radio outreach in Cameroon; CSO’s platforms and WhatsApp groups in Mexico and Nigeria; and media training in Brazil).
  o Strengthen gathering and analysis of sex-disaggregated data (as well as data disaggregated by other demographic details such as age, race, disability) and enhance early response through convening multi-stakeholder dialogues and coordination platforms (e.g. Cameroon platforms in 10 regions).

• When elections are postponed:
  o Ensure close coordination with UN partners on the ground to ensure UNW programme activities are aligned with new timelines.
  o Provide gender analysis on UN assessments of the impact of COVID-19 to ensure women’s participation and that UN recommendations aim to enhance inclusion.
  o Support the adaption of existing materials, or the development of alternative communication plans and information materials, as needed, especially if virtual tools may be required (e.g. Bolivia in partnership with ACOBOL will adapt training tools for virtual ToTs in preparation of candidate trainings; and Mexico CO is considering virtual training materials for aspirants).
  o Provide technical support on gender mainstreaming in the development and implementation of conflict/violence prevention and mitigation mechanisms in electoral projects (e.g. Mexico CO where State elections might be postponed, the CO will enhance technical support to State governments to implement the existing protocol on violence against women in politics).
  o Technical support available to country offices to develop Peace Building Fund project proposals for 2021 funding window, to ensure specific attention is given to prevent and mitigate violence against women in elections.

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