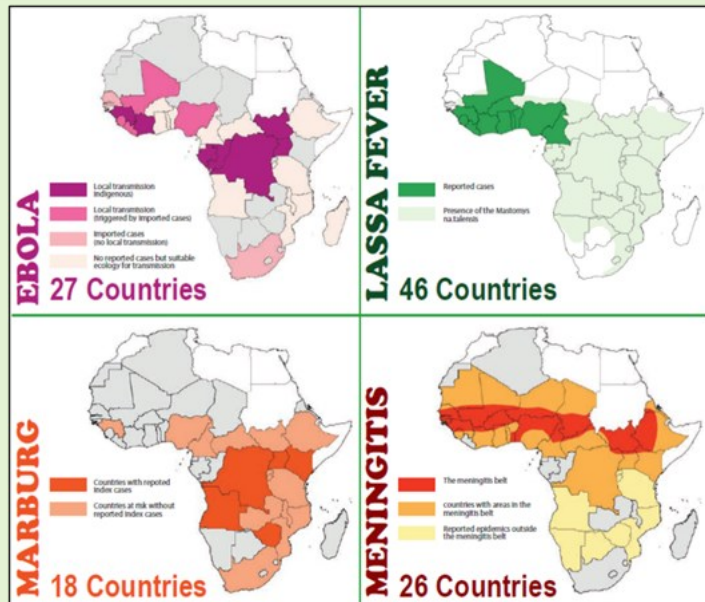


Outbreaks and Epidemics (O&E)

September 2021

The Issue



The impacts of disease outbreaks and epidemics (O&E) are never gender neutral as they deepen pre-existing gender inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political, and economic systems. Rapid gender-responsive mechanisms are therefore essential for relevant and effective disease O&E response.

Delayed responses to O&E results in extended restrictions on the movement of people and goods as measures of containment (lockdowns, quarantines, and school and market closures).¹ Such restrictions disproportionately affect women and girls who become overburdened with unpaid care work of children and the ill.²

Women are overrepresented in the informal economy and service sectors (retail, banking, hospitality, and social work) which are often most impacted by outbreaks and epidemics.³ Women are also overrepresented in the provision of healthcare services (paid and unpaid) and are therefore disproportionately

exposed to illness and loss of life. Women's employment in the face of events is therefore characterised by vulnerability and low or no pay.

Extended containment measures implemented in the face of O&E events have been associated with higher rates of gender-based violence (GBV) - labelled the "shadow pandemic" by the United Nations.⁴ Delayed responses to events have also been associated with higher levels of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and out-of-school children and youth (OSCY). SEA is inextricably linked with economic and food insecurity as a result of O&E events which also contributes to the rise in the number of child marriages, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and teenage pregnancies.⁵ Although school absenteeism and dropping out are a common phenomenon for both boys and girls during O&E, girl-children are more at risk.

Considering the underrepresentation of women in political and governance processes, decision making on public-health emergency response mechanisms often do not consider the gendered impacts of O&E and therefore do not provide the necessary social safety nets and protection for women and girl-children.



¹ UNWomen., 2020. UN Secretary-General's policy brief: The impact of COVID-19 on Women. URL: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Bonnet, F., Vanek, J., & Chen, M. (2019). Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical brief. International Labour Office, Geneva. URL: [http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Women% 20and% 20Men% 20in% 20the% 20Informal, 20](http://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/publications/files/Women%20and%20Men%20in%20the%20Informal%20).

⁴ UNWomen.,2020. Press release: UN Women raises awareness of the shadow pandemic of violence against women during COVID-19. URL: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/5/press-release-the-shadow-pandemic-of-violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.

⁵ African Union Commission (AUC), UN Women, OHCHR and UNFPA.,2020. Gender-Based Violence In Africa During The Covid-19 Pandemic. URL: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/gbv-in-africa-during-covid-19-pandemic>.

Key entry points and checklists

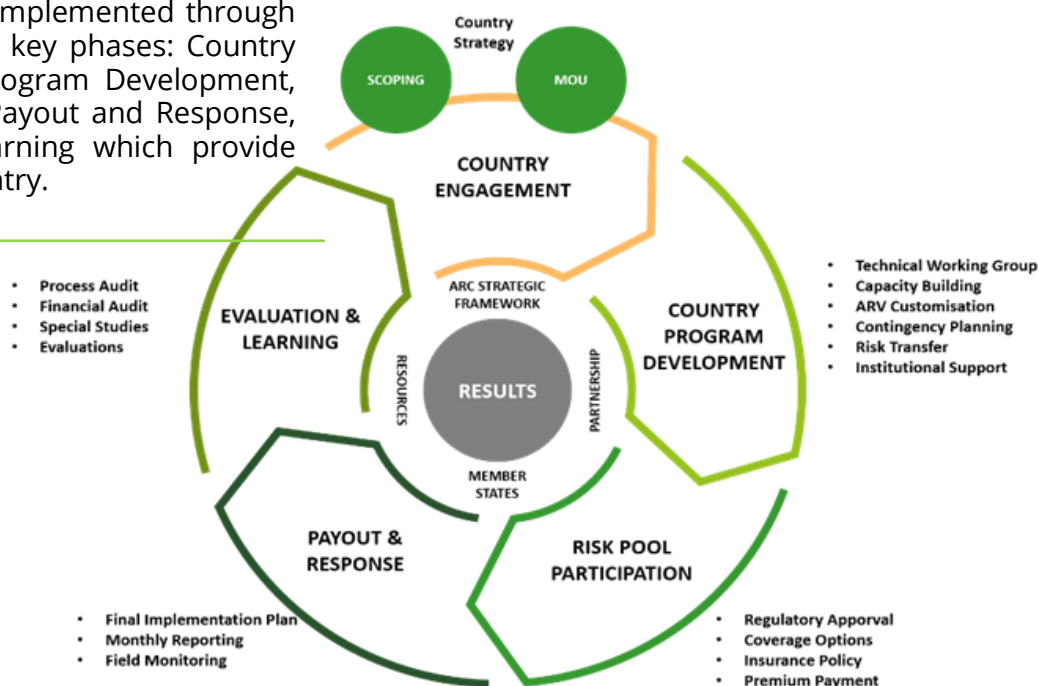


1 KEY ENTRY POINTS

The O&E Programme supports Member States through a 4-pronged approach to country preparedness and response to O&E:

- 1) Epidemic risk profiling and assessments on preparedness and capacity for early response.
- 2) Epidemic risk modelling of selected pathogens in countries affected.
- 3) Contingency Planning for efficient and timely response; and
- 4) Rapid deployment of capital to operationalise the pre-approved contingency plan.

The O&E Programme is implemented through a project lifecycle with 5 key phases: Country Engagement, Country Program Development, Risk Pool Participation, Payout and Response, and Evaluation and Learning which provide O&E with key points of entry.



1.1 COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT

- ✓ Gender analysis and collection of age and sex-disaggregated data of Member State's DRMF strategy and policies.
- ✓ Gender-responsive Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - ensuring there are clear provisions for gender in operational, administrative and programmatic issues.
- ✓ Engagement and early involvement of Ministry in charge of Gender.
- ✓ Incorporation of Gender-responsive strategies when providing technical assistance and support to member states experiencing outbreaks.

Key entry points and checklists



1.2 COUNTRY PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & RISK POOL PARTICIPATION

- ✓ Ensuring gender balance when setting up Technical Working Groups.
- ✓ Provision of capacity building on gender and O&E.
- ✓ Ensure gender sensitive Contingency Planning process including gender-responsive strategies and activities.
- ✓ Ensure use of gender analysis recommendations in O&E Preparedness Index.
- ✓ Ensure gender sensitivity in partnership building by having all stakeholders including CSO, Ministry in charge of Gender, gender focal points in public health sector as well as the private sector.
- ✓ Certificate of Good Standing to be issued upon explicit incorporation of gender-responsive policies and strategies as per the MoU and Guidance Note.

1.3 PAY-OUT AND RESPONSE & EVALUATION AND LEARNING

- ✓ Incorporation of O&E related gender- sensitive indicators for each country, needs assessments in the Final Implementation Plan as well as for Monitoring and Evaluation activities.

2 CHECKLIST

- ✓ Involvement of Ministry in charge of Gender to develop adequate gender-responsive national strategies on O&E.
- ✓ Gender-responsive operational and contingency plans.
- ✓ Gender balance in TWGs, ensuring that women are also represented in leadership positions (Programme Supervisors and Government Co-ordinators).
- ✓ Engagement with Development Partners and Stakeholders that are active in gender related policy advocacy.
- ✓ Incorporation of Gender-responsive mechanisms/strategies in technical assistance missions to member states experiencing outbreaks.
- ✓ Collection and use of sex-disaggregated data throughout project cycle.

RESOURCES

1. Gender Strategy: https://www.arc.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ARC_Gender-Strategy_2019.pdf
2. Gender & DRM Online training: <https://arcademy.talentlms.com/learner/courseinfo/id:164> French at <https://arcademy.talentlms.com/learner/courseinfo/id:170>
3. The Gender & DRM platform: <https://www.arc.int/gender-platform>
4. ARC gender page <https://www.arc.int/en/gender-dimension>
5. <https://www.africanriskcapacity.org/product/outbreaks-and-epidemics/>
6. <https://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/SexGenderInfectDis.pdf>
7. <https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/>



KEY MESSAGES

Outbreaks and Epidemics deepen pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political, and economic systems which in turn amplify their impacts. As a result, women and girls are disproportionately affected by such impacts and have become more time-poor; economically poor or disenfranchised; experience higher levels of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as a disproportionate loss of life and illness due to overrepresentation in care work (paid and unpaid).

The rapid containment of outbreaks is central to O&E's programme as this is instrumental in alleviating many of the negative impacts caused by long and unpredictable containment measures (lockdowns, quarantines as well as school and market closures).

Collaborative and end-to-end Gender-responsive approaches to Disaster Risk Management are therefore integral to effectively mitigate the true negative impacts brought about by outbreaks and epidemics.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ARC: African Risk Capacity
DRMF: Disaster Risk Management and Financing
GBV: Gender-Based Violence
MoU: Memorandum of Understanding
O&E: Outbreaks and Epidemics
OSCY: Out-of-school children and youth
SEA: Sexual exploitation and abuse
STIs: Sexually transmitted infections

For more information/ comments please contact gender@arc.int