Addressing the vulnerability of women in the COVID-19 crisis

Women make essential contributions as frontline responders – and face particular vulnerabilities – during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. In Asia and the Pacific, UN Women has been focusing on ensuring gender equality during COVID-19, also with the support of UN Volunteers like Fanny Arendt (Sweden). We share her story and perspective.

"Women and girls are disproportionately affected in times of crisis. It is essential to recognize the gendered dimension of pandemics, in order to strengthen COVID-19 responses at the national, regional and global level," says UN Volunteer Fanny Arendt (Sweden).

Fanny serves as Programme Analyst for Governance, Peace and Security with the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Thailand. She supports programmes preventing violent extremism, strengthening women’s leadership roles in peace and security efforts, and enhancing
women’s access to justice.

The response to COVID-19 has implications on peace and security, including on women’s rights and opportunities to participate in resilience-building efforts.

"Gender dimensions span a wide range of societal structures and tend to be overlooked in crisis situations like this," Fanny shares.

To capture the multiple roles that women take on during crises, I have contributed to providing analyses and updates on state action and response plans that impact women and men differently during COVID-19. --UN Volunteer Fanny Arendt with UN Women

So far, Fanny has developed knowledge products, general guidelines and a vision for programme adjustments so that UN Women’s activities can meet the new needs and challenges posed by COVID-19, now and in the future.

Going beyond her usual responsibilities, Fanny is also providing humanitarian surge support to the Pacific region, which is simultaneously facing two crises at present: the coronavirus outbreak and the effects of the tropical cyclone Harold. She provides situation reports and input to ensure that women’s protection needs are included in national action plans.

It feels natural for me, as a UN Volunteer, to provide all the support I can during these humanitarian crises to help vulnerable groups who face particular challenges. While it is a difficult time in many ways, I find inspiration and excitement from being actively involved in addressing these emerging issues, especially in my role as a UN Volunteer. --UN
Volunteer Fanny Arendt

Fanny’s assignment is funded by the Government of Sweden, as part of the partnership between Sweden and UNV on the Full Funding programme. Fanny is one of 40 volunteers serving with UN Women so far in 2020 across nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

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Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 5: Gender equality, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals