



Gender Transformative Approach in Times of Covid-19: Voices of Women and Girl Children from the Ground¹

Introduction

With the increasing cases of those infected by COVID-19, countries in Southeast Asia declared the restriction or regulation of movements of goods and people by enacting policies on community quarantines or physical distancing, including the prohibition of social and cultural activities and mass gatherings.

Industries that catered to essentials, such as health, food, energy, finance, communications have been regulated while groceries, or supermarkets had to develop and enforce protocols. With the lockdowns or quarantines happening around the world, many migrant workers had returned home. Many had become jobless, and continue to remain insecure about their future employment overseas. To reduce production and expenses, companies cut wage of their workers by enforcing the use of mandatory leaves or in worst cases laid off their workers without paying wages. In Indonesia, the layoff affected at least 1.6 million workers according to the reports from a number of state ministers.² In the Philippines, there had already been 7.3 million unemployed Filipinos or 17.7% unemployment rate last April.³ This is worrying because apart from the minimized wages or no income for families, many companies do not have clear policies to support their workers who had been laid off. Apart from wage workers, the informal economy workers are largely hit by this pandemic whose daily income depends on working outside the home. Country news reports all over Southeast Asia have pointed to high unemployment rates with low chance of quick recoveries.⁴

Even before this crisis, marginalized women and girls suffer disproportionately from inequalities. The poverty which they endure plus their being women and girls all play in the discrimination that they experience which also further pushes them to poverty. The lack of livelihood remains a top problem in communities as articulated by women. Women are often found in low wage jobs

¹ The Weaving Women's Voices in Southeast Asia or WEAVE is feminist regional network of women's organizations and advocates working at the national level in six countries in Southeast Asia. **Kalyanamitra (Indonesia), Foundation for Women (Thailand), Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (Philippines), SILAKA (Cambodia), Women's League of Burma (Myanmar), MKM (Brunei)**. This report only covers experiences and stories of women from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, and Burma. **Project Women** in Brunei also contributed to this report. For more information about WEAVE, please refer to the final page of this report.

² <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-52713350>

³ <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/business/2020/6/5/unemployment-April-2020-COVID-19.html>

⁴ <https://asiatimes.com/2020/05/mass-unemployment-the-new-normal-in-se-asia/>

in the manufacturing, service and tourism industry, and there is lack of or limited access to quality healthcare services including sexual and reproductive health services and products. Proper information dissemination that reaches marginalized women and girls is also a problem and they also face multiple barriers when they try to access justice especially from the violence perpetrated against them whether in the streets, workplace or even at home. For marginalized women and girls – residing in far-flung or rural areas, indigenous women and girls, those with disability, LGBT, women and girls living with HIV, and women migrants also face additional barriers, sufferings, inequalities not to mention the challenges they faced in accessing justice and healthcare services and possibility of insensitive response they might experienced.

In times of crisis, such as this COVID-19 pandemic, some population groups are more affected than others, which includes women and girl children. This crisis has further placed marginalized women and girls at a greater disadvantage because the effects to members in the household also affect them — from the loss of jobs and job insecurity by family members and even the women themselves, and the limited freedoms that we all experience including the freedom to move, and how all these affect our mental health. But such are also differently experienced by women given that the household burden and mental load that they carry from all members staying at home 24/7, and by women and girls taking care of practically everyone in the household including the elderly and the sick. Even women take the mental load of worrying if sick family members have contracted COVID-19, too.

This report will cover the period since the start of the lockdown in most member countries of the Weaving Women's Voices in Southeast Asia (WEAVE). WEAVE has documented the impacts of the pandemic in Southeast Asia, particularly focusing on access to justice of marginalized women and girl children. WEAVE has also conducted their own activities and efforts in their countries to respond to the pandemic, i.e. facilitating and providing financial support to partner communities and assisting victims of gender-based violence.⁵

Women and girls, and marginalized communities continue to face distinct issues that up to now are not prioritized or remain invisible. The following are issues found among the consolidated reports by WEAVE: ***(1) Women face more stress over survival, multiple burden, and mental load and other issues affecting their mental health and wellness; 2. Enforcement of the enhanced community quarantine protocol is anti-poor and anti-women; 3. Heightened vulnerability and risks: A mental health crisis in the middle of a crisis; 4. Cases of VAWG, harassment, discrimination are less prioritized during crisis; 5. Continuing invisibility of marginalized sectors during COVID-19. There had also been several issues regarding government response to the pandemic which includes ballooning multilateral loans, crackdown and militarization, and double standards in pandemic response. In order to survive this crisis even with limited government support and mass arrests, women utilize various strategies.***

⁵ WEAVE has also conducted its first webinar on VAW and the Economy.

1. Women and the marginalized face more stress over daily survival, multiple burden and mental load and other issues affecting their mental health and wellness

With the role and expectations women play at home, staying at home for all members of the family 24/7 burdens them with the tasks of managing the household – caring for children, the sick and the elderly, working at home, thinking of ways to survive and cope everyday and even forced to leave the house to make a living. Hospitals cannot cover everyone who have symptoms of the disease, and so the patients are advised to stay at home when they're not facing worse symptoms – and it is usually the women who take on the burden to care for the sick family members. The multiple burdens and anxiety of contracting COVID-19, including the limited social space, causes women to experience a high psychological burden as well as fatigue/physical stress.

Surviving this pandemic on daily basis for the poor women adds to their mental stress. For people who lost their jobs, the way to survive this pandemic is to return to their families in villages where the cost of living is cheaper. For rural women who live in the village, one of the ways to survive is to save money on food or manage their households without cash by consuming, and processing their garden products such as vegetables, corn, cassava, sweet potato, and banana, or fish in coastal communities. Others continue to sell their produce at a lower price. Coincidentally in some places, this is a time for rice harvest which gives them supply of food. Some families in rural areas have temporarily transferred to their farms or rented farms located faraway in the mountains.⁶

On the other hand, women who used to receive remittances from their family members as overseas workers have resorted to backyard gardening. In places where it is too hot and with not enough water, selected vegetables only thrive and there is difficulty in maintaining the backyard. In the city proper, there are no available spaces to do gardening (since not everyone is familiar with other methods of growing in urban spaces).

Women coconut farmers cannot sell their products. They are forced to share at a very low cost or make things out of their products such as brooms or virgin coconut oil to sell, however, these products seem to not be needed during this time. Women also sew face masks given the high demand. For poor urban women, they survive by managing their limited money that they have with the most economical expenses.

In Brunei Darussalam, all **single mothers** surveyed/interviewed shared the same concern on increase in mental stress and heightened anxiety over their current situation and the future. The mental stress is prevalent among single mothers with children below 18 and those who live on their own without any extended family or helper. Their routine before is dropping the children to the day care center and school and go to work. Now, they have to go to work and leave their

⁶ In a visit by a woman leader who happens to be a volunteer health worker in the mountain farms, she recounts having seen and have been informed that there were many teenage mothers.

children behind at home unsupervised. This brings anxiety while at work, and upon coming back home, they have to follow-up on the online classes of the children. Single mothers who were allowed to work from home and spend time helping children with their classwork can take a toll on them especially when they have more than three to six children below 18. This escalates when they have children with disabilities such as autism. In addition to that, cost on food and groceries increased as the children at home demand for more food compared to when they are in school. Additional cost on internet connection also increased due to longer use for online learning. This situation could also be true to countries who have resorted to online learning. It is a challenge for poor families who do not have the technological materials, and in which mothers may also be technologically illiterate. This is even on top of time demands since they have been advised to accompany their children in online learning classes.

In the Philippines, **women community leaders** are also part of the community of frontliners who were assigned in checkpoints apart from working as barangay health workers or VAW Desk officers. Safety gears and security issues is a problem as they have to deal with violators who are ill-tempered and tend to resort to violent means.⁷ They are compelled to buy their own masks which are expensive and they try to make do with very minimum pay, which they said, is better than having received nothing at all. Some women volunteers experienced harassment from male violators of community quarantine posing additional physical threats to the lives of women volunteers.

While women cope utilizing various ways to survive in this pandemic, they suffer from the multiple burdens brought by the expectations due to their gender – as a mother and a woman leader. Women's caretaking role become the "buffers" or "safety nets" to families who have lost income, etc. This is why policies and governments should look into these "invisible" impacts of COVID-19 to help address women's wellbeing, and also address the root causes of women's hardships especially in times of crisis.

2. Enforcement of lockdown or community quarantine protocol is anti-poor and anti-women

The enforcement of community quarantines and lockdowns has inevitably left the poor and marginalized with no security over their lives. Hunger and starvation amidst fear over the virus are deeply felt by marginalized families and communities who have lost their sources of income and no ability to seek health care services. In Indonesia, a 43-year old woman died of psychological pressure and hunger on her way to a community health center reportedly after two days of starvation. Her family, including her husband and four children have been reported to have only subsisted on water and unripe cassava from their garden.⁸

⁷ In one case, a man threatened a woman frontliner at checkpoint with a bolo, and another woman frontliner is at the receiving end of cusses, threats, and discrimination from members of the community for enforcing the implementation of the curfew.

⁸ <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/04/21/hunger-hits-as-many-indonesians-struggle-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>

One of the largest hit by the crisis are women and the elderly who make up a large portion of the **informal economy** as daily wage workers in the service and food sector (mobile and street vendors). In Thailand, 300,000 sex workers and entertainment workers in Cambodia who rely on the tourism industry are expected to have no income for the several months (and years) to come. This crisis reflects that Thai society and other countries in Southeast Asia have a large population of poor people who earn daily wage income without saving. Children and elderly people have to depend on these informal workers.

Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), of which women constitute a huge portion, have gone out of business or bankrupt. In Brunei, those who can do small business have begun to migrate their business in social media with pick-up and delivery services. In Cambodia, discrimination is directed towards Muslim people who came back from Malaysia where there was reported spread of the virus. People discouraged buying from or selling things to them because they are perceived as transmitters of the virus.

In Indonesia, many **factory workers** have been laid off from their jobs without receiving wages (unpaid leave). They are left with nothing or with very limited choices to cope with the effects of lockdowns. Cambodia faces this looming problem as 90% of garment factory workers are women.

Those working in **hired labour** as gardeners and cleaners in hotels, such as the Morglan people or sea gypsea community in Phang nga in Thailand are facing starvation. Some workers have no money to pay the rent and have become homeless, while others have to borrow money and pay high interest rate from informal money lenders. Women and girl children who are homeless or have gone homeless face the possibility of gender-based violence.

In Brunei Darussalam, there were **single mothers** who were asked to go on forced unpaid leave. Despite having been able to supplement their income with the monthly welfare aid of B\$250 from the government, they are worried that their company may not be able to survive the pandemic and might retrench some workers in the near future. This makes them feel insecure financially not knowing whether they will still have a job three to four months from now.

In the Philippines, worry looms over women headed households in rural communities as they have posed several questions to the authorities in local villages: How are we supposed to live until the lifting of the enhanced community quarantine? What will happen to poor families if the quarantine period will be extended while relief support remains scarce? Many rural families still fear how long they will be able to sustain themselves during the quarantine period because: (1) relief had been one-time only for some localities; (2) many are working in informal economy or on a daily wage basis (construction workers, salespersons, fast food workers, vendors/peddlers); and (3) there were those who were relieved from their jobs. According to some women leaders, some local officials are more concerned of the enforcement of lockdown than of the survival of the communities.

While the fear of the virus and the effects of the lockdown drift over in Southeast Asia, the situation in **conflict areas** poses another layer of difficulty in this time of crisis. In Burma, the fighting in the states continue. In Rakhine state, 128 people died, 147 received injuries, and 34 were arrested during the fight between the Tatmadaw and Arakan army.⁹ Despite raising awareness about staying safe from COVID-19, some areas in Burma like the Kachin **internally displaced people (IDPs)**, cannot practice effective handwashing and access to drinking water as there is only one well in the IDP camp, which is not enough for more than 100 families.¹⁰ In addition to having lost their work, the IDPs are neglected by the government in their provision of relief food to families with no regular income. All these are exacerbated with the rising price of basic food.

Exportation of goods from Cambodia or Burma (seasonal fruits and other raw materials) to destination countries such as China and neighboring areas, face its own challenges, including the loss of jobs its own workers, a problem that becomes more marked in a system that promotes export-oriented and import-dependent economy.

While community quarantines may be necessary to contain transmission, such massive move would be defeatist if governments do not properly address the concerns of the marginalized. Livelihood and income is mostly on a daily wage basis run by the informal economy that defines Southeast Asia, where women and the elderly also make up a significant portion. While we are facing health issues, we are also much more challenged by the socio-economic situation of marginalized women and girls in the region. For those living in camps (IDPs) or face discrimination (Muslim women entrepreneurs or migrants), they experience a differentiated impacts of this crisis because of their compounded identities.

3. Heightened vulnerability and risks: A mental health crisis in the middle of a crisis

Reports of suicide and attempted suicide have reached the news in Thailand with stories that paint of despair over not being able to provide needs for the children, the inefficiency in government aid, and looming financial woes.^{11,12} Since the 20th of March and until the writing of this report, 22 cases of suicide were attributed to the virus outbreak.¹³ In the Philippines, attempted suicide and deaths by suicide have made the rounds in social media which were attributed to fear of having contracted the virus¹⁴ or tested positive for the virus¹⁵, no other

⁹<https://www.facebook.com/BurmaMonitor/photos/pcb.507798056568304/507797919901651/?type=3&theater>

¹⁰ <https://www.Burmawaterportal.com/news/1696-%E2%80%98not-enough-water-to-wash-our-hands,%E2%80%99-say-kachin-idps-bracing-for-covid-19.html>

¹¹ <https://coconuts.co/bangkok/news/at-breaking-point-thailands-poor-are-killing-themselves/>

¹² <https://coconuts.co/bangkok/news/no-one-cares-about-me-thai-woman-shouts-before-swallowing-rat-poison/>

¹³ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p1989H4B00vqypN43WeUh7EmuC43TgGM/view>

¹⁴ <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/03/25/man-claims-life-over-virus-fear/>

¹⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/Ayman.Mat.News/posts/3254577501243562>

means to provide food for the family¹⁶, depression¹⁷, and lack of social support¹⁸. Three deaths by suicide were also reported in a town days before the end of the enhanced community quarantine in the jurisdiction.¹⁹ A colleague in the network shared that in her home province, five have died over suicide due to the stress, hunger and hardship experienced as exacerbated by the crisis. One woman was also reported to have thrown her baby to the river attributed to post-partum depression although she said that she faces starvation and difficulty in life. Calls of persons in distress in mental health hotlines have spiked in Thailand and the Philippines.²⁰

This deepening isolation and despair are worsened by the inequalities in technology in which those who have access and are literate, are able to know about the information on hotlines and be able to seek help. It also does not help that in this times of mental anguish due to the pandemic and lockdowns, government officials, including the highest official of the land in the Philippines, continue to incite violence and apprehension by directing the military to shoot 'troublemakers' or quarantine violators²¹. It also includes promoting messages that point to abusive punishment for violators, including children, such as the display of coffins, lewd requests and shaming in social media²². It is counterproductive that some countries in Southeast Asia resort more to arrest starving and desperate 'violators' than ensuring them access to food and essential needs.

No sex disaggregated data is available to show how many women committed suicides in both countries, but the problem is alarming because the mental load which are often complained by women are higher now due to COVID-19.

These are abnormal times that need special measures that should be addressed strategically and not rely on arrests or militaristic response. Mental health had been a persisting issue long before this pandemic but has worsened wherein government should seriously address by providing functional hotline numbers and addressing starvation and loss of income. When suicide cases spike, whether done by men or women, and when mass arrests are done for petty quarantine violations, women also receive the share of burden of tending to children and the elderly alone (if the husband is arrested or died by suicide), or that families suffer from the absence of women whom they rely as managers of the home (if the woman is arrested or died by suicide).

¹⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/infografixfb/posts/119583083006262>

¹⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/jankyle.parena/posts/255335302182973>

¹⁸ <https://tribune.net.ph/index.php/2020/03/21/no-family-no-friends-so-let-it-go/>

¹⁹ http://www.dnx.news/crime/three-suicides-in-one-week-in-province/?fbclid=IwAR0BOfhhUjOSkcApAqT_IRzwtYaj53eKUCNRd3NUWV5JIV4Od4TVD0bTNB8

²⁰ <https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/a-viral-call-for-help-from-suicidal-filipinos/>

²¹ <https://theaseanpost.com/article/duterte-tells-police-shoot-dead-troublemakers>

²² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/257292-barangay-captain-lgbtq-quarantine-violators-lewd-acts-punishment>

4. Cases of VAWG, harassment, discrimination are less prioritized during crisis

Violence is another vulnerability that women and girls face more during crisis. Even before this crisis, this remains as a persisting problem and many of these cases also happen inside the home or very close to home perpetrated by intimate partners, husbands, stepfathers, uncles, and neighbors.

Even before this crisis, there is already difficulty for women and girl children victims to access justice from the violence that they experience. From the WEAVE research (2016) on access to justice of marginalized girl children, the violence experienced by women and girls continues to be trivialized by the authorities. The attitudes on rape and other forms of violence include stories of women and girl children victims who are met with disbelief and even further violence by family members and friends. When they try to report to the authorities at the local level, they also receive victim blaming, and their credibility and sexual history being questioned.

Even before the pandemic, there are reports wherein women victims of domestic violence and their abusive partners were told by the local authorities to come up with a mutual resolution, and that this issue is usually not prioritized among other issues and problems in communities, only a marital concern solved just by the involved parties. And it is a fact that the lack of information and access to livelihood by marginalized women and girls force them to rather stay in abusive relationships, only to report when the violence has escalated to severe forms.

Before this crisis, WLB-Ph had received queries from victims on their cases – what to do and which government agencies to go. They inquired on how to approach their cases when even those who are supposed to help and assist them like the barangay (village level) VAW Desks, police and other authorities in the locality or municipality dismiss or do not entertain their cases. For the deaf, the lack of interpreters lead to dismissal of their cases. That's how difficult it is for a marginalized woman or girl victim of violence to access justice. Reporting to the authorities does not guarantee that your case is recorded and addressed. We assist them with the step-by-step process, or refer them to relevant government agencies. Much more should be done on proper information dissemination and strong referral system by the government.

Now, imagine in this pandemic, where quarantines or lockdowns compel everyone to stay at home in which there is lack of mobility. Victims, apart from the multiple burden and mental load that they are burdened to take on for the family's daily survival, are more than ever trapped with their abuser 24/7. The loss of jobs and job insecurity by the partner, and the lack of food on the table can expose victims to abuse that may escalate especially in prolonged family isolation. And it is in this environment that our abusers can also further get away with impunity. Because abusers are always at home, there is added difficulty in reporting the abuse.

4.1. High Cases of violence against women and girls / children

While cases of violence against women and girls are under reported more due to the crisis, some countries have reported high levels of violence within such a short period during this crisis. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection recorded 275 cases of violence against women with a total of 277 victims (2 March – 25 April 2020).²³ In Jakarta, Indonesia, there was an increase in domestic abuse reports in the first month of home quarantine which were reported to the Jakarta Legal Aid Foundation of the Indonesian Women Association for Justice (LBH Apik), a non-government organization. In two weeks (March 16-30), it recorded 59 cases of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and online pornography which were accepted through e-mail, social media and hotline. LBH Apik provided legal consultancy for women victims of violence.²⁴ In the Philippines, the president's latest report covered the Philippine National Police's records on violence against women and children. As of April 30, 2020, there were reported 763 cases of crimes against women and 521 cases of crimes against children since the implementation of community quarantine on March 15, 2020.²⁵ As of June 11, there were 2,183 cases of violence against women and 2,077 cases of violence against children.²⁶ Various groups have also expressed the seemingly alarming increase in online violence against women and online sexual exploitation against children.²⁷ There are seemingly more cases of cybercrimes against women of which their nudes have been uploaded and circulated online, and/or have received threats and blackmails regarding their photos or videos. Private groups in Facebook have circulated and spread sexual content of women and minors, which prompted advocates to create online Facebook group for mass reporting of sexually explicit content.

In Thailand, there had been difficulties in responding or assisting victims in reporting cases to the authorities during lockdown. Cases of violence against women and girls have appeared in the media, including two wives who were killed by husbands in a week (20-23 April), and a case of a woman abused by her ex-husband. She reported that it was difficult for her to find transportation from her village to the police station given the limited public transportation and that hired cars or vans were fearful of the virus. There was also a reported case of a girl who was pushed out from a car by her mother. Statistics on reported cases of VAWG is not available.

²³ <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/indonesia-52713350>

²⁴ <https://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2020/04/07/jakarta-records-spike-in-domestic-violence-reports-during-work-from-home-period.html>

²⁵ <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2020/05may/20200504-Report-to-the-Joint-Congressional-Oversight-Committee.pdf>

²⁶ <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1292037/read-dutertes-12th-report-to-congress-on-use-of-his-special-powers>

²⁷ <https://www.onenews.ph/secret-pandemic-online-child-exploitation-on-the-rise-amid-covid-19-problems>

In Brunei Darussalam, there is a concern that due to the longer exposure of girl-children online in the virtual classroom, they are at risk of being subjected to violence online. This is an area wherein if ever it is happening, it is not reported at all to relevant government agencies. Girl-children are also exposed to potential perpetrators as they spend more time at home unsupervised when their parents go to work.

4.2. Civil society and governments install hotlines for the vulnerable

In the Philippines, hotlines set up by the government and various civil society organizations attend to violence against women and children. In the Women's Legal and Human rights Bureau's²⁸ case, victims who initially reported through government hotlines and received little response have sought the help of non-government organizations. For psychosocial response, advocates have voluntarily set up an online chat service which also covers sexual and reproductive health concerns. Some advocates, including youth in schools, have taken actions to themselves to create their own support groups for victims of online sexual violence.

In Indonesia, the *Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection* prepared a mechanism for offline services for women and children, both through referral services from *Regional Technical Implementation Units (UPTD) for the Protection of Women and Children*, integrated service centers for woman and child empowerment (P2TP2A) in the provinces and districts / cities, as well as reporters who independently came directly to the Ministry.

For the sake of the health protocol, direct complaints are temporarily eliminated, but online complaints continue to be made. The government has issued a protocol for handling cases of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic. This protocol consists of two services namely online services and face-to-face services. Online services are still being carried out during the Pandemic COVID-19 period using online media such as telephone, WhatsApp, email or written media in the form of letters.

The government also launched SEJIWA (Sehat Jiwa) psychology services which is expected to be a space for the people, especially women and children, who are vulnerable to psychosocial problems due to pressures that arise during the pandemic. The SEJIWA psychology service does not only provide counseling service for women and children victim of violence but also people with mental health problems because of COVID-19. Through SEJIWA psychology services, the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection provides assistance to women and children affected by COVID-19, such as women victims of domestic violence, women in emergency situations and special conditions, women migrant workers, women with disabilities, and children who need

²⁸ Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau, a feminist non-government organization based in the Philippines (also referred to as WLB-Ph among WEAVE members).

special protection. The public can consult with psychologists through the hotline or through the complaint website.

In Brunei, there are several helplines run and monitored by government agencies such as the police helpline concerning criminal cases such as abuse, trafficking and exploitation.

4.3. Challenges in reporting of women victims of violence

Women are at a loss as to which agency will report the incidents due to the quarantine period, especially now when not all government offices are open. Different stories, however, were documented which also raises difficulty in accessing justice due to the compounded problems women face (availability of shelter, who to contact in case they wanted to report any form of violence, difficulty in accessing transportation and communication, whether to leave their children or not, it is safer to go out or endure the violence, etc.). When women victims of domestic violence require medical treatment, it is not clear which health facilities can be quickly accessed.

The lack of mobility due to lockdowns or community quarantines has posed a further challenge to family members who wanted to act on the case. In one incest case reported, a sister/aunt wanted to act on the case of their niece who had been sexually abused by the uncle or the sister's brother. The father was hesitant to pursue the case because it involves his brother. However, the aunt/sister was in another province, and cannot come to help her niece because she would not be allowed to cross borders. The case was reported to the police but they were told to come back after the quarantine period. In this case alone, we can see how violence against women and girls continues to be trivialized by the authorities and even family members.

Victims who decided to file a case were told by the authorities to file them after the quarantine period. The stories included incest, abuse of a former migrant, stories of women and a young girl seen going to vacant lots at night, harassment of women leaders implementing curfew, and verbal abuse received from husband after attending a meeting on relief operations. Domestic quarrels are more common as reported by one woman leader, wherein women receive verbal abuses from their husbands. Sometimes, they are forced to have sex with their husbands or partners; saying no would lead to more unpleasant quarrels which they do not want to stress over more at this time.

Protection orders are available in countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia but became inaccessible during pandemic. Even before the pandemic, the implementation of protection order is difficult as the authorities still view domestic violence cases as a private matter, supported by cultural and religious norms. The accessibility of protection order is also only limited in provincial and district levels, and not far flung or remote areas. The lack of information-sharing especially at the local level on protection orders is also a problem. There is difficulty to conduct post mortem (*visum et repertum*) cases of violence against women and children, especially in the regions due to expensive price constraints

and limited access to transportation. For example, for the islands, residents must use ships that are restricted to operating hours or even resort to normally non-operational ones.

As reporting had mostly shifted online, some victims have reported that there were limited response or worst no response in hotlines provided by governments. Online recourse is also only accessed by those who have access to technology and are technologically-literate. And while online has been the go-to today for reporting and counseling, online services has a lot of limitation because it fails to respond to issues like getting shelter for victim-survivors. Several shelters (and very few shelters catering to violence against women and children even before the pandemic) have closed during the lockdown or quarantine period. In some areas, there are no available shelters despite the presence of laws like mandating every cities to have crisis centers but remains unfunded until now.

Institutions supposed to respond to victims, including social welfare, face the challenge of limited personnel because most have focused on the cash distribution response and other visible issues of COVID-19 response. Many things cannot be funded by service providers such as post mortem fees and personal protection equipment.

In Indonesia, while there is a protocol for handling cases of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, the service agencies prioritize providing online counseling with limited service time. Face-to-face services are provided by service agencies in cases that require immediate service due to legal status, psychological conditions, or risk of harm while still prioritizing security and safety principles for clients and service providers. In Burma, there are shelters that support some women and girl children victims but limited only in towns and cities, and not in ethnic areas.

In Burma, there is limited response regarding cases of domestic violence as there is limited reporting mechanism and function of the judicial system in this current situation as is also the same situation in other WEAVE member countries. The current fighting in Karen State, Chin State, and Rakhine State had not made humanitarian aid possible for those areas in this crisis. The Women's League of Burma²⁹ had some cases of sexual violence and domestic violence that needed to be resolved in court which had been stalled due to the pandemic. Meanwhile, trials are still conducted in Indonesia but it is not fair because the perpetrators can do it by video conference while the victims are required to come to the hearing. This is why CSOs advocates that victims do not need to come to trial. In Thailand, the judicial case of a girl child victim of rape was suspended.

²⁹ The Women's League of Burma is composed of 13 ethnic women's organizations in Myanmar (referred to as WLB-Burma among WEAVE members).

Some CSOs, NGOs and lawyers push their way to assist victims of violence. In conflict areas in Burma, cases have been known but were not reported due to the fighting. For women and girls who ran away from the village and are now IDPS, it is very difficult to communicate and access information about them.

Recently, or three months since the lockdown, WLB-Philippines had been receiving lesser than the usual numbers of Facebook inquiries or none at all by women seeking help or legal advise. The staff thinks that women had to problematize other aspects of survival such as food, and their safety from gender-based violence might be less prioritized at the moment.

In this pandemic and stay-at-home policy enforced by the government, women and girl victims of domestic violence find it hard to access justice given the problems they face at each stage of the process of accessing justice (barriers in reporting to the authorities and court procedures) exacerbated by this crisis situation. ***In cases when they try to access justice, women and girls are silenced because the structures are seemingly not working, and the system is failing them, too.***

4.4. Some good practices to prevent and combat violence

The Indonesian government through the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection had developed protocols for handling cases of violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic, although there are still issues in implementation. The protocol consists of eight sections during COVID-19 pandemic to protect women victim of violence : (1) protocol on reporting of VAW; (2) protocol on delivery service for victim; (3) referral to health services for the victim; (4) referral protocol to safe house or shelter for victim, (5) protocol on psychosocial service for victim; (6) protocol on legal consultation for victim; (7) protocol on assistance of legal proceedings for victim; (8) protocol on how to save the victim to reduce dangerous risk and violence in unsafe situations when the victim must live with the perpetrator or other family members.

The Commission on Human Rights in the Philippines launched an online reporting portal for gender-based violence during lockdown. Such move is crucial at a time that government institutions mandated to respond to cases have limited their services. This move also exemplifies the call that all government institutions should have their own policies and mechanisms to respond to cases of gender-based violence especially in their own jurisdictions. The portal is also used as documentation and reporting of CSOs and advocates on cases of gender-based violence. Furthermore, the agency has converted some spaces in their building as safe house for victims.

Advocates and civil society organizations, despite limited personnel and funding, continue to provide the following services to victims of gender-based violence: 1) creation of

Facebook groups for mass reporting to take down content of online sexual exploitation of children and gender-based violence against women / young women 2) online legal consultation services, 3) online counseling services (including answering queries on sexual and reproductive health) and referral to counselling services, 4) directing victims to take initial actions when experiencing violence such as taking photos if they sustained bruises and injuries, or write in their journals if possible, 5) provision of police station hotlines closest to the victim, and 6) provision of temporary safe housing services.

VAW is a phenomenon that happens in conjunction with women's multiple or various burden and mental health which continue to be invisible. It comes that at the national level, the government should prioritize funding to agencies that would look into the welfare of women and girls, especially in cases of violence. All the more we shouldn't cut budgets for health, education and social services that also particularly tend to the needs of women and girl victims. In the Philippines, the rape crisis center remains unfunded since it was passed in 1998. In this crisis, it is best to make our policies or guidelines more responsive and friendly to victims – even before this crisis, this is being pushed. **And in this crisis, given the challenges faced, should policies and guidelines also be curated or modified to address concerns on mobility and shelters.**

There are serious socio-economic impacts if governments continue to be blind about the seriousness of VAW. There are severe direct impacts to victims as well as intergenerational impacts – VAW that continue from one generation to another because the violence committed against women was left unaddressed and passed on to her children, including relationships that might be affected by the violence, and the seeming lack of urgency by government to subsidize the costs in accessing justice (health, medico-legal, counseling, etc.). Our economy rests on women and girls' freedom from violence which must be a part of the agenda when governments seek for economic recovery in this crisis.

5. Continuing invisibility of marginalized sectors during COVID-19

Women and girls are not homogenous. They have different contexts and needs. Unfortunately, even before COVID-19, data are neither disaggregated by sex nor sectoral concerns. This is one of the main problems why government's response continues to be gender-blind and lacking context-specific measures for women and girls.

The issues of the elderly, disability, or members of SOGIE are neither properly documented nor recognized at all by the government. And this is the reason why their issues remain hidden and essentially invisible in the communities. Even before this pandemic, there is no data on discrimination against lesbian, bisexual, transgender women. In Indonesia, they face the grim reality of being criminalized even if they try to access justice. It would require deeper discussions with the abovementioned groups of women to properly document their issues.

Pregnant and lactating women are in difficult situations in this pandemic especially in rural areas where accessibility and availability of resources remain a challenge. In the Philippines, an eight-month pregnant woman pushed herself to go out and sell produce (vegetables and fish), or do other forms of work like doing the laundry of the neighbor. A mother died from blood loss after having been refused by six hospitals, not to mention this transpired in a semi-urban area.³⁰ Women leaders who are also local barangay health workers assist pregnant women from rural areas to hospitals in centers (20-30 minutes travel period). Some policies imposed at the national level are urban-centric and does not look into the distinct context of rural areas which have issues when it comes to accessibility and availability of resources.

In Burma, access to information and communication with internally displaced women and girls from conflict areas is difficult, thereby, their accessibility and security to food is not known.

5.1. Migrant Women

Women migrants are also the hardest hit in this pandemic. In Southeast Asia, many migrants have become jobless. For migrant women, job security is a concern especially if they stand as the breadwinner in their families. While many wanted to go home to their home countries because of insecurity over their daily survival in the countries of destination (some were placed on indefinite leave), others are afraid to go home because they fear that they won't be able to return to their jobs if their own home country is in lockdown. There are already women migrant workers stranded abroad/affected by lockdown protocols in UAE working as airport employees who have been laid off.

In the Philippines, women migrant workers stranded in their home provinces find it hard to find alternative source of income due to the lockdown. Instead, they resort to getting loans. But they are getting restless already; from the start of the lockdown in March and until the present, they still have no information as to **how** they can avail of the assistance of the government – whether LGU or national government agencies. Apparently, they were not deemed qualified for the social amelioration program of the government. They understand that the priority of SAP is the poorest of the poor, but it should not be at the expense of excluding other social groups who also disproportionately bear the brunt of this pandemic.

Lack of reliable information is the biggest challenge faced by migrant workers in general. An efficient referral system seems to not be working during normal times and it is made more challenging in times of crisis. Some WMW even complained that hotline numbers provided to them are not working. Perhaps because so many Filipinos are asking for help, no one is able to answer the phone from the Philippine Embassy or Consulate Office.

³⁰ <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/04/28/20/doh-investigating-hospitals-refusing-patients-after-death-of-pregnant-woman>

In Thailand, migrants from Laos and Burma who have lost jobs in Chang Rai cannot return home. They have no money to pay for rent and have waited long in stations as there are no public transportations available. Burmese migrants in Mae Sot, a border town, have difficulty earning enough money for their families.

5.1.1. Undocumented migrant women

In Brunei Darussalam, most of the undocumented migrant women are freelance domestic workers who are able to obtain an employment visa through a sponsor who has a labor quota. Some have a tourist visa and take the risk of being deported anytime once they are caught doing work. They expressed their concern that they are not getting enough freelance work since most of their clients refrain from asking them to do work at their premises due to this pandemic. They are deemed to be a high risk carrier as they work in various households. They themselves refrain from taking jobs from clients for fear of getting infected as they do not have enough resource to pay for the hospitalization if they get sick. Now, they are worried that they do not have enough income to send to their families back home.

5.1.2. Female migrant teachers in private schools

Filipino female migrant teachers in Brunei Darussalam have to juggle working extra hours to transfer their lesson plans online while conducting online classes. Likewise, teachers are also burdened with the cost of the internet as they are not subsidized by the schools. Some have their own laptop but are not upgraded to handle the latest applications for meetings, teaching and webinars. They needed more memory for videos and classwork. They are spending more time in following-up the parents and the students. They have to teach the parents first so that the parents can tutor on their own their children. The challenge comes when parents go to work. The children are left at home unsupervised and the teacher has to wait for the parents to come home and start a video call again. When there are many children at home in different levels of education, the teachers find it hard to agree on the time schedule with parents and children who may share only one computer at home. Teachers have to rely on their own creativity in simplifying their lesson plan to suit the online learning method. The situation in Brunei may also be the same with countries who also grapple with the new online learning system.

5.2. Children / Girl-Children

A survey and some interviews done by Project Women³¹ revealed that the transition from traditional classroom to virtual classroom (flipped) was found challenging by most girls. The adjustment is higher for girls with parents who have low education and who cannot assist them in their homework. Girls from low-income group do not have a laptop or computer at home and they do not have enough budget for the internet. They rely on their mobile phones to receive their class homework using their mobile data. They also do not have a printer at home to print out the handouts. Although, some schools provide the printed materials and parents can pick them up in the school premises every Monday. An interview with some parents with girl-children with disabilities (autism) revealed that parents have a challenging time adjusting with the online learning method. Their girls behave more in school with their classmates. Parents have to coordinate closely with the teachers who give the instruction on various activities the girl children can do at home. Mostly, the mothers take the task of learning the activities and helping their girl-children to execute.

This also is problematic in countries in Southeast Asia, where poor children cannot cope with the demands from online education. Learning through the use of technology cannot be done with no or unreliable internet connection. Poor children do not even own smartphones, personal computer or laptops to do their online learning or research, or afford the internet connection needed. It is also said that there are several learning styles for which not all children can manage learning in front of a computer and no support from adults.

In the Philippines, some women leaders shared that older children seem to have understood the gravity of the situation and that they have to adjust. Even if some could be seen loitering, most are in their home. However, children are also left wondering how long this would last and when they are allowed to go out. Some teenagers (usually males) go outside and play their sport (pigeon flying), while no girls are seen outside loitering, probably busy with their phones. Girl children are seen fetching waters or accompanying their families in farms. In some barangays / villages, teenagers have been caught violating curfew hours and were brought to the police station for counselling. The women admit that there is not much knowledge yet on the situation of children/girl children.

On the other hand, younger children cry to their mothers due to lack of food. It tears the mothers' hearts whenever they see their children crying; they cannot even give them biscuit to eat. It pains mothers more to see their children looking at stores but they cannot even buy anything, or to see others eating, yet their children have nothing to eat. It also pains mothers to feed their children with mere vegetables, especially when their children are still very young.

³¹ Project Women is an organization promoting women and girls' rights based in Brunei Darussalam.

The communication with women leaders also show that in general, most communities are not that knowledgeable about the issues faced by children especially girl children. The reason for the lack of data provided by women leaders is partly because the children are in their homes, and partly because women may still lack perspective on issues confronting children, especially now that they are faced with so many challenges due to COVID-19.

Women's recognition on the work that they do in various spheres (inside or outside the home) is already invisible; the economy rests on their invisible contribution. It is not surprising that in times of crisis, this invisible work that they do is not acknowledged and addressed. As mentioned above, women should not remain as the receiving end of blanket policies which are not sensitive and responsive to the plight of women and girls.

6. Other government response to the pandemic

With lockdowns and quarantines in place in most countries, governments rolled out economic stimulus packages which faced several challenges on its own, and also carried out information dissemination through social media. Deferment of loans and rental payments were also encouraged. Civil society has enormously contributed and actively participated in various community work especially in donation drives, support for healthcare workers, distribution of relief packages, information dissemination, analysis of the government response to the pandemic, and surfacing issues left behind in this pandemic including gender-based violence.

6.1. Issues in government response

Governments allocated and rolled out economic programs from the state budgets to handle the pandemic of which a portion goes to social protection. In Indonesia, the budget aimed to prioritize 25.2 million families in the Family Hope and Staple Food programs, and the 5.6 million workers who had been laid off, informal workers and micro-entrepreneur and small business owners. Funds from the social protection also includes free electricity for 24 million customers. A large portion of the budget goes to credit restricting and financing for MSMEs, among other businesses.

In Thailand, people with formal employment will get compensation from the government (62% of their salaries). Those employed in business will get 15% of their salaries while informal and freelance workers will receive 5,000 THB allowance. However, only a few people have received the money despite many who registered for this allowance. The government claims that AI / Artificial Intelligence has been used to screen the target group who have the

right to get the money.³² The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security announced that single parents who are in need of support can also come to GO shelters. However, in reality, moving to shelters may not what these single parents need as they may have to take care of their parents as well.

In the Philippines, the government announced an economic stimulus package with issues that include the complications in choosing the beneficiaries. In WLB's partner communities, relief efforts remain to be gender neutral and scarce. Not all barangays or local villages have received relief packages (only to be given when people have run out of options), and some have raised the issue of the unequal distribution of relief in households (which is regardless of the number of families and family members residing). Acquiring assistance by those who needed relief package but were not provided tend to be difficult. Relief packages do not include hygiene kits and nutritious foods for pregnant or lactating mothers. In times of crisis, women sacrifice their personal hygiene needs such as sanitary napkins. Moreover, women migrant workers in a partner community complained why they were not able to receive support from the government as they too, have lost their jobs.

Due to this crisis, governments have sought huge loans from the IMF, World Bank and ADB. At the same time, the media and netizens in social media criticized the larger budget allocation to the army instead of public healthcare. In Thailand, the head of the military sought to decrease the budget of the army. CSOs demanded the army to stop the plan to buy the submarine and tanks.

There are still issues surrounding the economic aid given by governments, i.e. people in various sectors felt they also deserve aid because they are as well cannot provide food on the table caused by this pandemic (which also resulted to deaths over suicide or attempted suicide as reported above). Women had to openly air out their grievances to the local village officials and requesting for assistance or relief is still challenging.

There are no programs specially aimed to address gender-based violence in this time of lockdowns or quarantines. The stay-at-home policy would indeed cause victims to share the same space with abusers 24/7 and yet there is no specific budget allotted or referral pathways contextualized in this crisis from governments. Even before the pandemic, there is lack of attention and budget to institutions and programs. Non-government organizations and collectives (volunteer-based) who work on these issues can only do so much given their capacities and resources.

³² <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/many-thais-left-out-of-govt-cash-relief-scheme>

6.2. Crackdown and criminalization as response to critics and propagators of fake news

To maintain security and public order, governments already created policies that criminalize those who spread fake news, online frauds regarding sales of health equipment, defamation against the president and state ministers, and those who criticize the government regarding the response to the pandemic. At a time of public health emergency, governments heavily utilized the military, police and cybercrime units to arrest quarantine violators and monitor opinions in cyberspace. In the Philippines, it has already resulted to some cases filed against these persons by the government, or the government's call for deportation of an overseas Filipino caregiver in Taiwan; she was later on defended by the Taiwanese government. In Indonesia, communities will be more afraid in giving criticism because of the policy, and there is fear that because criticisms are not allowed, government policies will not be in accordance with what the community needs. These policies with a criminal approach are considered to be contradictory to the government's decision to release prisoners to prevent the spread of the virus. In Burma, the Tatmadaw continues to suppress freedom of expression by ordering internet shut down even amidst the COVID-19 outbreak and arresting journalists.

The recorded number of arrests in countries in Southeast Asia continues to increase. While the reasons for disobedience from the stay-at-home policy vary (with police arrests sometimes unnecessary), it cannot be denied that these people went out in search of food, or urgent concerns for daily survival.

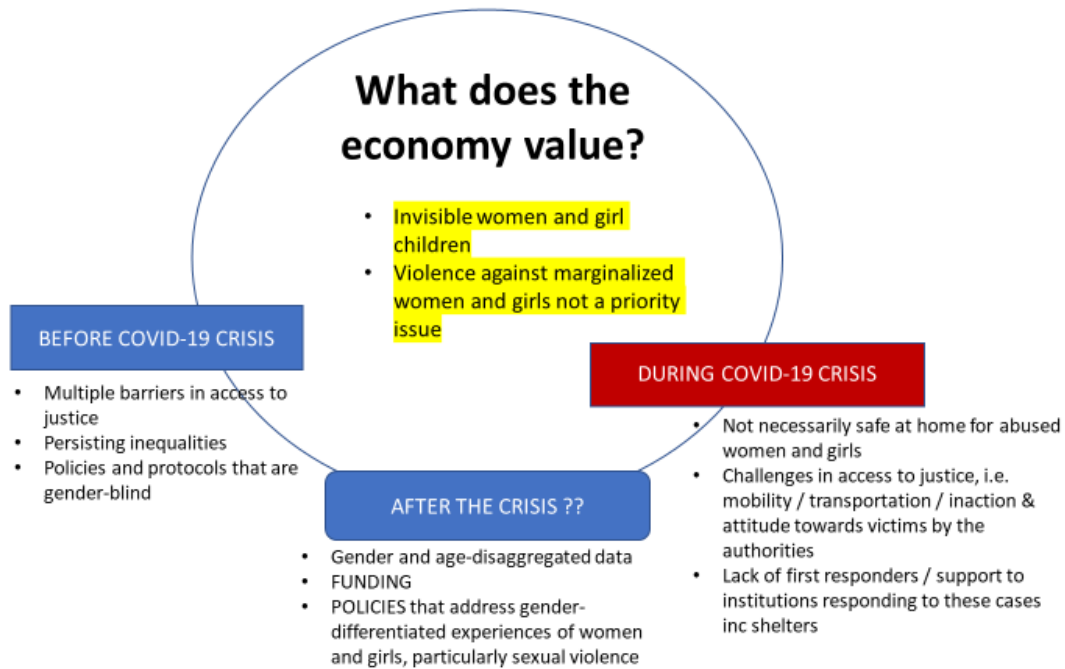
6.3. Double standards in handling the pandemic

In Thailand, the spread of this virus originated from the boxing stadium which revealed that the army has engaged with this business.³³ Actually, the government had announced the closing of all this activity, but because of the power of high rank soldiers, the boxing stadium reopened. In the Philippines, a politician who grossly violated the law on physical distancing was not sanctioned while arrests continue to ordinary persons found to have violated the protocol.

Responses of government to crisis should take into account the issues and concerns raised by the marginalized masses. These issues and concerns should include those facing compounded layers of discrimination and difficulties. For women and girls, addressing gender-based violence and health concerns by allotting funds and inclusion in policies and protocols must be prioritized.

³³ <https://thethaiger.com/coronavirus/army-officers-sidelined-over-illegal-boxing-match-that-caused-covid-19-cluster>

7. Conclusions and recommendations



Even before this crisis, we can see how violence as a woman's issue is still treated as an invisible issue, or not prioritized as an issue. We treat VAW or violence against women and girls as separate and merely a socio-cultural issue, but not an economic issue, however, feminists and advocates have pushed that VAW is an issue that has far greater socio-economic impacts, that in the long run affects the economy.

VAW is always at the backseat when we talk about issues on development. It is rarely mentioned by economists as an indicator of development just because we cannot put figures in it, or measure it. Our market economy privileges what could be measured, disregarding issues that if we examine and analyze are significant when we tackle economies.

Violence against women and girls have socio-economic impacts, many of which are immeasurable, the effects last a lifetime considering that these violence and the victims' traumas and mental health are not directly addressed. It not only affects the victims themselves but society in general. Governments spend in medical and legal costs among others to address victims, and businesses are affected when their women employee victims are deemed 'inefficient' or are not properly able to function to work. Family members are also affected – not reporting to work or losing income because they have to tend to the victim's needs. How much more in this time of crisis when women are subjected to violence. There is indeed a spike in cases of violence against women and children as can be seen from the number of cases. Although some have not indicated if this has increased, this is already alarming. How would its socio-economic impacts seen or felt? Would we want an economy that thrives from sexual exploitation of

children, and gender-based violence against women, especially in this times of crisis? We have to make sure that economies and economic policies should be more responsive to the plight of marginalized women and girls.

This brief documentation gives us a glimpse of the effects of the pandemic towards marginalized sectors, and the lack of response by governments to address the specific needs and situation of women and girls in different sectors, including those internally displaced by conflict. It is imperative to analyze how authoritarian leadership has responded to the crisis, a measure of how effective their leadership is in this pandemic. Dire situations like this has elicited various and diverse responses from citizens calling for truly responsive and effective actions from their governments.

An analysis of the gendered impacts on policies and programs, and incorporating the voices of women and girl children within preparedness and response policies or practices are some ways to raise women and girl children's plight and concerns in times of crisis.

WEAVE urges that its government including ASEAN as a regional body, should be consistent in their gender- and sex- disaggregated data on violence against women and children, and other data as well including in the economy. We need to expose the issues women and girl children face starting with availability of data. There is a need to surface their stories and narratives so they would not remain invisible, and to inform a gender and age-responsive policies.

WEAVE strongly recommends the following:

- Incorporate a gender and needs-based analysis into preparedness and response efforts to improve the effectiveness of program implementation to address COVID-19 issues, and even after COVID-19;
- Prioritize marginalized women and girl children's issues in crisis and after this crisis, which includes accessible and free integrated services for women and girl children victims of violence;
- Develop policies that take into consideration the experiences and contexts of women and girls to prevent and eliminate discrimination, gender stereotyping, and violence against women and girls in the region;
- Support research that aims to surface the stories of marginalized women and girls, i.e. gender- and age- disaggregated data, gender lens/analysis;
- Measures to protect and stimulate the economy, from cash transfers to credits and loans, must be targeted at women, including elderly women, single mothers, sex workers/prostituted women, women IDPs, women in conflict areas, women migrants including undocumented migrant women, LBT, and women victims of violence;

- Implement policies and strategies that will promote girls' and women's economic empowerment by ensuring that women are recognized as important actors, and ensuring that opportunities will genuinely improve women's disadvantaged position in society;
- Integrate mental health in addressing health issues of women and girl children, even at the time of COVID-19. Spread awareness and information, and encourage them to seek help;
- Women's voices and their stories must be part of the agenda of ASEAN, ensuring that their meaningful and substantive participation is emplaced in all spaces and structures in government; and
- Appoint gender focal point in governments, and include representatives from women's organizations in advisory committees in coping with the pandemic.

Marginalized women and girls, even before the crisis, already experience the layers of systemic discrimination, violence and neglect given the gender neutrality and blindness as evidenced by policies, programs and responses. This is worsened during the pandemic, exacerbated by an approach that is militarist (more budget for military than healthcare) and resorts to criminalization rather than treating it as a public health emergency and violations of women's human rights.

A transformative approach that exposed gender inequalities is necessary, and daresay inevitable, in addressing systemic and structural discrimination that persisted for years. A general, nonspecific, non-inclusive approach to addressing COVID-19 will not work because there are specific contexts and distinct experiences of women and girls that must be reconsidered in planning and budgeting by government.³⁴

The pandemic has exposed that there is a 'new normal', but a 'business as usual' approach/response will no longer work. There is a continuing practical need from communities that ask and demand gender responsive relief packages and support systems especially in cases of VAWG. CSOs and feminist groups must continue to expose the disproportionate impact of this crisis to women and girls and how they act, negotiate, and rise above the situation.³⁵

³⁴ Directly lifted from WLB COVID Update #2

³⁵ Ibid.

The Weaving Women's Voices in Southeast Asia (WEAVE) is feminist regional network of women's organizations and advocates working at the national level in six countries in Southeast Asia: Kalyanamitra (Indonesia), Foundation for Women (Thailand), Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau (Philippines), SILAKA (Cambodia), Women's League of Burma (Myanmar), MKM (Brunei).

Established in 2014, WEAVE is a critical platform on women's rights that engage with national bodies and ASEAN, and works in three thematic areas: a) expose culture of impunity of states and promote access to justice as a fundamental human rights in Southeast Asia, b) work against sexual violence of women and girls in Southeast Asia, and c) expose and critique the male-centric, sexist, neoliberal nature of the ASEAN Economic Blueprint Pillar. To bring this forward, WEAVE engages in documentation of girl children and women's agenda, capacity building, and movement building, and utilizes both online and offline spaces.

In 2016, WEAVE launched its research, "Coming Out of the Dark: Pursuing Access to Justice of Girl Children in Cases of Sexual Violence", which aimed to demand accountability to governments including ASEAN to prioritize the issue of sexual violence of girls and women in the region. Girl children and women in ASEAN continue to bear difficulties in accessing justice despite the severity of sexual violence in the region, a harsh reality that remains unaddressed in this culture of impunity among the countries.

In its commitment to advocacy work, WEAVE values the experiences and voices of women and girl children in marginalized communities to enabling them to participate and bring their agenda to the region. WEAVE organized a Women's Regional Camp in the six countries in ASEAN, to create a safe space for intergenerational sharing in the region.

