

COVID-19

GNWP Mitigation and Adaptation Strategy and Appeal

October 2020

Country Update

Moldova

Context and government response:

As of October 20, 2020, Moldova has registered 67,302 COVID-19 cases, including 1,600 deaths. A state of emergency has been in March: public meetings were cancelled, movement restricted, and schools and universities are closed; some classes are provided online, but they were not accessible to many due to lack of access to the necessary equipment (laptops), software or internet. Moldova plans to re-open schools as of September 1, 2020, with mandatory masks for teachers, but not students, and some social distancing measures in place. On 24 March, 2020, the government has asked the military to help enforce the measures. Beginning in late May, the emergency measures began to be gradually lifted. On June 15, 2020, restaurants, malls and other public spaces, as well as the Chisinau International Airport re-opened, despite the fact that the cases were increasing. As of August 2020, most businesses are opened, but large gatherings of over fifty people are prohibited, and there are movement restrictions for people over 63 years old.

Impact on women and on peace and security:

According to GNWP member, Foreign Policy Association (APE), a major concern is that there are no masks and antiseptic in drugstores, and there are insufficient first hand medical kits necessary in hospitals for COVID-19 symptoms treatment. This puts women at a disproportionate risk, as they are at the forefront of addressing COVID-19.

There is also an increase of fake news related to the COVID-19, leading to disinformation. The NGO and media sector have criticized the government for "failing to provide the public with full information so as to conceal the real situation in Moldova", and for going ahead with the political schedule, including allowing partial parliamentary elections in one of the regions on March 15, 2020.

The COVID-19 has also contributed to the shrinking civil society space and dwindling resources for women's rights organizations. According to GNWP partners, both the government and international donors' funding has been redirected to COVID-19 response, and away from women's rights organizations, who do not have basic resources, including hygiene products. Those who are forced to work in the field such as those distributing food packages or working in domestic violence shelters face an increased risk of contracting the virus. Moreover, the government has used the emergency as an excuse to tighten its control – including new restrictions on the freedom of expression and freedom of the media – therefore shrinking the space for civil society work.

Response by women peacebuilders:

Women's rights organizations & other civil society groups have been mobilizing fast and have adjusted their programs and interventions to the new realities and needs. Examples of practices from Platform for Gender Equality / Gender-Center, National Coalition "Life without violence", PromoLex, Center "Memoria" and "Casa Marioarei", PA "Honor and Right of Contemporary Women" and other women's rights organizations and activists in the field of gender equality and violence, with support from UN Women, IREX Europe / EU, Oak Foundation and other partners in response to COVID-19 include:

- Exploration of innovative communication techniques: an online monitoring platform (monitor.md) was created to provide the public with updates on COVID-19 and its impacts. Using the platform, citizens can report the impacts in a public space, and make concrete requests of various authorities, including calls to prevent discrimination, human rights violations, spread of COVID-19;
- Relief packages and financial aid were provided to more than 1500 women and children who are victims of violence, elderly, women with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups.
- Increased services for victims of domestic violence: this includes online and offline services as well as temporary housing and telephone medical counselling.
- Increased support to women's activists and organizations, including those working in the Transnistria region through small grants, legal assistance and online counselling to prevent burnout.

Civil society groups and women peacebuilders' organizations in Transnistria region created a hotline for reporting cases of violence. Under quarantine conditions, this work is done by volunteers. They rely on a few donations from private individuals and businesses, or use their own money to fund their volunteering work.