

DEALING WITH COVID-19 AND BUILDING THE FUTURE FROM GENDER EQUALITY RECOMMENDATIONS

The COVID-19 crisis has drastically changed political and social agendas and priorities, and all public policies must be reoriented to respond to these priorities. It is therefore essential to take into account the gender perspective, to ensure that the measures adopted in the short, medium and long term are as effective as possible, both for women and men, and no one is left behind, in accordance with the commitment set out in the Basque Country 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Along the same lines, the United Nations has indicated that addressing the needs of women will strengthen the response to COVID-19. Likewise, the main international and European organizations and several countries have declared the need to incorporate the gender perspective in the response to the pandemic and have published guidelines to that effect.

In the belief that taking into account the different initial situations and needs of women and men when dealing with this multidimensional crisis is a question of efficacy, social justice and a public responsibility, Emakunde-Basque Institute for Women makes the following recommendations for tackling COVID-19 and building a more equal future.

RECOMENDATIONS	REASON
<p>1. To guarantee the functioning of care resources for gender-based violence cases and access to such resources for all victims, considering their diversity.</p>	<p>Confinement has increased the risk of women who suffer violence in their homes, making it difficult for them to seek help. It is therefore essential to ensure victim care services are in working condition and are accessible, with the necessary reinforcements and adaptations being made to that end. It is also important for the prevention of further violence that services for men who are or have been violent continue to operate, particularly in cases where they continue to live with their partners.</p>
<p>2. To guarantee access to resources for gender discrimination cases.</p>	<p>In a context of crisis and massive job destruction, the public authorities must ensure that there is no direct or indirect discrimination based on gender. Therefore, they must ensure that the care services for these cases are in place and accessible, making the necessary adjustments to this end.</p>
<p>3. To guarantee the safety and response to the needs of all socio-sanitary professionals who work on the front line and are most exposed to the virus, taking into account the specific needs of women who are predominant in this field (doctors, nurses, assistants, carers, etc.).</p>	<p>It is a priority to protect and address the needs of people, mostly women, who are on the front lines of the COVID-19, working intensively and under pressure and putting their lives at risk for the good of everybody.</p>
<p>4. To guarantee the safety and needs of all staff in other essential services working on the front line who are most exposed to the virus, taking into account the specific needs of women, particularly in sectors where they are in a majority (pharmacists, cashiers, cleaning staff...).</p>	<p>Besides the health professionals, there are other people who are providing essential and public-facing services, many of them women and in low-value and low-paid jobs such as supermarket cashiers and cleaning staff for essential infrastructure. They are also working intensively and on the front line and must be protected and cared for.</p>
<p>5. To guarantee the safety and response to the needs of elderly people who are the most vulnerable to COVID-19, considering the specific needs of women who are in the majority in this age group.</p>	<p>The elderly are a high risk group, particularly those over 80 years of age and are predominantly women (65%). In these moments of confinement, those who live alone and have no family support should be given the help they need. In addition, women, who generally have lower incomes, it is essential to maintain their purchasing power.</p>
<p>6. To consider the specific needs of single-parent families and other social groups in a situation of special vulnerability, where women are in the majority.</p>	<p>Under normal conditions, there are groups of women who are in a particularly vulnerable situation, such as women who are heads of single-parent families, or women who suffer from other discriminatory factors, such as having a disability or being in an irregular documentary situation. It is very probable that the conditions</p>

	imposed by lockdown have aggravated their situation even further and it is necessary to provide them with the support they need.
7. To adopt measures for economic sectors with a large presence of women that have been particularly affected by the crisis, such as tourism, hotels and restaurants, local businesses, culture, employment in the family home, etc.	Support must be given to those sectors that are suffering most from the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, many of them with a majority presence of women.
8. To ensure that economic, fiscal and employment promotion measures proposed benefit women and men equally, considering the lower and more precarious presence of women in the field of employment.	Women are participating less and under worse conditions in the labour market. The existing wage gap is proof of this. The economic, fiscal and employment promotion measures proposed in connection with the COVID-19 must mitigate these inequalities and not exacerbate them.
9. To guarantee that the social protection measures envisaged benefit women and men equally, considering the higher incidence of poverty and exclusion in them.	Women have less income than men and poverty and exclusion have a greater impact on them. The social protection measures proposed in the context of the COVID-19 should reduce these inequalities, not increase them.
10. To adopt measures to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on those working in the non-formal sectors of the economy, taking into account the specific needs of women, particularly in sectors where they are in the majority, such as domestic workers.	It is mostly women who are employed in the informal sector and make up a significant percentage of the female workforce in these economies. In this context of crisis, this situation places them in a more vulnerable situation and makes it more difficult for them to access any public aid being granted to deal with COVID-19.
11. To articulate measures to compensate for the non-functioning or limited functioning of public services related to education and care (pre-school, educational centres, non-urgent social and health services...), which favour co-responsibility and mitigate the overload of work in caring for families, which falls mainly on women.	As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, public services such as those related to the education sector or to services in the socio-health field considered non-essential or urgent have ceased to be provided. All this huge work of educational and welfare support has been assumed by families and presumably mainly by women. It is essential to establish measures to alleviate this overload of work (teleworking, domestic and care work, support for study from home...) and to prevent this situation from widening the existing inequalities between women and men.
12. Use household confinement to promote a more egalitarian culture by removing gender stereotypes, encouraging good behaviour and promoting greater participation of boys and men in domestic and care work.	It is important to pay attention to what is happening in households during times of confinement and to take advantage of the time that families are spending together to promote a more egalitarian culture and good behaviour and to eradicate gender stereotypes and roles that prevail in many households. Confinement has led many people - especially men - to become aware of all the work involved in running a household and caring for dependent and sick people. This is a great opportunity to encourage now and in the future an equal sharing of domestic and care work between men and women and to encourage boys and men to do their share, thus alleviating the burden that falls disproportionately on women.

<p>13.To ensure a balanced presence and participation of women and men and a gender perspective in decision-making areas.</p>	<p>Women and men must be in a balanced decision-making process regarding initiatives to respond to and recover from COVID-19, whether at a local, regional or autonomous community level. The diversity of views will lead to better results and will enrich the final decision. In addition, women's and feminist organizations should be involved and their capacities tapped.</p>
<p>14.To guarantee a multi-level and coordinated response from equality policies and bodies to COVID-19.</p>	<p>The policies, programmes, bodies and organs for equality at the three levels of the Basque public administration (Basque Government, provincial councils and town councils) must be adapted to the new context and provide a coordinated and focused inter-institutional response so that the measures adopted on the COVID-19 situation have a positive impact on the equality of women and men in the short, medium and long term.</p>
<p>15.To adopt measures so that domestic and care work, performed outside and inside the home, is recognized socially and economically in order to foster the transformation towards an economic and social model that places care and sustainability of life at the centre.</p>	<p>The COVID-19 crisis has made it clear that jobs involving the care and assistance of people are essential to the maintenance of life. This paradigm shift to put care at the centre of all policies must be consolidated in the future, as the sustainability of our species and the world depends on it.</p>
<p>16.To create spaces, instruments, methodologies that facilitate the incorporation of the gender perspective in the institutional response to COVID-19.</p>	<p>In this context of crisis intervention, it is necessary that those who must make decisions and those who have to put them into practice have the necessary spaces, tools and methodologies that facilitate the incorporation of the gender perspective in their work.</p>
<p>17.To monitor the impact on women and men in all their diversity of the measures taken to address COVID-19 and on the most vulnerable individuals and groups.</p>	<p>It is essential to know the impact that the measures being implemented during COVID-19 are having on women and men, in order to avoid any negative effects they may have on equality and to reinforce the positive ones.</p>