

Tackling the Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19 Times

Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, data estimated that 1 in 3 women will experience violence in their lifetime.

As countries went into lockdown, reports on domestic violence have spiked.

“Violence against Women and Girls does not only affect victims, it impacts the entire society through multiple generations. We must engage in an open dialogue and bring all stakeholders to the table. Every field, every sector must be involved.”

Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary General

“Only solidarity, empathy, and the will for action can turn this shadow pandemic around and give women and girls the rights and dignity they deserve.”

Heinz Fischer, former Head of State, Austria

The highlight of the event was the roundtable discussing how to tackle the Shadow Pandemic with Helen Clark, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand, Angela Cretu, CEO of AVON Cosmetics, Mohammad Naciri, Regional Director of UN Women Asia and Pacific and Ms Trisha Shetty, women’s rights activist and founder of SheSays.

Helen Clark highlighted the need to have more women in leadership to formulate gender-responsive responses against Violence against Women and Girls, arguing that “More attention is paid to issues that address women when women are there to do something about it”.

Along with raising awareness for domestic violence, Angela Cretu stressed that the private sector provides the necessary economic measures to empower women: “Only 10% of women report abusers to officials in fear of losing their children or livelihood. Businesses, together with governments need to create opportunities for women to gain financial freedom.”

With a unique perspective from the Asia & Pacific Region, Mohammad Naciri underscored that victims are not only trapped at home with their abusers, but digitalization has enabled the rise of online harassment and online misogyny: “We need to expand the legislation that criminalizes harassment as stalking. This does not exist in some countries.”

Considering the dramatic increase of domestic violence cases, Trisha Shetty especially advocated taking action by investing in support services for survivors and advocating for leadership that celebrates women’s dignity and proactively acts against Violence against Women and Girls.

Trisha Shetty emphasized, “we are leaving far too many behind. It is costing us progress to our society and economy.”

Ending violence concerns everyone!

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