

Responding to COVID-19 Pandemic

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COVID-19 Crisis Aggravates Violence Against Women

From the onset of the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus and throughout the lockdown period, EuroMed Feminist Initiative has adapted to swiftly respond to the needs of women who have been struggling to come to terms with the additional pressure caused by the pandemic which, in most cases, has exacerbated their already vulnerable situations.

With reports of increasing rates of gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 lockdown, EuroMed Feminist Initiative members in all countries have directed their efforts to adjust the provision of services and guidance, and bring much needed support at all levels to many women at a time when the pandemic crisis is aggravating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.

The increase in the rates of domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdown in many countries of the Euro-Med region is alarming. From Sweden to Morocco, from France to Tunisia, from Italy to Egypt, calls to helplines are soaring and women in precarious situations are finding themselves under immense psychological and social pressure.

EuroMed Feminist Initiative members and partners have undertaken a wide range of actions and support mechanisms to respond to the challenges posed by the pandemic and the governmental lockdowns.



The Euro-Med Region Hit Hard by the Negative Impact of COVID-19 on Women

The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls has been alarming to say the least. Women account for a large proportion of the working force in sectors such as healthcare and services, putting them at high risk of infection. The confinement imposed by many countries in the Euro-Med region has resulted in situations where women are enduring increasing levels of domestic violence without any means of escaping from the clutches of the perpetrator.

In Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, cases are soaring. A 180% increase in reported cases has been registered in Lebanon; physical violence against women has increased by 36% in Morocco; a 33% increase in domestic violence has been reported in Jordan, whereas in Tunisia violence against women has increased five-fold since March 2019.

In France, violence against women and girls has risen by 32%, with Paris registering an increase by 36%. Despite the creation of alternative focal points to receive complaints from victims, service

provision remains insufficient. Moreover, many trials of perpetrators of violence have been delayed, while some have been released before being judged, putting their victims under renewed threat.

In Spain, calls reporting cases of domestic violence have increased by 60% in April 2020 compared to the previous year.

In Italy, the COVID-19 lockdown has had significant repercussions, leading to an increase by 73% in the number of emergency calls reporting domestic violence. The national helpline for victims of gender-based violence has received 5031 calls, with Tuscany and Lombardi being the most affected regions.



Our Response

Distribution of Health Kits to Women in Vulnerable Communities

EuroMed Feminist Initiative members and partners in Lebanon have distributed hygiene kits supplied under the *Madad for Women program* to women in vulnerable communities across Lebanon. A thousand women in Beirut, Mount Lebanon, Akkar, and North Lebanon have been provided with dignity and hygiene kits, and 10 Social Development Centers with items that provide safe protection against the COVID-19 virus, including medical gloves, detergents for medical use, face masks, and other items that guarantee personal protection and a safe functioning working environment at the centers.



Support, Counselling and Referrals Despite the Lockdown

The COVID-19 confinement measures have posed challenges for service provision to most vulnerable victims of gender-based violence. Counselling, remote case management, and psychosocial and legal support to women and girls survivors of violence have shifted swiftly on-line. Helplines have been put at the services of victims 24 hours a day - 7 days a week, and online meetings have been held with government, civil society organizations and community-based organizations to discuss the main referral pathway network during the COVID-19 outbreak.

To read more about our response under the Madad for Women gender program, click [here](#).



Zero Tolerance for VAWG: Setting up Emergency Plans and Actions to Support Victims and Survivors

The Regional Campaign on *Zero Tolerance for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)* that EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the consortium of nine member-organizations in seven countries (Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco, Palestine, Algeria, Jordan and Egypt) launched in 2019 aims to break the silence that surrounds VAWG, shift the blame from the victim to the perpetrator, and advocate for comprehensive laws that criminalizes all forms of VAWG. The Campaign partners have prepared emergency plans to support victims and survivors of VAWG, by providing services and consultations related to domestic violence through their hotlines or centers. The Social Media Campaign has reached until end of April 2020 over 11 million women and men supporting women to speak up and encouraging men to engage in the fight against VAWG.



A Hub of Information on the Measures Taken during COVID-19 Crisis

As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak and the surge of domestic violence due to quarantine, a special emphasis has been placed on actions that could be carried online. The campaign's website (www.ostik.org) and social media, as well as the social media of the consortium, intensified the dissemination of information on available services in the South Mediterranean countries supporting victims and survivors of VAWG. These messages are contextualized to each country's specific challenges and dialect, while messages are focused on sharing hotline and helpline contact information, and informational videos which are regularly updated. Moreover, a directory of services for victims of VAWG has been developed to provide them with all the necessary details they need to reach out for support.

The OSTIK Campaign is on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



COVID-19: Women Are Always at The Forefront in Dealing with All the Consequences

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, EuroMed Feminist Initiative has raised the voice to reveal the extent of the negative impact the COVID-19 crisis is having on women all over the world, and particularly in the Euro-Med region.

With the rise in the rates and severity of domestic violence against women, including sexual and reproductive violence, EuroMed Feminist Initiative has stepped in to urge governments to adopt a COVID-19 response in accordance with human rights standards and the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Read more:

Speak up for Palestinian Women's Rights, for Accountability and Justice. Click [here](#).

An Urgent Need of a Humanistic Gender Equality Way of Analysis. Click [here](#).

PWWSD Welcomes Cabinet Recommendations on GBV and Calls for the Immediate Enactment of the "Family Protection Bill". Click [here](#).



EuroMed Feminist Initiative is a policy network that encompasses women's rights organizations from the two shores of the Mediterranean. It provides expertise in the area of gender equality and women's rights as inseparable from democracy building and citizenship, advocates for political solutions to all conflicts, and for the right of peoples to self-determination.