

#InclusiveLockdown:

Key Practical RECOMMENDATIONS by African Women & Girls

On Friday, 27th March 2020, we had a [heart-to-heart conversation](#) with our online audience on the impact of the [#COVID19](#) outbreak on African women and girls, led by our Executive Director, Memory Kachambwa ([@Kachambwa](#)) and Head of Communication, Mildred Ngesa ([@MildredNgesa](#)).

Quite a number of African countries have already gone on a total lockdown while others anticipate the same to manage the spread of COVID-19. The [heart-to-heart conversation](#) was necessary for us to collectively reflect on the impact of COVID-19 on African women and girls and ask ourselves critical questions that we believe will lead to all leaders taking the necessary measures to facilitate an [#InclusiveLockdown](#) in all their responses to fighting the pandemic.



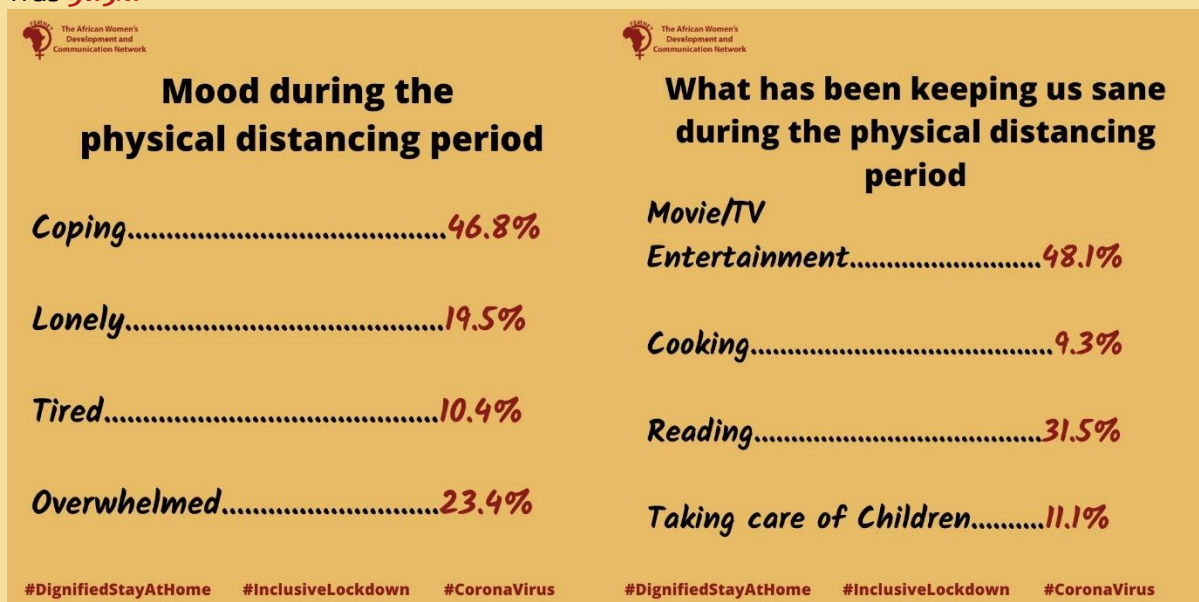
- ❖ What does it mean to women and girls in all their diversities - who hold the center of lives & livelihoods together?
- ❖ What does this mean for the pregnant woman who needs in-house health services?
- ❖ What does it mean for women and girls in the rural areas who have to go to their farms and fetch water to provide for their families?
- ❖ Multiple news outlets have reported the number of domestic violence has increased, what happens to the women and girls trapped in abusive homes?
- ❖ What does it mean for the woman who cannot afford to stock up on menstrual products because she has to choose to provide food for her family?
- ❖ What about women who are dealing with pre-existing conditions who have to go and get medication, for instance those with HIV and AIDS.

- ❖ How about women in informal economies living from hand to mouth and lockdown is not an option?
- ❖ And our sisters who are sex workers and there is a curfew and physical distancing precautionary measures?
- ❖ What about women who constitute over 70% of the workforce in the horticulture sector now rendered jobless with increasing global travel bans?

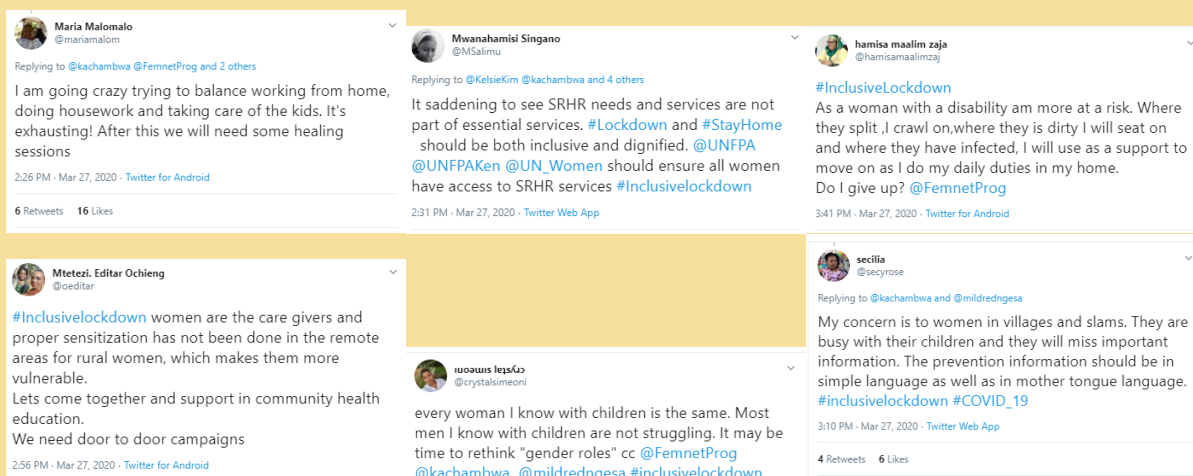
While we agree that a lockdown is much-needed in fighting this global pandemic, African women and girls in all our diversities are urging our government leaders to facilitate a dignified and inclusive lockdown.

Here is a summary of what African women & girls had to say about COVID-19

During the week, we had asked how everyone was feeling and keeping sane during this physical distancing caused by the [#COVID19](#) outbreak. **46.8%** of those who responded were coping while **23.4%** were feeling overwhelmed. The highest coping mechanism for those who responded was watching movies and TV entertainment at **48.1%** followed by reading which was **31.5%**.



For 2 hours, Memory & Mildred interacted with African women virtually, who had a lot to share on what staying/working at home and lockdowns means to them. Here are some of their sentiments.



[Get all the conversations here](#)

KEY Recommendations

Critically, during the heart-to-heart [#InclusiveLockdown](#) conversation, African women and girls voiced their key challenges, how they are coping and what they urgently expect and need from their governments' COVID-19 response plans and measures.

Below is a summary of each of the key challenge that African women and girls in all their diversities are facing and the practical actions they are recommending at country level: -

| Key CHALLENGES highlighted | Practical RECOMMENDATIONS to Governments |
|--|---|
| ❖ Lack of women's participation in national COVID-19 response teams | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ensure women's rights organizations are part of national response teams for equitable, gendered and inclusive response. ❖ Generate gender aggregated data on COVID-19 leadership and its impact on vulnerable populations. |
| ❖ Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and products for women and girls of reproductive age as well as young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Conduct SRHR needs assessment during the pandemic and #StayHome. Work with the mainstream ministries to ensure basic SRHR services like menstrual products and family planning pills/services are part of 'essential service kits' to be made available for free to all women and girls in need. ❖ Activate family planning media campaign which outlines where and how women can access SRHR services. ❖ In partnership with mobile companies, run a targeted SMS campaign on SRHR to educate and reduce the risk of teenage pregnancies and unwanted pregnancies. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Invest and support partners to run mobile clinics which are safer for women and girls. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increased gender-based violence and child abuse at household levels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Organize a national wide campaign to educate and emphasis on #SafeStayHome free from gender-based violence and child abuse. ❖ Issue guidelines on how to protect children welfare and safety at home. ❖ Promote existing Toll-free numbers for reporting gender-based violence alongside the numbers for reporting COVID-19 cases. ❖ Support and finance separation homes/safer house/hostels - it would be ideally if men who perpetuate violence are removed from their houses to public hostels so women can stay home safely with their families. ❖ Resource referral system to work fast and effectively. ❖ Support/finance online/phone counselling support. ❖ Scale up resources and support to stop rapidly increasing cases of female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage in targeted communities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increased burden of unpaid and domestic care work and the risks of contracting COVID-19 among women associated with handling patients at domestic level. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Work with men influencers to promote positive masculinity at home during this pandemic through social media campaigns. Men influencers should include political leaders and how they engage in day to day work in their households including domestic chores and supporting children and those who are sick. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Loss of income for women small scale traders, informal workers, domestic workers, sex workers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Set facility to bail-out women owned business to keep their business afloat ❖ Support women and youth-led businesses to produce and procure essential services needed e.g. masks, sanitizers, relief food etc ❖ Scale up cash transfers to include diverse communities of women who are not ordinarily in the cash transfer category. ❖ Work closely with the trade unions to ensure workers' rights are protected especially in the sector which employs more women including the horticultural sector, example farm workers, service and hospitality industry etc. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increased intersectional oppression for diverse | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Support women's rights and feminists' organizations to conduct an intersectional analysis on how diverse women are being impacted with COVID-19 and what are their |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>populations impacted by COVID-19.</p> | <p>unique needs - including sexual minorities, women and girls in rural areas, women in informal settlements, women in informal sector, sex workers, women with disabilities, elderly women, teenagers, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Upon receiving the in-depth analysis and recommendations, work with different government authorities and other stakeholders to respond and support each diverse communities. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Lack of support for women and people with disabilities especially in the lockdown. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Deliberately work closely with organization that advocate for the rights of people with disabilities to ensure public health information, communication related to COVID-19 mitigation and practical and essential needs of people with disabilities are prioritized and responsive. ❖ Provide the much-need financial support to families and caregivers who need to take care for people with disabilities. ❖ Ensure an accessible hotline telephone number for people with disability to communicate with the government and health care workers to ask questions and share any concerns. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Inadequate gender-responsive and inappropriate information on COVID-19 - not enough sensitization has been done for example targeting diverse vulnerable groups including children, elderly persons, people with disabilities, those living in rural areas, refugees etc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Dissemination of appropriate gender responsive COVID-19 information to fit various audiences in different contexts for instance rural population with no access to technology, people with disabilities (Brailles), LGBTIQ etc. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sporadic and inadequate government support to women in frontline especially nurses. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ensure adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) reaches all nurses especially in rural communities. ❖ Provide hardship allowances and support as appropriate. ❖ Provide child care support for the nurses with care responsibility of their children. ❖ Provide psychological support to health providers especially nurses. |

| | |
|---|---|
| ❖ Lack of access to safe and clean water especially in informal settlements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ensure households with no water connection have access to safe and clean water as well as supporting provision of water supply via mobile tanks. ❖ Ban children to fetch water in wells or public water point to reduce the risks of COVID instructions - they are less likely to follow prevention protocols and with less people in public spaces, children going to fetch water can easily be abused and harassed. |
| ❖ No shelters for homeless women and children. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide decent shelter for homeless women and children to prevent them from COVID-19 exposure. ❖ Ensure they have access to essential survival package/kits. |
| ❖ Increasing mental health disorders and limited psychosocial support for all, especially children and young people. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ The lockdowns, quarantine measures and overall uncertainty of COVID-19 is disrupting livelihoods and resulting in increasing levels of anxiety, stress, depression and hopelessness amongst the populations, particularly affecting children, young people as well as those managing existing mental health conditions. ❖ Ministries of Health in every country should work closely with organization that advocate for mental health rights to provide psychosocial support and other mental health interventions to affected individuals and their families. |
| ❖ Increasing technology related violence against women and girls. | ❖ Governments have the ultimate responsibility to ensure safeguarding measures are in place to prevent and punish online harassment, bullying and other types of cyber violence on online platforms. |

At regional level, we invite all women’s rights advocates, activists and feminist to collectively call for continental wide inclusive COVID-19 response plan [#InclusiveLockdown](#) as well as urge their African Union leaders to forge a united front and call for Africa debt moratorium.

We invite you all to feel free to use these practical recommendations in your continued advocacy to influence policy makers and policy influencers at national and regional level.

THANK YOU