

COVID-19

GNWP Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Appeal

June 2020

Country Update

Canada

Context and government response:

As of May 29, 2020, Canada has registered 82,418 cases of COVID-19, including 6,979 deaths. On March 18, 2020 Canada implemented a ban on foreign nationals from all countries and closed the Canada-U.S. border to all non-essential travel. The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) is one of the main economic response measures the federal government has implemented to provide temporary income support to those who have stopped working because of COVID-19.

As a part of the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, the federal government has also announced additional support for women and children fleeing violence by providing up to \$50 million to women's shelters and sexual assault centres including funding for facilities in Indigenous communities.

Summary of impact:

Nearly 2 million jobs were lost in April, bringing the total job loss to 3 million since February, with job losses concentrated in low-wage industries. In the core working ages of 25 to 54, the rate of decline for jobs held by women was more than twice that of men.

In Canada, the majority of federal and provincial public health leaders are women, including Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. Women leaders, such as chief medical officers, are playing a visible and powerful role in Canada's response, however women are also leading in areas such as frontline healthcare, community-based responses and the service industry. Women faced an increased unpaid care burden at home due to school closures and in healthcare setting since they are the majority of workers, as well as increased prevalence of domestic violence due to the lockdown measures. According to Statistics Canada crowdsourced survey, young women aged 15 to 24, were significantly more likely to report that they were very or extremely anxious about the possibility of violence in the home (12%), relative to men in the same age group (8%).

As of May 15, 2020, the Public Health Agency of Canada announced that 55% of confirmed COVID-19 cases are women and 45% are men, and of total death 53% are women and 47% are men – this data differs from that of other countries which have reported that men were that majority of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Several reasons for this are that Canada has had the most COVID-19-related deaths in long-term care facilities, in which women are overrepresented due to high life expectancies. The fact that women of colour are also disproportionately represented in the paid care work sector, including as personal support workers (PSWs), is another possible source of elevated risk to exposure.

Responses led by women peacebuilders:

Women's civil society organizations such as YWCA Canada are also advocating for a feminist approach to the COVID-19 response. They are calling on municipal, provincial and federal governments to implement policies such as universal paid sick leave for workers and emergency childcare for essential workers, to take a gendered approach to addressing homeless during the pandemic and to provide additional emergency funding to charities and non-profits. Advocates for gender equality are also raising awareness that more must be done to ensure women's needs are addressed in the government's COVID-19 response, and that the government must adopt an intersectional lens by taking into account race, age and socio-economic status.

The Canadian Women's Foundation have launched the Tireless Together Fund: a national emergency fund to ensure the provision of critical support to women and girls during the COVID-19 crisis by helping essential service providers reach women and girls and continue the operation of their services, Based on a survey in March, 80% of service providers are concerned about their ability to continue delivering services, while 66% are offering special programs in response to COVID-19 even within new constraints for civil society organizations.

Many programs that aim to build confidence, resilience and leaderships skills of girls, as well as trans, Two-Spirit and non-binary youth funded by the Foundation's Girls' Fund have also switched to an online format to continue engaging participants in discussions and community activities. Some programs are even going beyond their mandates and providing support not only to the girls, but also their families who are potentially dealing with stressful situations at home such as food insecurity, domestic violence or unemployment during the pandemic. They are working to lend laptops to girls who do not have access and to meet the needs of their families by providing accurate information on emergency supports.