

THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON GENDER NORMS IN INDONESIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND VIETNAM

A literature review by Shane Harrison and My Linh Nguyen
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ACRONYMS

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation
WSME	Women-owned and led Small to Medium-sized Enterprises

DEFINITIONS

Gender	A social construct that defines what it means to be a man or women, boy or girl in a given society – it carries specific roles, status and expectations within households, communities and culture. Gender is not the biological difference between men and women, boys and girls (CARE 2019).
Gender equality	The equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men and other genders of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male (CARE 2019).
Gender norms	The accepted attributes, characteristics, roles, and rules of behaviour for women and men at a particular point in time by a specific society or community (Investing in Women 2019a). Gender norms are social norms that specifically relate to gender differences (Haider 2017).
Social norms	Beliefs about what others do (empirical expectations) and what others think one should do (normative expectations) (Bicchieri & Penn Social Norms Training and Consulting Group 2016).
Women's Economic empowerment	CARE defines women's economic empowerment as the process by which women increase their right to economic resources and power to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. This requires equal access to and control over economic resources, assets and opportunities as well as long-term changes in social norms and economic structures that benefit women and men equally (CARE 2016).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a systematised literature review on women's economic empowerment and gender norms during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work was undertaken for the Australian Government's Investing in Women (IW) program to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted gender equality and gender norms in IW's operating countries of Indonesia the Philippines, and Vietnam. The aim of the study was to derive information on how gender norms in these countries had been impacted by the pandemic and identify initiatives that the private or non-government sectors had implemented to shift gender norms or address gender inequality in this context. We also endeavoured to identify positive and negative forces that have impacted gender norms. In October 2021, we conducted a systematised review of academic databases and the publications of non-government organisations, multilateral organisations, civil society organisations, and private sector companies using predefined search terms for relevant materials published from January 2020 onwards. The findings from the review are briefly summarised below.

Impact on women's employment, carework, and experiences of violence

Indonesia saw significant economic impacts upon women and girls as a result of the pandemic. A significant proportion of Indonesia's female labour force is concentrated in the informal sector and in sectors such as tourism and garment manufacturing which continue to be negatively impacted as we move into the second year of restrictions and public health measures (The World Bank 2020). While employment rates have slowly recovered over time, many women and men are still experiencing reductions in pay and working hours (Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). The literature indicates that women have taken on more caregiving responsibilities compared to men, and that even though men are taking on more domestic work, women's workloads remain disproportionate (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan 2020). There is also evidence that suggests that gender-based violence may have increased during the pandemic, with few survivors choosing to report to service providers. There are also reports of increased rates of child marriage in some contexts (Rahiem 2021).

The Philippines has seen significant reversals in its long-term economic gains. Filipino households have faced reduced earnings, food consumption, and savings, as a result of the pandemic (Cho et al. 2020). As with Indonesia, Filipino women report facing increased care burdens due to the disruption of paid work and school closures (Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility 2020), and that this has negatively impacted their physical well-being

and mental health (Hill, Baird & Seetahul 2020). Although men report taking on more household responsibilities, these contributions have increased off a low base and appear to be perceived as temporary (Dizon & Medina 2020). The literature indicates that reported cases of gender-based violence have decreased during the pandemic, most likely due to movement restrictions and reductions in service availability. There are significant concerns, however, around increased reported cases of online sexual exploitation and abuse of children compared to the same period in 2019 (Save the Children 2021). There are also some positive indications of shifts in gender norms through Filipino women taking leadership roles during the pandemic, with female health workers at the township level often leading the service response.

Vietnam has in the past had one of the highest female labour force participation rates in the world. However, the economic sectors with the greatest concentrations of women saw the most significant reductions in working hours as a result of the pandemic, causing a widening of the gender gap in the labour force participation rate (ILO 2021). Paralleling Indonesia and the Philippines, Vietnam has seen women's unpaid domestic and caregiving workloads increase, with this negatively impacting upon their physical and mental health (Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). School closures have particularly affected Vietnamese women, as they have had to take responsibility for child supervision and online learning (Giang & Huong 2020). While men have begun to take on more domestic work, it does not appear to be an equal responsibility between women and men in the household. As a result, women are being forced to take time off, take leave without pay, or quit to take care of children (UNICEF 2020b).

There are reports that gender-based violence has increased based on case trends supplied by service providers (Giang & Huong 2020). This is reported to be because of tensions within the household, more time spent together, and alcohol consumption (Giang & Huong 2020; The Institute for Social Development Studies & Hanoi School of Public Health 2020). Across all three countries the pandemic appears to have rolled back gains in women's economic empowerment and positive shifts in gender norms. However, there are also opportunities for change, most notably through men's involvement in domestic work and women's leadership roles in township level public health responses.

Challenges and opportunities for shifting gender norms

We could not identify any initiatives that had been purposefully undertaken to leverage the pandemic to shift gender norms. Consequently, we identified methods the private sector has employed to address gender equality during the pandemic. This included, for example, companies assessing the impact of the pandemic on migrant and temporary workers, older persons and minorities, and other aspects of their supply chain and operations. While we found that some companies have provided retraining and reskilling for employees, this data does not report the extent to which women have benefitted from these opportunities. Some companies are providing greater access to services for gender-based violence and mental health support, as well as implementing methods for reporting complaints or concerns relating to COVID-19. We found that these measures, combined with training on gender-based violence, harassment, and respectful workplace cultures, could be an opportunity for facilitating gender norms change.

The pandemic has meant that the amount of hours men spend on caregiving has generally increased. Implementation of flexible workplace arrangements and public campaigns could build on this to promote positive norms and sustain this change in behaviours. However, organisational systems and leadership perceptions would need to shift to accommodate all work contributions regardless of where, when, and by whom, work is being done. In the review, we also found instances where companies have attempted to increase the reach of financial services to women, including through financial literacy and digital skills training. However, increasing girls' engagement in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM) needs the support of changes in gender norms around women's leadership and technical capacities. In response to disrupted supply chains, we also found that some financial institutions have provided resources to women-led enterprises to recover. This review also indicated that employees value women's leadership in the workplace, but improving the representation of women in leadership roles requires shifts in norms around caregiving, violence and harassment, and workplace discrimination.

Positive and negative forces for progressing shifts in gender norms

This review found that there were opportunities that could be leveraged by different stakeholders in the pandemic to progress shifts towards more equitable gender norms. We discussed these forces in the context of the workplace and with regard to the three main actors: government, investors, or civil society. For government, this has involved the direct participation of women in COVID-19 responses and through the policy measures they have developed. While across Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam there has been limited involvement of women in health leadership during the pandemic, in the Philippines, women have been leading public health actions and decision-making at the township level. All three governments have implemented broad-based policy-measures to address reductions in household income, which we can assume benefitted women in poverty, but further support is needed for unpaid carework. We also found that investors such as the International Finance Corporation and Investing in Women have positively influenced the behaviour of their clients and private sector partners through the development of gender-related guidance notes and advice. Lastly, we found several examples of civil society organisations - such as the Worker Rights Consortium, the Gender Network Platform, and CARE International, - that have advocated and acted to protect women's rights during the pandemic. This review showed that although measures of gender equality have largely reversed over the last two years, actors at all levels of society can contribute to positively influencing gender norms, even in the midst of difficult economic circumstances and societal upheaval.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a systematised review of the literature on women's economic empowerment in the COVID-19 pandemic conducted for Investing in Women. The review itself synthesises information on how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected women and girls with respect to economic empowerment and gender equality across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. This report conveys the findings of the review process, with its primary purpose being to inform Investing in Women's work with its partner organisations to improve gender equality and to shift gendered social norms in these countries of operation.

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant negative impacts upon the physical and psychological health of women and girls throughout the world. In addition to the direct impacts of the novel coronavirus, the pandemic has also been observed to cause a deepening of pre-existing gender inequalities between women and men, girls and boys (Fisseha et al. 2021). Research suggests, for example, that in different contexts women and girls have faced increased rates of family and intimate partner violence (Kourti et al. 2021), greater burdens of unpaid carework and domestic work (Sarrasanti et al. 2020), reduced access to sexual and reproductive health services (Both, Castle & Hensen 2021), increased levels of child marriage (UNICEF & UNFPA 2021), and worsening labour force participation rates and slower re-entry into labour markets (World Economic Forum 2021).

Investing in Women is an Australian Government funded aid program that targets inclusive economic growth through women's economic empowerment in South East Asia. Established in 2016, Investing in Women endeavours to improve women's market-based economic participation through encouraging gender equality, facilitating impact investment for women's small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and developing interventions that positively shift gender norms. For gender norms, the initiative targets four specific norms through its programming with partner organisations in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, including; women's perceived primary role as caregiver; men's perceived role as family provider; perceptions that certain jobs are women or men only; and perceptions that women are better in support roles and men are better leaders.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its evident impact upon women and girls, Investing in Women recognised the need to review the research literature to understand how COVID-19 and the associated public health measures have impacted social norms and gender equality in its operating contexts. This review is designed to complement research being conducted by Investing in Women in Indonesia on the effects of the pandemic on social and economic norms, and areas where the pandemic has caused positive shifts

in gender norms towards greater equality. It is important to state from the outset that evidence of initiatives undertaken to shift gender norms in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam during the pandemic was scarce. As such, this review focuses on the impacts of the pandemic on women and girls within these countries, private sector initiatives that have been implemented, and positive and negative forces that have impacted upon gender norms.

Report overview

This report is divided into three main sections. This, the first section, has introduced the background to this literature review and the Investing in Women program. The second section proceeds to provide details on the methodology that we employed, including the search strategy and the limitations that we faced. Then, in the third section, we present the findings of the review organised into three main sub-sections. The first sub-section addresses how COVID-19 has impacted gender equality and women's economic empowerment across Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The second sub-section then looks at different examples of how private sector companies have addressed gender norms during the COVID-19 pandemic, in both their business practices and internal operations. The third sub-section then outlines positive and negative forces affecting gender norms in these contexts. The report closes with a brief conclusion based on our analysis of the evidence on how the pandemic has affected gender norms and private sector initiatives.

METHODOLOGY

This literature review employed a systematised approach to analysing how COVID-19 has impacted gender norms and gender equality in Investing in Women's operating countries. This section details the methods that were employed to undertake the review, including the research questions, research method for academic and non-academic literature, data analysis, and limitations.

Research questions

Investing in Women recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions to gender equality across the world. In response to this, the program acknowledged that it was necessary to attain a broader understanding of current knowledge on how gender norms and gender equality has been negatively (or positively) impacted in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. As such, the literature review was guided by two main research questions:

- How does COVID-19 affect women's economic equality?
- What are the positive and negative forces for progressing shifts in gender norms?

Method

To address these questions, we assessed qualitative and quantitative evidence on women's economic empowerment published in academic journals and in non-academic databases and websites since the beginning of the pandemic. For the purpose of this review, we mark the start of the pandemic concurrent with the World Health Organisation being first informed of cases of an unknown pneumonia on 31 December 2019 and the identification of this as a novel coronavirus was identified by the Government of China on 7 January 2020 (WHO 2020).

Peer reviewed research

For academic peer reviewed literature, we conducted a systematic search for relevant articles using predefined search terms based on the categories of gender norms, gender-based violence, and COVID-19. These search terms can be found in Table 1 in Appendix 1. The search terms were kept purposefully broad to capture as much literature as possible related to gender norms and women's economic empowerment in the pandemic. The high volume of published material on COVID-19 globally, however, meant that we found it necessary

to limit the search geographically to studies conducted in South East Asia¹, and more specifically, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The search string combined these terms and searched across titles, abstracts, and keywords.

Databases that we searched included Scopus (131 results), Medline (75 results), Global Health (65 results), and Business Source Complete (28 results). These databases were chosen to enable a broad coverage of social sciences, health interventions, and business and economic literature. Articles were first excluded if they were not peer-reviewed journal articles, if they were not published in English, or if they were published before 2020. The remaining articles were then screened based upon their title and abstract to determine whether the full text would be reviewed. Many articles were excluded at this stage, as the search terms surfaced a large number of articles that explored the knowledge of different populations on COVID-19 or the psychological impact of COVID-19 and COVID-19 related restrictions. These were not relevant for addressing the review questions.

Non-academic research

To complement the academic literature, we also conducted hand-search of relevant websites and databases that contain research reports, assessments, and other materials relevant for addressing the research questions. This involved scanning publication and report databases for relevant literature published since the beginning of the pandemic, with report titles screened and included for review based on whether they addressed COVID-19 in Indonesia, the Philippines, or Vietnam. A report was then included in the review if the content of the full-text contained information on factors that impact gender equality, private sector engagement on gender equality, and women's economic empowerment. The organisations and websites that scanned can be found in Table 2 in Appendix 1, with these identified were based on the professional experience of the two reviewers.

¹ For this review, we counted South-East Asian countries as those countries which are currently members of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). As at October 2021, this includes Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam

Analysis

The academic and non-academic articles that were included for review were assessed against several categories prioritised by Investing in Women in the Terms of Reference for the review, including: women's economic empowerment, domestic and care work, violence against women, and approaches to shifting gender norms. Information that was relevant to these categories was collated from across the included texts, with the findings then synthesised into the narrative review contained in the following section of this report. While there was no formal assessment of the quality of the reports, data that was misleading or misrepresented has been purposefully excluded.

Limitations

There are two main limitations to this review. The first is that the limited time available for data collection and analysis meant that the websites and databases that were searched had to be limited. While we believe that this review has covered most research and reports on the topic, this may mean that there is evidence that we were not able to surface or that there are relevant statistics and other data covered in press releases and others forms of media. As the search was limited to publications written in English, this has also meant that information reported in Indonesian, the many languages of the Philippines, and Vietnamese were not included. Second, the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that data collection on gender equality and the implementation of social norms change initiatives has been incredibly difficult for researchers and service providers. As such, we found that there was limited publicly available information on the impact of gender norms change initiatives conducted by governments, multilateral and non-government organisations, civil society organisations, or private sector partners.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of our review of the literature and a discussion of this information with respect to shifting gender norms towards more gender equal societies in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The section itself is divided into three main sub-sections. The first addresses the impact of COVID-19 on gender norms and women's economic status in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, particularly in the domains of employment, carework, and gender-based violence. The second section then reviews gender initiatives conducted by the private sector, identifying opportunities for change and the challenges that these businesses have faced. Lastly, in the third section, we identify positive and negative forces for shifting gender norms in the pandemic at four different levels: workplaces, government, investors, and civil society.

Impact on women's employment, carework, and experiences of violence

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on employment rates throughout Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. At the beginning of the pandemic, government imposed measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 caused the closure of all but essential workplaces, while international demand for manufactured products and other services declined due to reduced consumer demand from other countries also implementing stringent lockdown measures (ILO 2020). As a result, 2020 saw a swathe of temporary and permanent staffing reductions, as well as reductions in working hours (ILO 2020). In the main, sectors where there are high concentrations of women workers tended to be hit the hardest, and women saw increased caregiving responsibilities in the face of school closures and lockdowns. There have also been reports of heightened levels of violence against women and children, prompted by increased financial and emotional stress, co-location with perpetrators, and alcohol abuse (UNESCAP 2020). While employment rates have slowly recovered in 2021, this sub-section addresses how the areas of employment, carework, and gender-based violence continue to be impacted by COVID-19 in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.



Indonesia

As with most economies around the world, Indonesia has seen significant negative economic impacts as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, with this reported to have disproportionately affected working women. While early figures showed that women and men were losing employment at similar rates and experiencing reductions in working hours, a significant proportion of Indonesia's female labour force is concentrated in the services, tourism, and garment sectors, which in 2021 continue to be negatively impacted by the pandemic (The World Bank 2020). For micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), an Asian Development Bank Survey indicated that 48.6% of 525 Indonesian MSMEs surveyed had suspended operations during the pandemic, while those who did not suspend faced disruptions in their supply chain, drops in foreign demand, delayed delivery of products and services, and cancellation of contracts (ADB 2020). In this same survey, women-led MSMEs reporting no sales increased from 39.7% in March 2020 to 50.6% in April 2020 (ADB 2020). There have been no further surveys conducted with MSMEs by the Asian Development Bank to understand the context in the second year of the pandemic.



For women working in the private sector, an Investing in Women survey conducted in December 2020 with 300 men and 300 women aged 18-60 working in large private sector firms indicated that many workers who had been suspended were working again (Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). However, 44% of women and 36% of men surveyed reported that they are still experiencing lower pay and 33% of women and 26% of men reported reduced working hours (Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). Indonesian women in the labour force also appear to be highly concentrated in jobs in the informal sector or are dependent on income from family businesses. In these cases, the weaker economic activity associated with the pandemic has had a greater impact on their economic well-being compared to private sector wage labour, as they have lesser access to formal social and workplace protections (UN Women 2020a).

Compounding health and finance-related anxiety, women and girls in Indonesia have seen increased housework and caregiving burdens during the pandemic. Conventional gender norms in Indonesia tend to assume that men are the main contributor to household income and the primary decision-makers in the family structure (Lembaga Demografi Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia 2021). While crises can present an opportune time to reshape and remake gender norms, they also often reinforce the prevailing gender norms and stereotypes associated with women and men in a given community. In a rapid gender assessment conducted by CARE International in the initial stages of the pandemic, for example, female tea pickers reported that they began their day at 3am (instead of 430am before COVID-19) to prepare morning and midday meals for their family. When returning from the plantation they would then have to prepare evening meals, conduct households chores, and oversee their children's studies (Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020). Similarly, in interviews conducted with 40 women and men aged 18-40 years old in Greater Jakarta and Greater Surabaya, women reported bearing the unequal burden of their household's unpaid care and domestic work (Lembaga Demografi Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia 2021).



These qualitative reports of greater domestic burdens are reinforced by quantitative data. In the Investing in Women survey of 300 women and 300 men aged 18-60 from large private sector firms in Indonesia, 90% of women and 81% of men reported more responsibility for housework and other caring responsibilities (Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in

Women 2021). In an online survey of 1,266 women and men aged 10 to 79 conducted by UN Women, 69% of women and 61% of men spent more time on unpaid domestic work, and 61% of women and 48% of men spent more time on unpaid care work. Notably, more than half of women surveyed mentioned that their partners help more at home and 45% said their sons help more than before (UN Women 2020a). These figures suggest that the pandemic may have prompted shifts towards greater equality in division of household responsibilities in Indonesian households. However, housework responsibilities still overwhelmingly fall on women, with Indonesia's National Commission on Violence Against Women finding in their online survey of 2,285 Indonesian women and men that the number of women engaging in housework for longer than 3 hours was four times the number of men, transwomen, and other respondents (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan 2020).

Since March 2020, more than half a million education institutions across Indonesia have closed and transitioned towards distance learning, with only a limited number of these institutions re-opening in the latter half of 2021 (UNICEF 2021). The literature indicates that women are largely responsible for the schooling of children, while also attending to household chores and other responsibilities (Lembaga Demografi Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia 2021; Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020). The results of the Investing in Women survey of employees in large private sector firms suggests that these increased responsibilities at home are negatively affecting the physical and mental health of women as the pandemic continues into the tail-end of its second year (Indonesia Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021).

Evidence also suggests that gender-based violence has increased during the pandemic. Difficulties in collecting official statistics mean that robust data on the incidence of gender-based violence is difficult to come by (UN Women 2020b). However, according to Indonesia's National Commission for Violence Against Women, cases of violence against women have increased by 12% since COVID-19 emerged in Indonesia. Similarly, The Legal Services of Indonesia Women Association for Justice reported receiving 97 reports by email and phone from 16 March to 19 April 2020, a significant increase from the 60 reports received in the preceding month (Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020). In a situation report produced by the United Nations Population Fund, the authors report that 122 cases of rape and sexual harassment were reported to the police from January 2020 to May 2020 compared to 175 cases for the whole of 2019 (United Nations Population Fund 2020). The actual incidence of gender-based violence in the community is likely to be higher because movement restrictions have prevented victims reporting (The World Bank 2020; Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020).

There are two main surveys which have attempted to gather data on incidence of gender-based violence in Indonesia during the pandemic. In an online survey of 2,285 respondents across Indonesia conducted by the Commission in from April to May 2020, they found that violence was particularly affecting women who are married, working in the informal sector,

aged 31-40 years, whose income falls below 5 million rupiah per month, and are located in the 10 provinces most affected by COVID-19 (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan 2020). In the second, The World Bank conducted a phone survey across six provinces in Indonesia with 866 women from July to early September 2020. The results indicated that 17% of women respondents had experienced injury, 4% felt unsafe at home, and 8% reported experiencing conflicts once per week in the six months prior to the survey. Indeed, 83% of the sample perceived that intimate partner violence in their community had worsened due to the pandemic (Perova & Halim 2020). Of the respondents to the World Bank survey, 10% of those who had experienced violence chose to report to a service provider, with most remain silent or telling relatives, friends or neighbours (Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan 2020). For those that did seek help, service providers have also had to limit their activity due to lockdowns (UN Women 2020a).



While gender-based violence is often associated with intimate partner violence or sexual violence, child marriage is a form of gender-based violence that can also see increases in emergency settings. A qualitative study of child marriage in Nusa Tenggara Barat, Indonesia, suggests that effects related to the pandemic are driving instances of child marriage. Adolescent girls participating in the study reported that they had decided to marry their boyfriends as a means to escape online learning, the increased burdens of household work, and the boredom of being confined to the home (Rahiem 2021). Confirming this qualitative study are anecdotal reports by CARE International staff in Indonesia, who report that during the pandemic several children have been married off after their graduation from junior high school (Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020).

CARE International notes that women have been largely excluded from leadership roles and decision-making in the public health response to the pandemic. This includes being prevented from attending meetings as they are organised with little attention to women's availability or are conducted at short notice. The additional care burdens women have faced also mean that it is difficult for many women to participate in community organising activities as they lack sufficient time. While CARE cites examples of women taking leadership roles in their communities to socialise information on COVID-19 and provide advice on equitable distributions of relief items, it has meant that they have to wake up earlier and go to bed later than prior to the pandemic to ensure that household responsibilities are taken care of in addition to their new role (Yayasan CARE Peduli 2020). Shifts in household income responsibilities also appear to be both a positive and negative force for gender norms change. While there are reports of women supporting their partners after they have been laid off from work, men are reported to feel uncomfortable working from home, and both women and men perceive the notion of a house-husband negatively (Lembaga Demografi Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Indonesia 2021). This indicates that while there may be small shifts in household responsibilities within the context of stay-at-home restrictions, it is unlikely to cause long-term shifts in norms around domestic responsibilities, as shifts in attitudes and beliefs do not appear to have accompanied small shifts in practice.

The Philippines

In the first three quarters of 2020, the Philippine economy contracted by 10% year on year (Cho et al. 2020). In a survey conducted by the Asian Development Bank with 1,804 MSMEs in the Philippines, 70.6% of respondents reported suspending their operations during the pandemic, while the remaining businesses faced supply disruptions and low domestic demand (ADB 2020). According to the Asian Development Bank survey, relatively more women-led MSMEs in the Philippines temporarily closed businesses, suffered greater losses in sales and revenue, and suspended monthly wages (ADB 2020). Indeed, over 59% of surveyed women-led MSMEs reported no sales of revenue in March 2020 due to temporary business closures, compared to 56.8% of men-led MSMEs. For the remaining firms that were open, almost 30% experienced more than a 30% reduction in sales and revenue (ADB 2020).



The pandemic thus negatively impacted women's economic empowerment and the financial resilience of households in the Philippines. The impact of COVID-19 on Filipino households has actually reversed reductions in poverty that had been achieved in recent years. Regular monitoring of low-income households conducted in the Philippines indicates that, although overall employment had recovered to 84% of pre-crisis levels by August 2020 as quarantine measures were reduced, household earnings have remained much lower than pre-crisis levels and household distress has deepened as households have drawn down on savings and reduced non-food consumption (Cho et al. 2020). For women, research conducted by Investing in Women suggests that they have suffered more from temporary suspensions and cuts in their hourly rate compared to men (Hill, Baird & Seetahul 2020). This same survey suggested that employer support for employees followed normative gender roles, with men receiving more paid leave and technical assistance while women received greater support for mental health and stress (Hill, Baird & Seetahul 2020).



As was the case with Indonesia, the literature suggests that women have faced greater burdens of domestic work and care work due to the pandemic. In surveys conducted by Investing in Women of 300 women and 300 men working in the private sector in the Philippines in December 2020, 89% of women and 81% of men report spending more time on home and family care responsibilities (Philippine Business Coalition for Women Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). A similar survey conducted by Investing in Women with 300 men and 300 women working in the private sector in the Philippines May 2020 indicated that 27.5% of women suggested that they felt more domestic pressure during the crisis and 70% of women reported more time

spent on food preparation (Hill, Baird & Seetahul 2020). This increase in volume of domestic responsibilities is having a negative impact on women's well-being, with 46.3% of women in the same survey reporting a negative impact on their physical health due to exhaustion from domestic burdens and 44% reporting a negative impact on their mental health from caring responsibilities (Hill, Baird & Seetahul 2020).

A gender and inclusion assessment of 951 persons from five different regions led by the Gender Based Violence Area of Responsibility² suggested carework has increased for all women and men respondents. Women were observed to be overburdened by domestic responsibilities, with this particularly affecting women with disabilities. Increased domestic work is reported to have been caused by the disruption of paid work and school closures (Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility 2020). Similarly, in a gender assessment conducted in Metro Manila, women report spending 7 hours on housework during the pandemic compared to four hours prior to COVID-19. In the main, women were reported to take on overall house management and were the primary decision-makers in the household (Dizon & Medina 2020). In all the available literature, men report taking on more household responsibilities with participants in the CARE assessment suggesting that they spend 5 hours on average on housework compared to 2.4 hours prior to the crisis. However, these studies suggest that men's contributions have increased off a low-base and these are perceived as temporary (Dizon & Medina 2020).

For gender-based violence, there are no significant studies that provide an indication of incidence during the pandemic compared to prior. In a rapid gender analysis conducted by CARE International the report notes that that from 20 March 2020 to 15 June 2020 a total of 5,040 cases of violence against women and children were reported in Metro Manila. This represents a decrease in reported cases from the previous year. Participants in the CARE assessment perceived that the cases were comparatively low during the quarantine period, however, several participants knew of cases of violence against women and children occurring. According to figures from the Philippines National Police and Department of Justice, during community quarantine, on average eight people a day were sexually assaulted, over 1,200 cases of crimes against women and children were reported in March and April 2020, and there were 602 rapes from 17 March 2020 to 23 May 2020 (UN Women 2020b). As these are only case numbers, they are not an accurate reflection of incidence of gender-based violence and do not provide information on patterns of incidence across the diverse geographic and sociodemographic composition of the Philippines.

In an online survey of girls aged 13 to 24 conducted by Plan International from April 20 to May 15 2020, most respondents had not observed violence at home or within their immediate environment (Plan International Philippines, 2020). Of those surveyed, 5% reported that they had observed violence at home and 17% had observed cases of violence against women and girls outside of their home (Plan International Philippines, 2020). Specific to the Philippines is concern about the online sexual abuse and exploitation of children

² The Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) brings together non-governmental organisation, UN agencies, academics, and other stakeholders to improve effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response to all forms of gender-based violence. The GBV AoR Coordination team sits in Geneva and provide policy advice and guidance on the implementation of GBV responses in emergency settings and leads standards and policy setting for GBV in humanitarian emergencies (Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility 2021).

associated with the closure of schools and deepening poverty. According to the Department of Justice, from March to May 2020, cases of online sexual abuse and exploitation increased by 264.6 % (202,605 more reports) compared to the same period in 2019 (Save the Children 2021). However, services for survivors of gender-based violence appear to have faced delays (Dizon & Medina 2020).



In contrast to the increased carework and the greater risk of gender-based violence, there are specific areas where gender norms have shifted in the pandemic. In CARE's rapid gender analysis, participants reported that women were engaging as volunteer block leaders and health workers to support the COVID-19 response. Not only does this provide an alternative source of income and information about the pandemic, but it also contributes to making women's leadership visible in the protection of the community. Furthermore, community health workers at the township level are often women, with these individuals providing primary healthcare services to their communities, organising awareness raising, and serving as a link to the government (Dizon & Medina 2020). This suggests that women's leadership within the health-sector response could be leveraged to amplify women as change agents and protectors of their communities.

Vietnam

As was witnessed in Indonesia and the Philippines, the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected working women in Vietnam. Vietnam has one of the highest female labour force participation rates in the world, with 70.9% of working-age women classified as in the labour force in 2019 (ILO 2021). Vietnamese women are mostly concentrated in the services sector at 36.8% of the workforce, with the remainder found in agriculture (36.1%) and the industrial sector (25.4%). As a result of the pandemic, working hours in 2020 were much lower than in previous years due to the closure of non-essential businesses, schools, and the lockdowns in countries that serve as Vietnam's export partners (ILO 2021). In general, the economic sectors which had the highest proportion of female labour experienced the greatest reductions in working hours (ILO 2021). While the third and fourth quarters of 2020 saw a recovery in working hours (with women's working hours recovering faster than men's), according to the International Labour Organisation women were working longer hours than men, making the double burden of economic and household responsibilities even greater (ILO 2021).



Of significant concern is that larger shares of women left the labour force than men due to the pandemic, contributing to a widening of the participation rate gap from 9.5% to 11.2% in favour of men. ILO found that the negative impact of the pandemic was felt more acutely by younger women aged under 24 and older women aged 55 and over, who were more likely to be found in informal employment (ILO 2021).

Several assessments conducted during the pandemic suggest that there has been limited changes in the division of domestic labour due to the pandemic, and moreover, that women's workloads have increased. In an Investing in Women survey of 300 male and 300 female employees from large private sector firms in December 2020, 82% of women and 77% of men report having more responsibility at home for housework, childcare, and caring for relatives (Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). For women, 57% reported that they had increased the time required for childcare and 46% had increased their time for children's schooling (Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021). Interestingly, these increases remained in place despite the fact that schools had reopened during the survey period. The impact of household work is of great concern, with over one-third of women reporting that caring for family is a cause of mental distress and 39% of women reported exhaustion due to domestic burdens having negatively impacted their physical health (Vietnam Business Coalition for Women's Empowerment & Investing in Women 2021).



Similar dynamics surfaced in other assessments. In CARE International's rapid gender assessment comprising 41 in-depth interviews of women and men from across Vietnam, respondents suggested that in both urban and rural settings women still conduct most housework and caring roles. Particularly impacting women has been the closure of schools, with women having to take care of children during the day and supervise online learning (Giang & Huong 2020). While male respondents suggested that they were taking on increased household responsibilities, aligning with the Investing

in Women survey, qualitative responses suggest that it is not their equal responsibility within the household (Giang & Huong 2020). In a parallel assessment conducted by CARE with 1,280 apparel and footwear factory workers from five provinces in Vietnam, 75.7% of female workers and 21% of male workers reported that they undertook more childcare and schoolwork support compared to before the pandemic (CARE International in Vietnam 2020).

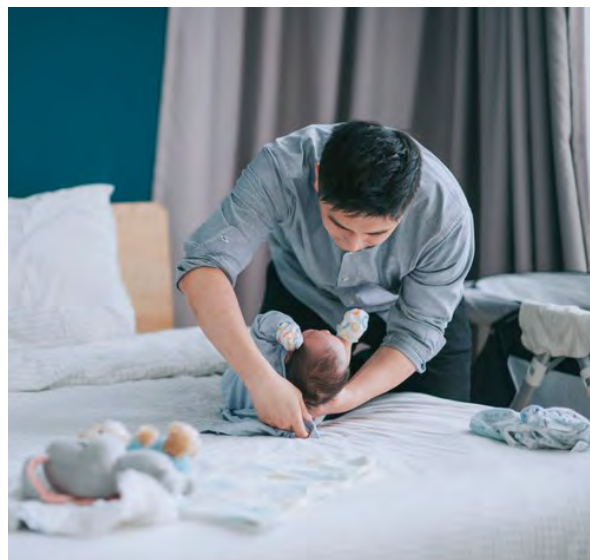
Support for online schooling is a particular challenge for women, with a UNICEF assessment noting that helping children to use online learning software was a significant difficulty for parents (UNICEF 2020a).

The additional housework burdens have a negative impact on women's ability to engage in paid employment. In a mixed-methods assessment involving a survey of 148 individuals (94% women) and 36 in-depth interviews conducted by UNICEF, respondents suggested that women had been forced to take time off, take leave without pay, or quit work to take care of children after school closures (UNICEF 2020b). While in each of these assessments there were few openings reported for shifts in gender norms around household divisions of labour, decision-making, or other responsibilities, the CARE assessment reported that shifts in division of labour were noted in households where women were working outside of the home and men were required to stay at home during the day due to the closure of the workplace or having been furloughed (Giang & Huong 2020). However, this report also noted that when women returned from their working day that normal divisions of household labour would resume. Indeed, in households where men have become economically dependent on their wives, men report feeling embarrassed, disgraced, or useless, suggesting there is a significant psychosocial cost (and thus, impediment) for men transgressing conventional gender roles (CARE International in Vietnam 2020).

As with Indonesia, there appears to have been an increase in cases of gender-based violence in Vietnam during the pandemic. According to Peace House Shelter, a home for women victims of violence and trafficking, the numbers of women coming to the service doubled during COVID-19 compared to the previous year. Similarly, in the first four months of 2020, the Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender, Family, Women and Adolescent (CSAGA) saw an increase of 208 cases (624 total cases) compared to the last four months of 2019 (Giang & Huong 2020). The only publicly available study on gender-based violence



Shifts in division of labour were noted in households where women were working outside of the home and men were required to stay at home during the day due to the closure of the workplace or having been furloughed.



during the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam is from a qualitative study conducted with 303 women aged 18-60 years old living in Hanoi that were experiencing domestic violence during the data collection period (The Institute for Social Development Studies & Hanoi School of Public Health 2020). This study reports that these women were enduring domestic conflict on a daily basis and that this had increased during the pandemic. Of the participants, 87.8% reported psychological violence, 34% reported financial abuse, and 59% reported physical violence. Of those who experience physical violence, the participants often suffered more than one form of severe physical violence at once and also noted that the frequency had increased during the pandemic (The Institute for Social Development Studies & Hanoi School of Public Health 2020).

The authors of these studies suggest that greater tensions within the household due to financial stress associated with loss of income, more time spent together in the household due to stay-at-home orders, and greater alcohol consumption have contributed to incidence of domestic violence (Giang & Huong 2020; The Institute for Social Development Studies & Hanoi School of Public Health 2020). These forms of violence are not limited to the home, with 19.8% of women and 11.9% of men in CARE International's survey of apparel and footwear workers noting that they had experienced at least one form of violence in the six months before the survey. (CARE International in Vietnam 2020). The most common form of violence reported was yelling and cursing by managers, however, 12% of participants indicated that there had been sexual harassment of female workers and 4.5% reported that there had been forced sex or sex in exchange for employment benefits (CARE International in Vietnam 2020). In sum, there appear to be few positive forces driving changes in gender norms within the context of the pandemic in Vietnam. Rather than creating openings for long-term structural shifts, the pandemic appears to be reinforcing normative gender roles, particularly through the occurrence of intimate partner violence.

Challenges and opportunities for shifting gender norms

In reviewing the literature to identify best practices for responding to the gendered impacts of COVID-19 and for shifting gender norms, we could not identify any dedicated initiatives specifically designed for this purpose in the context of the pandemic. Most interventions were (understandably) designed to promote physical health, well-being, safety, and livelihoods, from the perspectives of human rights and gender equality. On this basis, this section then presents evidence of initiatives private sector partners have undertaken to address gender equality during the pandemic. We have organised this into seven main areas based on our analysis of the main areas where private sector partners appear to have responded to gender concerns, including:

- 1 Identifying and assessing the risks and impacts related to COVID-19 crisis
- 2 Ensuring health, safety, and protection of livelihoods for workers
- 3 Violence and harassment
- 4 Flexible working and caring responsibilities
- 5 Filling gender gaps in digitalisation
- 6 Resilient supply chains and responsible purchasing decisions
- 7 Women's voice and leadership

There are two main limitations to the information that we present in this section. Firstly, it is not possible to understand whether a good practice has been introduced to address compliance requirements or is due to the existing systems which have been in place prior to the pandemic to support gender equality, for example flexible working, health and safety precautions in the factory. Based on an assessment of human rights disclosures and gender impacts of the most influential companies globally, the World Benchmarking Alliance found that companies with mechanisms to protect and empower women prior to the crisis have

a better response to it. Companies that already address the needs of women employees and supply chain workers are better able to adapt quickly and support these women during a crisis (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a). In this review, however, we don't have a full data of human rights status and/or gender equality in the workplace before the pandemic of all private sector partners who demonstrate good practice in responding to the COVID-19 impacts.



Secondly, in order to address gender equality private sector partners should address gender issues in all of their operations. The examples contained in this section represent just one aspect of a partner's activities on gender equality. It is not possible to tell from the information provided whether this activity is part of a comprehensive organisational strategy or an isolated case, making it difficult to identify where a company may sit in its levels of gender awareness.

Throughout this review we benchmark the given examples against the CARE International gender continuum (Figure 1) to understand where these practices are located and discuss where these practices may offer opportunities for shifting social norms. A recent publication by Learning Collaborative (2019) has suggested, however, that not every program can or should be turned into a social norms change initiative, with it perhaps being more important to understand how social norms influence behaviour and then incorporate a norms-shifting approach as needed. In the following review of practice, we incorporate this framework to understand private sector initiatives.

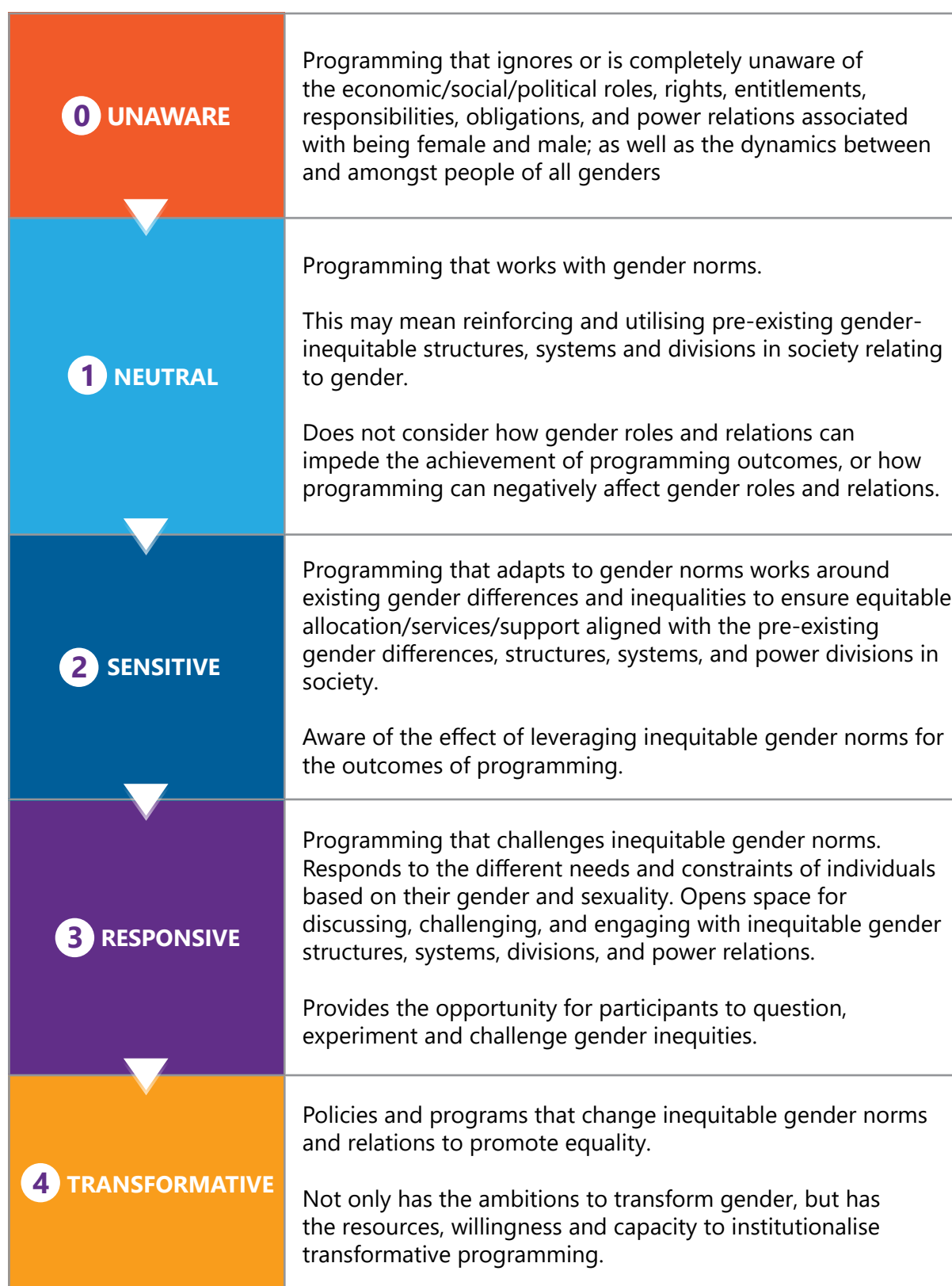


Figure 1: CARE International gender continuum

Identifying and assessing the risks and impacts related to COVID-19 crisis

In 2021 the World Benchmarking Alliance conducted a study of 229 global companies in the sectors of agricultural products, apparel, extractives, ICT manufacturing and automotive manufacturing to understand how they have been impacted by and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the companies included in the study, only 8% described how they considered the risks and impacts of their operations on vulnerable groups, such as migrant and temporary workers, women, older persons and minorities (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a). Similarly, other publications indicate that few private sector companies have responded to the pandemic informed by sex-disaggregated data, for example, Elo7, a client of IFC (IFC 2020). The lack of sex-disaggregated data means that many women's issues could be invisible and responses by private sector partners might not be equitable for different social groups. From the angle of shifting gender norms, the lack of sex-disaggregated data means that we are unable to assess how private sector partners justify their decisions to allocate resources or why they may support certain groups over others.

Ensuring the health, safety, and protection of the livelihoods for workers

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the livelihoods of workers, having devastating effects on their welfare and opportunities to engage in decent work. According to the World Benchmarking Alliance (2021a) study of the impact of COVID-19 on 229 global companies, 23% of the companies participating in the study indicated that they provided notice and re-training for workers made redundant and 21% demonstrated how they planned to re-employ them. Less than half of the companies participating in this study described how they provided financial support or full payment for workers who felt unwell or were quarantined due to testing positive with COVID-19, while one-third described the steps they have taken to avoid redundancies, including through the use of government schemes (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021b).

Despite the best efforts of private sector partners, data that describes good practices during the pandemic is rarely disaggregated by sex. As such, we do not know the extent to which women have been informed, consulted, or benefited, from re-training, upskilling, livelihood, and financial support from private sector companies. Furthermore, we don't know if gender-responsive mechanisms are in place to support women's meaningful participation and decision making on issues related to their health, safety, and livelihoods. Interventions to influence gender norms could include strengthen existing mechanisms to support women's participation and decision. This could take place, for example, through social dialogues,

tripartite dialogues, trade unions, or even Sexual Harassment Prevention Committees like those that have been set up by CARE International in garment factories in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar (CARE Australia 2021). When organising re-training and upskilling activities, there could be opportunities to shift gender norms by training women in skills that are concentrated in male-dominated jobs or sectors. It would require that private sector partners have strong awareness and commitment to address gender norms and gender equality in the workplace which consequently could impact business performance. Otherwise, re-training and upskilling activities would reinforce gender norms and stereotypes or even cause more job loss among women because they don't have the same level of access to information and technology as men do.

Violence and harassment

As previously mentioned, incidence of gender-based violence has reportedly increased in Indonesia and Vietnam due to economic stress, pre-existing levels of violence, and the imposition of stay-at-home orders to prevent COVID-19 transmission. This increase in gender-based violence is not just limited to the family environment and intimate partner relationships, but it is also occurring in the workplace. In response, companies are providing some support through access to information on gender-based violence resources, safety measures, redress mechanisms, and psychological, social, and medical services for survivors of violence (IFC 2020; EU, UN Women and ILO 2020). According to the World Benchmarking Alliance (2021a), 90% of the 229 companies studied reported having a grievance mechanism in place for raising concerns related to COVID-19 without retaliation. However, grievance mechanisms are not dedicated to reporting gender-based violence. Some companies are working with suppliers to ensure all workers are eligible for paid leave and financial support if they experience violence or sickness due to COVID-19 (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021b).

An example of good practices related to gender-based violence can be found in Avon's Isolated Not Alone. The global campaign (which was also implemented in Asia, including the Philippines, Indonesia, and Vietnam) raised awareness on GBV, provided information on available support, and called on governments around the world to ensure frontline services had the resources to support survivors. The campaign built on pre-existing awareness-raising initiatives and worked with their global network of partner NGOs. The Avon Foundation, for example, funds the National Shelter Network in Mexico to provide access to resources and immediate protection for around 3,000 women and children. In India, the Family Planning Association received USD 40,000 from Avon allowing them to provide essential services in rural communities across the country, including counselling for vulnerable women and children affected by domestic abuse (EU, UN Women and ILO 2020). This example suggests

that Avon's organisational structure has been set up to address gender inequalities and therefore has potential to shift gender norms if the intention is in place.

There are also examples of companies that have established grievance mechanisms for the reporting of GBV and are taking steps to prevent violence and harassment from occurring in the workplace and the supply chain. In a World Benchmarking Alliance (2021b) study of 35 apparel companies on their efforts to drive gender equality and women's empowerment, 80% had policies in place regarding violence and harassment, but only 31% had provided training on violence and harassment to their employees. An even greater difference can be seen in the supply chain, where 29 of the 35 companies surveyed (83%) required their suppliers to have a violence and harassment policy, but only six companies (17%) required them to provide violence and harassment training (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021b). In the World Benchmarking Alliance report and other publications, however, there is little information provided about the content of GBV and harassment training, and whether such training is compulsory for all workers and managers in the supply chain.

Based on this evidence, we recommend that providing quality training on GBV and harassment could be an opportunity for facilitating gender norms change. This training should include (at a minimum) building a respectful workplace culture, confidentiality, trust, and non-judgmental listening. When a company considers family and domestic violence as a workplace issue it presents another opportunity for changing gender norms. This approach requires equipping managers with better awareness of how domestic violence can influence work performance and absenteeism of employees. Training on gender norms can also help managers to become more sensitive and aware of how they should communicate with employees without incidentally reinforcing gender norms and stereotypes that might prevent women survivors of violence from seeking support.

Flexible working and caring responsibilities

Working from home, the loss of childcare options, and school closures, pose a significant challenge for employees, especially working mothers. The challenge of COVID-19 has proved that the capacity to work flexibly is critical to business continuity, occupational health and safety, workforce planning and risk management. UN Women and IFC recommend good practices from private sector partners in providing flexibility and family-friendly policies. Examples include flexible working hours, free childcare services for essential workers, subsidised financing solutions to support new mothers in their work-life integration, and social media campaigns promoting self-care and care for others while working from home (UN Women and IFC 2020; IFC 2020).

In a discussion paper produced by Male Champions of Change (2020), the authors present different options and forms of work flexibility. These include flexible start and finish times, reduced hours (part-time work), job sharing, split shifts, swapped shifts, compressed hours, flexible leave options (such as additional purchased leave), flexible working locations, and the ability for employees to design their own rosters (Male Champions of Change 2020). Flexible working brings many benefits for organisations, individual staff, and for progressing gender equality at work. According to Male Champions of Change (2020), employees report that flexible working addresses their health and safety concerns about the exposure to COVID-19 on public transport or in the workplace. They also report appreciating the personal benefits of working at home, such as lesser commute times, the ability to do household chores in work-breaks, and being able to spend more time with their family.

To promote flexible work as a strategy to achieve gender equality in the workforce, introducing a policy on flexible working is the first step. Equal access to flexible working by both men and women would require system shifts, including shifting social and gender norms. For example, it would require shifting organisational culture and leadership perceptions which prioritise performance and outcomes over inputs and presenteeism (Male Champions of Change 2020). Furthermore, this would require openness to support flexible options for everyone, including women, people with disability, people living in remote and rural areas, and those who have caring responsibilities. It would also require changing perceptions about the workplace (for example, that a workplace is not always equivalent to an office or factory), and the perception that the private and the public sphere cannot be separated from each other. A house can be a workplace, a home-schooling place, and the place for undertaking caring tasks to maintain a household.

Indeed, it is important for employers to understand that caring responsibilities are no longer a private matter for individuals to manage. When providing flexible working, organisations should create an expectations and enable all employees, particularly men to actively share caring responsibilities. Male leaders and staff can act as role models for shouldering caring responsibilities such as childcare and home-schooling. They can also show supportive and compassionate attitudes to their colleagues who have caring responsibilities, sharing their workloads and extending understanding to colleagues who have to reduce working hours to look after children, sick, or elderly people. Shifting perceptions related to workplace management would enable flexible working, help to achieve gender equality, and therefore would help business partners attract and retain top talent (Lund et al. 2021). Vice versa, flexible working could thus be an enabling factor for shifting gender norms.

A study on the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality by Alon and colleagues (2020) found that during lock down periods the number of hours which men spent on caring responsibilities has increased. As previously mentioned, this appears to be reflected in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, with men tending to spend more hours per day

on childcare and domestic labour than before the pandemic. According to the authors, circumstantial factors due to the crisis (such as schools and day care centres being closed) have made men realise the importance of care work and they have demonstrated greater appreciation for its role in their lives. Economic losses and the health impacts of the pandemic have presented an opportunity for many people, including men, to reflect on their values and perceptions with regard to happiness, success, and the meaning of life. Campaigns on social norms change could build on public discussions regarding the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on family and caring work to promote positive norms and create a reward system to sustain new caring behaviours. The introduction of flexible working coupled with shifting social gender norms relating to workplace culture and performance could be an example of setting up such a reward system (Male Champions of Change 2020).

When employees do return to the office, organisational systems (such as human resource systems and practices such as performance appraisal, recruitment, retention and promotion) should be adjusted to accommodate and value all contributions irrespective of when, where, how, and by whom work gets done. Male Champions of Change recommend that workforce planning strategies should be geared to ensure the rotation of employees between in-office/onsite and remote working to avoid central workplaces becoming centres of power dominated by men and people without caring responsibilities (Male champions of change, 2020).

Filling gender gaps in digitalisation

COVID-19 has led to an increase in consumer demand for online ordering and delivery, which has boosted the business of e-Commerce firms. In general, women have lower rates of cell phone ownership than men, including smartphones, and less access to the Internet (IFC 2020). Even when women do have access to these technologies, they often lack both the digital skills and financial knowledge to fully use them (IFC 2020). Low access to digital tools and services exacerbates existing gender inequalities in access to jobs, markets, and opportunities for learning (IFC 2020).

IFC has documented several actions by financial institutions and companies to increase the reach of financial services to women, who are an underserved consumer segment. Companies have provided training for women on using tools that are necessary for digital finance and financial literacy and numeracy, resulting in greater up-take and sustained use of digital financial services. For example, to address women's lack of participation and engage in digital capacity building, e-Commerce companies such as IFC's client Elo7 are providing several different initiatives. These include digital skills training for women, creating gender inclusive designs on platforms, leveraging sex-disaggregated data to draw insights about women in the platform economy, and using alternative distribution channels that employ women, such as taking orders and managing deliveries via the telephone (IFC 2020).

IFC and UN Women provide a number of recommendations to enable equal access and use of digital technologies and platforms. For example, companies need to consider the impact on female employees and female entrepreneurs in their supply chain, how to increase women's access and capacity to use digital technology by providing them with the appropriate equipment and digital skills training, or whether they should subsidise women's costs of adopting technology. Companies can also take a long-term community engagement and future talent pipeline development approach by increasing outreach to schools and universities and providing opportunities for girls to engage in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and maths) curricula, activities, and competitions (IFC 2020, UN Women and IFC 2020). Furthermore, we recommend that increasing girls' engagement in STEM requires changing gender norms on caring responsibilities, women's leadership and women's technical capacity. Facilitating gender norm change should start from early childhood education when children start day care. Any programs or initiatives to engage women and girls in STEM will have little effect if changes at a wider social level have not yet taken place.

Resilient supply chains and responsible purchasing decisions

The impact of COVID-19 has caused demand and supply shocks and disrupted global supply chains, to the detriment to the survival of the most vulnerable businesses. As mentioned previously, this has had a particularly large impact on the revenue and profitability of women-owned and led small to medium-sized enterprises (WSME) (IFC 2020). This makes resilient supply chains and responsible purchasing decisions even more important to ensure that workers, particularly women are treated fairly. In the pandemic, some financial institutions, such as commercial banks have provided financial and non-financial resources to help WSMEs recover, and in doing so, potentially lowered risk within the supply chain ecosystem. BRAC Bank in Bangladesh, for example, implemented a comprehensive set of measures, such as moratoria on loan repayments, reduction of interest rates, provision of a working capital facility, and webinars to provide strategic guidance for businesswomen after identifying the urgent needs of WSMEs during the pandemic (IFC 2020). This could provide an opportunity to advocate for the importance of changing gender norms.

Companies have also taken actions to build a resilient supplier network through supplier development—a business strategy that involves working with diverse suppliers, especially women-owned business to boost their performance and drive continued business growth. These programs provide education and mentoring, facilitate collaboration between suppliers, and identify promising suppliers that meet both current and future procurement needs. Women-owned business often lack the resources or expertise to compete for large contracts on their own. Companies can support suppliers with complementary solutions to form successful partnerships so that, collectively, women-led business can win larger bids. This leads to company benefits such as lower procurement costs, innovative solutions, and

supplier growth, which can strengthen the company's supply chains (IFC 2020). Research by Ewens and Townsend (2019) found that in some cases early-stage male investors are biased against women entrepreneurs. By supporting female entrepreneurs and business owners, changing gender norms around women's capacity in business management among senior leaders of financial institutions could also be an enabling factor for replicating good practices.

In the garment sector, women currently account for approximately 80% of the workforce (ILO 2020). Due to the impact of COVID-19, some garment factories have moved forward with technology upgrading. Women often work in positions which are more likely to be replaced with automation. Combined with the reduction of jobs due to the poor economic situation in garment-exporting countries, there could be a further increase in competition over jobs and women's share of employment in the industry may decrease (ILO 2020). As discussed above, when companies provide retraining and up-skilling, it could be an opportunity to change gender norms to support women find more highly-skilled jobs.

Women's voice and leadership

A study of CARE International (2020) on women's leadership in the crisis responses found that countries that have more women in leadership, as measured by the Council on Foreign Relations Women's Power Index, are more likely to deliver COVID-19 responses that consider the effects of the crisis on women and girls. Meaningful participation of women in public and political decision making leads to laws, policies, public decisions, budget allocations, services and programs which account for and equitably respond to women's experience, needs, and rights (CARE 2020). In the workplace, women's active participation in leadership positions results in improved business performance. In an assessment of 35 apparel companies conducted by the World Benchmarking Alliance, five companies (14%) maintain a gender balance between 40-60% women at the board level, seven companies (20%) at the senior executive level, 11 companies (31%) at the senior management level and seven companies (20%) at the middle management level (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a).

This same report also provides more insights about social perceptions of women's leadership capacity (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a). In the workplace context, women supervisors were found to be generally perceived as more approachable and empathetic than their male counterparts, making it easier for women workers to raise issues and requests. Similarly, women supervisors were generally perceived as more concerned about growth, well-being, and long-term productivity, as opposed to their male counterparts who tended to prioritise short-term production targets and have a more fear-based style of management. Interestingly, interview participants of this study valued both the empathy and the target-oriented mindset of the different management styles, with one participant stating "both are

equally important” (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a). This implies that changing gender norms regarding women’s leadership could be one strategy, but it also requires changing related gender norms on caring responsibilities, gender-based violence, and discriminatory norms related to race, class, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientations, and HIV status.

As discussed above, interventions to influence gender norms and support meaningful participation of women could include strengthening existing mechanisms, for instance social dialogues, tripartite dialogues, trade unions, and Sexual Harassment Prevention Committees (CARE Australia 2021). In addition, business could implement measures to promote women’s leadership, for instance, introducing policies and measures that accelerate the movement of qualified women into leadership roles at all levels. This may also include supporting women access quality and affordable childcare, eliminating violence and harassment in the workplace, and skill development programs (ILO 2021). Finally, engaging men is always critical in influencing gender norms and advancing women’s leadership. The ILO/IFC Better Factories program in Cambodia’s garment sector aimed to enable women leaders to engage equally and influentially in processes that affect their working life and beyond. These programs highlighted the need to engage men with respect to gender norms and show them how they can be allies in promoting gender equality while reflecting on their own gendered experiences (UNESCAP 2019).

Positive and negative forces for progressing shifts in gender norms

In the previous sections of this report, we have discussed a multitude of different factors that have impacted gender norms and women's empowerment in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. These have included the disproportionate impact of reductions in working hours for female employees, loss of sales and revenue for women-led MSMEs, greater caregiving and household responsibilities, and increased incidence of gender-based violence. Similar to most emergency situations, the COVID-19 pandemic also has the potential to offer opportunities for increasing awareness of restrictive gender norms and the importance of gender equality. Short-term changes have already occurred in some areas. However, our analysis indicates that this often circumstantial (due to lockdowns and requirements to work from home) and may not create long-lasting changes, such as men's involvement in household work and caregiving. During lockdowns, children have also seen how parents can share caring responsibilities, which is a positive educational opportunity. Norms-shifting interventions could build on this momentum to diffuse changes across societal levels.



As noted in the previous section, we were unable to identify any specific interventions designed to shift gender norms in the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, there does not appear to have been any academic or non-academic research on how COVID-19 responses (such as economic or public health interventions) and norms-shifting initiatives could complement to each other to change attitudes and

behaviours towards gender equality. As such, with this deficit of evidence, it is difficult to determine positive and negative forces for progressing shifts in gender norms in this context. Rather, we discuss the broader social context and areas where different actors can influence social norms. Investing in Women partner organisations in the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam could account for these factors when implementing gender-norms-shifting interventions in their operating contexts. In the following subsections we discuss these opportunities that could be leveraged across four main areas in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam: workplaces, governments, investors, and civil society organisations.

Workplaces

COVID-19 brought massive disruption to the workforce, which impacted every person and organisation across the globe (Microsoft 2021). A study on the future of work after COVID-19 noted three main trends after the pandemic (Lund et al. 2021). First, hybrid remote work could continue when workers could work from home three to five days a week. That is four to five times the level before the pandemic. Second, the continued growth in share of e-commerce and the 'delivery economy', which was two to five times faster in 2020 than before the pandemic. This trend is likely to disrupt jobs in travel and leisure, hasten the decline of low-wage jobs in retail stores and restaurants, and increase jobs in distribution centres and last mile delivery. Finally, companies have enlisted automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to cope with COVID-19 disruptions and may accelerate adoption in the years ahead, putting more robots in manufacturing plants and warehouses and adding self-service customer kiosks and service robots in customer interaction arenas (Lund et al. 2021). All three trends may have negative impacts on women who are working in the sectors more affected by these trends, including apparel, retail, and hospitality.

While much research has already discussed the benefits of flexible working, not all social groups benefit equally from flexible workplace initiatives (Barrero et al. 2021). A survey of more than 30,000 Americans on working from home (WFH) found that the benefits flow mainly to the well paid and highly educated. WFH is more valuable to highly paid workers because they have longer commutes and a greater opportunity cost for their time. WFH will yield larger benefits (as a percent of earnings) for men, the college-educated, those with children, and persons with greater earnings (Barrero et al. 2021). Indeed, in a study on the future of work after COVID-19, Lund and colleagues (2021) found that only 20 to 25% of workers could work remotely three to five days a week. Survey participants in this instance included financial managers, market research analysts and statisticians in eight countries of the study. In Europe and the United States, workers with less than a college degree, members of ethnic minority groups, and women were found to be more likely to need to change occupations after COVID-19 than before. Low-wage workers often moved to other low-wage occupations, for instance, a data entry worker could shift into retail or home healthcare. In order to remain employed, more than half of the low-wage workers currently in declining occupations would need to shift to occupations in higher wage brackets that require different skills (Lund et al. 2021).

In another study conducted on work trends, Microsoft (2021) found that business leaders that were thriving during the pandemic were more likely to be Millennials (or Gen Y) and Gen X³, male, information workers, and those farther along in their careers. In contrast,

³ Below is a recommendation of a breakdown by age (<https://www.zenefits.com/workest/gen-z-millennials-gen-x-baby-boomer-the-4-leading-generations-in-the-workplace/>):

- Baby Boomers: born between 1946 and 1964, currently between 57-75 years old
- Gen X: born between 1965 and 1980, currently between 41-56 years old
- Gen Y or Millennials: born between 1981 and 1994, currently between 27-40 years old
- Gen Z: born between 1995 and 2009, those in the working age are from 18-26 years old

Gen Z, women, frontline workers, and those new to their careers reported struggling the most over the first year of the pandemic. Of those in Gen Z (aged 18-26), 60% said that they were merely surviving or were struggling. Gen Z is more likely to be single and earlier in their careers, making them more likely to feel the impact of isolation, motivation struggles, and may have limited financial means to establish a workplace at home (Microsoft 2021). If we use gender lens to understand the disproportionate impact of the pandemic, we could say that women in Gen Z face more challenges in engaging in work, getting a word in during meetings or bringing new ideas to the table when compared to their male counterparts or compared to other generations such as Millennials or Gen X. Women in Gen Z could be most affected by the pandemic and changes in workplaces, and that this may further compound with the pressures of additional social norms around caregiving as they start to make reproductive health decisions.

This same study showed that 41% of the global workforce is likely to consider leaving their current employer within the next year. This number is even higher for Gen Z (54%) (Microsoft 2021). Women, Gen Z, and those without a graduate degree are the groups most likely to apply for remote jobs in order to accommodate caring responsibilities (Microsoft 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has induced waves of people to quit their jobs, seemingly in search of more meaning, more money, and more flexibility, among other wish-list items (Deloitte 2021). The Great Resignation which has taken place in many developed countries, has proved that changing social norms, perceptions and values regarding work life balance have an impact on behaviour changes.

In this context of the new 'normal', each actor in the society could play a role in removing structural barriers to achieve women's economic empowerment. In the following parts, we will discuss more about opportunities for positive shifts towards gender equality that could be leveraged by national governments in Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, multilateral organisations, the private sector, and civil society organisations, to create long-lasting positive changes to gender roles and relations.

Government

The COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) monitors responses taken by governments worldwide to tackle the pandemic, and highlights those that have integrated a gender lens (UNDP 2021). It captures two main types of government responses that integrate gender: (1) the direct participation of women in COVID-19 task forces, and; (2) national policy measures taken by governments. According to the gender response tracker, there is only one female member in the national task force of COVID-19 responses of Vietnam (1 out of total 14 members) and Indonesia (1 out of total 10 members), while the Philippines doesn't have any female member in its national task force. However, as mentioned previously, community health workers in the Philippines are predominantly women and decision-making for COVID-19 responses at the township (barangay) are conducted predominantly by local women. This provides a good example of women's leadership in a public health emergency.

In terms of women's economic security, Indonesia provides social assistance through unconditional and conditional cash transfers. Vietnam provides economic, financial, and fiscal support for businesses and entrepreneurs through tax deferral. The Philippines has implemented a large scale Social Amelioration Program to reduce the negative impacts of the pandemic on households, with one of the largest forms of cash assistance in the world in terms of the size of the population covered (Cho et al. 2020). As intended, this transfer has appeared to reach poorer and more vulnerable households (Cho et al. 2020), likely including female-headed households, rural women, women with disabilities, and other vulnerable women and girls.

To address violence against women, Indonesia has taken policy measures to strengthen service systems (for example, the continued provision of psychological support and coordinated accessible services), the collection and use of data, the continuity of health sector response to violence against women, and awareness raising campaigns. The Government of the Philippines has only taken policy measures to coordinate services, while the Government of Vietnam is yet to address violence against women in the pandemic from a policy perspective. All three governments haven't taken any policy measures to support unpaid care, a major barrier for women's economic empowerment.

Investors

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, uses its capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries (IFC 2020). As an investor, IFC can use its financing instruments to advance specific goals to protect workers' rights for clients receiving COVID-19 response funding. This could include goals around minimising job losses, promoting occupational health and safety, paid sick and family leave, access to childcare and other social protection, improving equitable access to health and other essential services without discrimination, and temporarily suspending debt recovery proceedings of microfinance institutions that would put workers under additional economic distress (Human Rights Watch 2020).

To date, IFC has advocated companies to take transformative measures in responding to the crisis, for example, finding new markets, digitalising the business, expanding teleworking options, implementing social distancing and other safety protocols as staff return to work, and retraining and reskilling the workforce. Implementing such changes may require additional finance and technical advice, thus IFC has increased the amount of financing available for companies to help them fight the pandemic by offering an additional USD8 billion in support to help sustain economies and protect jobs in the private sector (IFC 2020). In response to requests from IFC's clients and experience from companies, IFC has developed a number of gender-oriented guidance notes. These include:

- [COVID-19 and Gender-based Violence: Workplace Risks and Responses](#);
- [Childcare in the COVID-19 Era: A Guide for Employers](#); and
- [COVID-19 and Gender Equality: Six Actions for the Private Sector](#).

In this and the previous section, some of the good practices for advancing gender equality that we have reported have been produced by IFC clients as a result of their guidance. Another investor which has a critical role in promoting women economic empowerment in the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar is Investing in Women, an initiative of the Australian Government. Investing in Women uses innovative approaches to improve women's economic participation as employees and entrepreneurs and influence the enabling environment for supporting women's full economic participation. The initiative consists of three pathways: Pathway 1 works with influential businesses on shifting workplace cultures, practices and policy barriers to achieve workplace gender equality; Pathway 2 partners with Impact Investors and ecosystem builders to expand market opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – led by and responsive to the needs of women; and Pathway 3 works with partners to positively shift attitudes and practices to support women in the world of work. As an investment body, Investing in Women could create parallel impacts with its partner organisations in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Its partnerships under the pathways for social impact investing, gender equality in the workplace, and influencing social norms all represent opportunities for change as quarantine measures slowly reduce and

economies begin to recover. As an investor, convenor and broker, Investing in Women is in a unique position to influence and support business partners to drive change for women's economic equality.

Civil society organisations

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, civil society organisations have been actively driving and advocating gender-responsive responses to the impacts. Below are a few examples of how civil society organisations have taken joint actions to advocate for gender equality and human rights. They can be considered as positive forces for shifting gender norms in Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines.

The Worker Rights Consortium conducts independent, in-depth investigations and issues public reports on factories which produce for major brands. Its publications and advocacy help workers at these factories in their efforts to end labour abuses and defend their workplace rights. States, investors and civil society organisations can use data in [the COVID-19 Tracker](#) of the consortium to identify which brands are acting responsibly toward suppliers and workers. The worker rights consortium has field representatives in Vietnam and Indonesia.

The World Benchmarking Alliance (WBA) develops free and publicly available human rights and gender benchmarks to measure and incentivise company contributions towards the SDGs. The benchmark reports take a deep dive into how companies drive and promote human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment across their entire value chain to accelerate corporate progress in closing the gender gap (World Benchmarking Alliance 2021a). These reports contain detail findings and insights of good practices categorised by sectors and by ranking levels.

The Gender Network Platform (GNP) in Indonesia is made up of more than 20 trade union, business, employer, non-government organisations, and other organisations and institutions active in the sector. The Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection are also involved, as is the National Commission on Violence against Women. The GNP carries out research and capacity-building, promotes gender-based violence-free zones, supports the incorporation of gender-based violence prevention in collective bargaining agreements, and develops guidelines for employers. The GNP is also supporting advocacy on the draft Bill on Sexual Harassment Alleviation and on Convention No. 190 (ILO 2021).

At the global level, CARE International takes the lead in advocacy for increasing women's leadership at all levels of COVID-19 response structures and for increasing funding for women's rights and women-led organisations that are responding to the crisis. Each country office of CARE International in Vietnam, Philippines and Indonesia produced a rapid gender analysis (RGA) to assess the impacts of COVID-19 as well as the needs of different vulnerable groups and to inform the design of its response in gender sensitive or responsive ways. RGA reports provide sex-disaggregated data and information about gender power dynamics in relevant domains of inquiry such as gendered division of labour, access to public space and services, household decision making, and control over one's body. Findings and recommendations from these RGA reports are useful baseline sources to inform COVID-19 responses by different agencies, not just in CARE's programming.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically shifted the balance of economic and social opportunity. This has extended to the state of gender equality and women's empowerment, with state-imposed quarantine measures and physical distancing restrictions causing waves of negative impacts upon women's economic participation. While emergency situations, such as a pandemic, are often cast by gender equality advocates as opportune times for creating long-term shifts in gender norms and inequalities, they are also periods where advances in women's rights, agency, and opportunity can be (unexpectedly) rolled back. This literature review found that the impact of the pandemic in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, has had a negative impact upon women's economic and social status. In each of these economies, women have been primarily concentrated in industry sectors that have seen the greatest losses in working hours and jobs. Women were also observed to be highly concentrated in the informal sector, with this translating into lesser access to formal support and entitlements in the face of large-scale economic decline.

While men did take on more household responsibilities when confined to the home, this does not appear to foreshadow a dramatic redistribution in household labour. Most assessments indicated that this was a temporary arrangement, that men's income generation was the primary form of household income, and that women were responsible for the household, including the significant burden of online schooling responsibilities. Also of concern is data that shows there are increasing numbers of women dropping out of the workforce entirely, with this reducing women's economic resilience and widening labour force participation gaps. In the early stages of the pandemic, civil society organisations also forecast an increase in incidence of gender-based violence. The available case data and examples contained in this report affirmed this prediction. There are also reports of increases in child marriage in certain contexts.

It is crucial that at all levels of society there are efforts to positively influence gender norms and empower women economically. Private sector partners have already taken significant steps to make this happen in difficult economic circumstances, including through flexible workplace arrangements, responsible purchasing decisions, and initiatives to address violence and harassment in the workplace. If Investing in Women's private sector partners are to generate long-term changes in gender norms, an intervention needs to be designed with this intention. Otherwise, prevailing gender-unequal beliefs and practices may undermine any progress. Investing in Women has a comparative advantage in this operating approach: it can utilise its unique capacity to influence businesses as an investor; build gender capacity for business partners who receive investment; and connect with partners running campaigns to create long-term shifts in gender norms in the countries within which Investing in Women operates. Similar research in one or two years could provide more insights around to what extent interventions specifically designed with the intention to change gender norms could make a difference in behaviour change towards gender equality.

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APPENDIX 1: SEARCH STRATEGY

Table 1 outlines the search terms that were used for this literature review. The left hand column indicates the broad category from which the terms were derived, while the specific search terms that were employed are listed in the right hand column.

Table 1: Literature review search terms

Search Category	Search Terms
Geographic Location	Brunei Cambodia Indonesia Laos Malaysia Myanmar Philippines Singapore Thailand Vietnam
Pandemic	COVID-19 Coronavirus SARS-COV-2 COVID
Gender	Gender Gender equality Gender norms Social norms Gender role Gender stereotype Women's economic empowerment Caregiving Domestic work Housework Violence against women Domestic violence Intimate partner violence Gender-based violence Flexible working

Table 2 lists the websites and databases that were hand-searched for materials relevant to the impact of COVID-19 on gender equality and women's empowerment in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Table 2: *Websites and databases reviewed for non-academic literature*

Organisation or Database
Asian Development Bank
Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
CARE International
International Finance Corporation
International Labour Organisation
International Organisation for Migration
Investing in Women
McKinsey
Plan International
Reliefweb
The Asia Foundation
The World Bank
United Nations Children's Fund
United Nations Development Programme (COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker)
United Nations Population Fund
UN Women



INVESTING IN WOMEN
SMART ECONOMICS
AN INITIATIVE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Philippines: 22nd Floor, Zuellig Building, Makati Avenue cor. Paseo de Roxas, Makati City, Philippines 1225 | +63 (0) 947 387 1314

Australia: Level 5, 33 Ainslie Place, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia | PO Box 310, Civic Square, ACT 2608, Australia | +61 (0) 2 6249 6254

WWW.INVESTINGINWOMEN.ASIA