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FOCUS

PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS DURING COVID-19

COMBATING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19: WHAT DOES THE CHINESE EXPERIENCE SHOW US?

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Abstract Previous evidence demonstrates that a public health crisis triggers and intensifies domestic violence, especially against women. The pandemic of COVID-19 supported this observation, as the world witnessed an increase in domestic violence. China has witnessed a similar trend. While the Chinese government is applying a stringent model of virus control measures over COVID-19 when compared to certain other countries, many questions remain: How is this impacting the situation of domestic violence in China? What has China done to combat domestic violence during COVID-19? What can we learn from the Chinese experience? This article intends to answer these questions by reviewing reports and media coverage and conducting interviews with stakeholders. First, it examines causes of domestic violence during COVID-19. Second, it analyses the types and features of domestic violence during COVID-19. Third, the article intends to discover the current difficulties in combatting domestic violence. Fourth, it presents good practices for specific local areas. Last, it concludes with recommendations for tackling domestic violence during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, by understanding the Chinese experience.

Keywords domestic violence, COVID-19, public health emergencies, pandemic

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INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, a virus that was later named COVID-19 broke out in Wuhan, China. By early February 2020, the virus had spread all over the country. To effectively control the virus, many cities and provinces, starting with Wuhan and Hubei Province, began imposing their own control measures that took various forms, from complete city lockdowns like Wuhan to minor movement restrictions. These control measures have demonstrated an estimable impact of domestic violence in China and the rest of the world.

Evidence drawn from previous experiences like the Ebola outbreak shows how a public health crisis triggers and intensifies violence against women.[1] The COVID-19 outbreak is no exception. As it became a pandemic, the surge of domestic violence also became a global trend. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) issued a report which shows that cases of domestic violence increased by 30% in France and 25% in Argentina. Hotline calls for domestic violence increased 30% in Cyprus and Singapore.[2] Canada, Germany, Spain, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) have witnessed an increased need for shelters, for victims of domestic violence.[3]

In China, a similar trend has been observed. For example, in Jianli County of Hubei Province, the police received 162 reported cases of domestic violence in February 2020, which amounts to three times more than the reported cases of February 2019.[4] The numbers in January 2020 also increased two times more than the figures of January 2019.[5] An analysis from those cases shows that 97.44% of the perpetrators are male,

[1] See Neetu John, Sara E. Casey, Giselle Carino & Terry McGovern, *Lessons Never Learned: Crisis and Gender-Based Violence*, US National Library of Medicine, available at https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7262171/ (last visited Oct. 5, 2020).

[2] See Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, *Violence against Women and Girls: The Shadow Pandemic*, available at eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic (last visited Oct. 5, 2020).

[3] Id.

[4] See Female-Emotion, 疫情期间家庭暴力翻了三倍，究竟是何原因 (*Domestic Violence Surged Three Times during the COVID-19 Pandemic, Why?*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/GFPmgJWfqeMEvmR2pdrLuA (last visited Oct. 5, 2020).

[5] Id.

94.67% of the victims are female, and 12.27% of domestic violence has been perpetrated by the older generation against the younger generation.[6] The local non-governmental organization (NGO) workers confirmed that this increase is a result of COVID-19.[7] Jingzhou City of Hubei Province also reported that, during the pandemic, domestic violence cases increased by almost two or three times.[8]

While the Chinese government was taking more restrictive policy in order to control the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to assess how are these measures impacting the situation of domestic violence in China? What measures has China put in place to combat domestic violence during the pandemic? What best practices can we use for future improvements from the Chinese experience?

This article intends to answer these questions by reviewing reports and media coverage and conducting interviews with stakeholders. First, it examines the causes of domestic violence during COVID-19. Second, it investigates the types and features of domestic violence during COVID-19. Third, the article aims to discover the difficulties in combatting domestic violence. Fourth, it presents best practices in specific local areas. Last, it concludes with recommendations for tackling of domestic violence during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

This article intends to paint a general picture of the situation in China. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize the diversity in tackling domestic violence during COVID-19 within China, including the level of strictness of local control measures, the actual situation of domestic violence, and the local responses to domestic violence.

I. WHAT CAUSED INCREASED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DURING COVID-19?

Although it may be possible for anyone to think of a few reasons why domestic violence increased during COVID-19, it still requires careful examination of all possibilities, so that the situation of domestic violence and the government's tackling measures during the pandemic can be evaluated.

A. COVID-19 and Its Control Measures

In China, the months of February and March in 2020 witnessed the most significant increase in infections and deaths resulting from COVID-19. Therefore, targeted lockdown

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[6] See Xiang Meizi, 她被丈夫掐脖、殴打近 7 小时：疫情期间被家暴，找谁来"撑腰"？ (*She Was Beaten by Her Husband for almost 7 Hours, Who Can Offer Help to Address Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19?*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/S5nycCn-j2h7HLT3c9ua4A (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[7] See Female-Emotion, fn. 4.

[8] See Kandian News Paper, 荆州反家暴组织：疫情期间家暴报警数，同期增 2–3 倍，受害者 "无处可逃" (*Anti-Domestic Violence Network of Jingzhou: Reported Cases of Domestic Violence to the Police Have Increased 2–3 Times and the Victims Have No Place to Escape*), available at https://kuaibao.qq.com/s/20200308A07JP100?refer=spider (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

policies, starting from Hubei Province, became nationwide since February 2020. The lockdown policies aimed to ban public gatherings and restrict the movement of individuals for the purpose of reducing the spread of COVID-19. The lockdown policies encompassed a wide range of restrictions, including (but not limited to) the following measures: 1) Hotels, restaurants and other venues or services that generated big crowds of people were required to shut down unless they were necessary, such as hospitals. 2) Resident compounds were restricted to individuals who were legitimately living in the area. Anyone wishing to enter or exit had to show a valid permit proving residence, or was subject to registration upon the approval of the team leader at the community checkpoints. 3) Individuals were required to stay at home unless there were urgent issues to be dealt with, such as needing a doctor. Similar measures also applied to villages. After March 2020, measures have been eased in certain part of China based on the improvement of the situation against the virus. However, most cities and villages experienced these strict lockdown policies in February and March 2020.

B. The Situation and Policy Impact on Domestic Violence

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown policies negatively impacted people's economic, social, and cultural lifestyles; as a result, the imbalance of power between men and women increased the cases of domestic violence.

1. The Economic Dimension. — The most direct influence of COVID-19 and the corresponding lockdown policies was the rise in the unemployment rate. According to information from the National Statistics Bureau of China, due to the impact of the virus, in February 2020, the unemployment rate reached 6.2% of the population, which accounted for an increase of 0.9% compare to that of the previous two months of 2020 and the month of February 2019.[9] This figure indicates that, in the first two months of 2020, China had an estimated 5,000,000 people who lost their job due to COVID-19.[10] The financial situation became a major cause of the power imbalance between intimate partners and spouses, Unemployment, salary reductions, and loss of jobs created uncertainty and pressure. These became contributing factors behind domestic violence against women and they may occur more frequently during the pandemic. The following case is an example.

On March 13, 2020, a woman living in Guizhou Province was violently beaten by her

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[9] See ZHANG Yi, 就业形势随复工复产有所好转 压力下保持稳定具有基础和条件 (*Employment Situation Becomes Better as People Are Returning to Work and Stability under Pressure Has Conditions and Foudations*), available at http://www.stats.gov.cn/ tjsj/sjjd/202004/t20200419_1739640.html (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[10] See Net Ease News, 疫情期间，中国已有约 500 万人失业！(*An Estimated 5,000,000 People Lost Their Jobs during the Pandemic*), available at https://3g.163.com/air/article_cambrian/F818FK6I05351LIV.html (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

husband because the financial situation of the family was tight, and the husband became angry after trying to ask for money from his wife, which resulted in a quarrel.[11] These cases are not rare. According to an NGO addressing domestic violence in Hubei Province, the financial burden caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 in families generated new conflicts between intimate partners and spouses.[12]

The economic difficulties contributed to the surge of domestic violence against women, and *vice versa*. According to UN Women, during the outbreak of COVID-19, domestic violence against women caused a loss of 1500,000,000,000 US dollars, and this number could increase, along with the rise of gender-based violence in the context of the pandemic.[13] Therefore, addressing domestic violence is not only an urgent human rights need, but also an economic concern. Since the two factors can mutually reinforce each other, it is important to bear in mind that any situation that might cause a loss of income or financial uncertainty for a family could also be a driving factor in domestic violence. This requires policymakers and aid workers to be sensitive to the family's economic situation and domestic violence cases.

2. The Social Dimension. — Under the lockdown policies, many companies required their employees to work from home. Schools that normally start in spring were closed until summer. Social distancing became a new rule. As a result, family members were confined in their homes, spending 24 hours together. Registration to track the history of traveling and whereabouts of individuals was required at almost all venues. Public fear and anxieties arose from COVID-19-related deaths and infections. Places of entertainment, gyms, and relaxation venues were closed. All these factors can contribute to psychological disorders and emotional distress, such as impatience, pressure, and anger. These could lead to negative behaviors, such as verbal abuse and violence against family members, especially toward females.

Under the lockdown policies, resident compounds with multiple entrances were required to leave only the most necessary entrances open and to shut down the rest. Checkpoints with inspectors were put in place, to ensure the implementation of confinement policies. Unnecessary services were closed, except for the necessary markets and pharmacies.[14] Family members were encouraged to stay at home unless it was

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[11] See Public Security Bureau of Tongren, 反对家暴 拥抱幸福 铜仁公安在行动 (*Combat Domestic Violence and Embrace Happiness, the Tongren Police Are in Action*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/0NJ4HbPj0X4g4AoQu6a88Q (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[12] See Home of Family Law, 疫情期当地家暴报警翻倍了 (*Reported Cases of Domestic Violence Doubled during the COVID-19*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/KiMh_a81uLX4jWBZk4FkXQ (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[13] See United Nations, 新冠大流行折射下的 "家暴" 问题 (*The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women*), available at http://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/1doNX1VOprfAOuf_8he34A (last visited Nov. 5, 2020)

[14] See The People's Government of Hebei Province, 关于进一步加强疫情防控 期间社区管理的通告 (*Notice on Strengthening the Management of Resident Compounds during the Pandemic*), available at http://www.hebei.gov.cn/hebei/14462058/14471802/14471717/14471780/14822845aa/index.html (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

necessary to leave; for instance, to see a doctor or purchase groceries. This made the perpetrators less concerned about the consequences of their violent conduct. Victims had less courage to seek external help. Aid organizations became focused on COVID-19 responses, leaving a far lesser degree of involvement for domestic violence.

3. The Cultural Dimension. — In Chinese culture, domestic violence was once considered a private family affair that should not be regulated by the public power. Females used to be silent on the issue and avoided seeking external support when they faced violence at home because of a fear of reprisal or being discriminated against by others. On March 1, 2016, the first Chinese anti-domestic violence law entered into force. This landmark legislation broke the custom of non-intervention for domestic violence by public powers. Nationwide campaigns were conducted to raise awareness in the public and the relevant governmental organizations, NGOs, and personnel were involved in the work. However, due to the deeply rooted attitude of remaining silent in response to domestic violence in Chinese culture, many females, particularly those living in the countryside or rural areas, are even more reluctant to seek external assistance from the police, social workers, or the court. Furthermore, in areas where people were less connected to the outside world, such as in smaller cities or rural areas, professional staff like those working at the police station and the court, are also reluctant to engage in domestic violence issues. For example, in a case within Henan Province, a woman called the local police when she was beaten by her former husband in his village, but was told that she should ask her relatives to pick her up and help her to return to her village.[15] This is a typical example that shows that in some villages, the police still encourage the family members to offer assistance to the victim. It is important to mention that, although public campaigns and trainings have been conducted to raise awareness among professionals, especially people working for the police and the court, time is still needed to ensure that every professional in the field is equipped with the necessary awareness and skills in this regard.

4. The Political Dimension. — In the context of COVID-19, the convenience of life was heavily interrupted. Almost all the governmental organs were involved in COVID-19 responses. From the central government to the provincial and even the community level, the fight against COVID-19 was considered the national priority. Resources, funds, and personnel were directed to the anti-virus cause. For example, the public security organs at all levels were responsible for the implementation of measures concerned with the COVID-19. At the local level, police personnel shifted their focus to checking and tracking the movements of transport vehicles and individuals, to avoid viral infections. In general, this reduced the personnel who could address issues related to domestic violence,

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[15] See Kaiqi Yuer, 疫情期间，别让家暴受害者无处可去 (*During the Pandemic, Do Not Let the Victims of Domestic Violence Have No Place to Go*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/5Qe2AHgcuixz6MH1tZxPDg (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

especially in areas with a shortfall of staff. Therefore, when the whole society was shifting their efforts to implementing lockdown policies to reduce viral transmissions, individuals tended to sacrifice their personal concerns (such as being a victim of domestic violence) to prioritize the national policies. They rationalized that they would solve their individual problems after the policies eased. This culture fostered a habit of individuals contributing to the national priorities instead of their personal interests. As a result, organizations, communities, and individuals that were not engaged in curtaining the virus tended to minimize or delay their needs in favor of the public organ needs. Victims of domestic violence were even less proactive in seeking external help. This situation enabled the perpetrators to feel fearless and use violence at home.

II. TYPES AND FEATURES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

As pointed out, on April 6, 2020, in a statement made by the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, "for many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest: in their own homes."[16] The lockdown seems to have made it more convenient for perpetrators to resort to violence. Existing violence (i.e., cases recorded before the outbreak of COVID-19) still re-occur, while new cases emerge.

A. Existing Domestic Violence as Intensified by COVID-19

COVID-19 changed social dynamics and focuses. For female victims of domestic violence, COVID-19 undoubtedly made their situation worse. The existing domestic violence still occurred, but the impact on different stakeholders, especially on the victims, intensified. The victims, perpetrators, organizations, and personnel tackling domestic violence faced a higher degree of constraints and more challenges than usual. Victims of domestic violence could suffer for a longer time due to violent abuse from a single incident. It was reported that during the lockdown, a female victim was physically abused by her husband for 7 hours.[17] Spending 24-hours together, and having no alternative places to go to, were key factors that intensified the harm to victims.[18] Other factors included pressure, anxieties, panic, and other physiological issues that particularly impact people during confinement and make them lose control more easily, resulting in negative emotions.[19] Consequently, perpetrators can resort to verbal or physical abuse more easily during conflicts or to express their emotions.

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[16] United Nations, *UN Chief Calls for Domestic Violence "Ceasefire" amid "Horrifying Global Surge,"* available at https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/04/1061052 (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[17] See Female-Emotion, fn. 4.

[18] Id.

[19] Id.

B. New Cases of Domestic Violence Generated by COVID-19

The pandemic shifted powers between men and women, changed social interactions and created gaps in policy and mechanisms. This created incentives for violence against women, and thus the new type of COVID-19-generated-domestic violence came into being. Tensions and conflicts arose, due to problems in maintaining relationships between partners, as well as between parents and their children.[20] According to an NGO working for domestic violence victims in Jianli County of Hubei Province, since the outbreak of COVID-19, 90% of the newly registered domestic violence cases were closely linked to the pandemic. Conflicts may arise from disputes of trivial family affairs, such as whether it is time to go out, whether family visits can be accepted, etc. Other factors that might trigger conflicts include the pressure of losing a job and the lack of social interaction. When supervising or instructing children's study at home (as it is Chinese tradition for children to have study assignments by their teachers as extra excercises to review their knowledge learnt at school), some parents even tended to abuse their children verbally or physically.[21] Social workers received increased inquiries from parents, regarding developing communication skills with their children.[22]

C. Features of Domestic Violence during COVID-19

1. Increased Administrative Barriers. — Despite the lockdown policies that made it difficult for victims of domestic violence to seek external help, additional administrative requirements also complicated the process. This can be seen from the following case[23] that occurred in Qingdao City. In January 2020, a woman took her daughter to Heilongjiang Province after quarreling with her husband. While she was wandering the street with her daughter, the police noticed them and then sent them to the local relief organization. However, because the woman had a fever, she and her daughter had to undergo body temperature checks every four hours. They also went through the 14-day isolation period. During the pandemic, relief organizations stopped assisting people with returning home because of the inconvenience of doing so. Therefore, the mother and her

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[20] See Women's Voices, 疫情期间遇到家暴怎么办？维权指南来了 (*Tips on How to Deal with Domestic Violence during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Oenx-XIkvsDnVYw0Mz_ 7Ag (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[21] See Fengxian Justice, 疫情期间家暴防护实用手册 (*Practical Manual on Prevention of Domestic Violence during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/soq2CCUyudusSligHmVv4A (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[22] See HUANG Liru, 疫情期间，反家暴社工开展线上服务反思 (*Reflections of Online Anti-Domestic Violence Services during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/VgyCm1KfDt8GRf4 RIZ6mXQ (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[23] See China Civil Affairs, 疫情隔不断回家路 助滞哈母女平安返青 (*Assisting a Mother and Her Daughter Being Stranded in Harbin to Return to Qingdao during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp. weixin.qq.com/s/ dMcKHWwCYs2vFYEUGsm5DQ (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

daughter stayed at the organization for 45 days. In March 2020, when the pandemic was under control and the situation in China improved, they took the nucleic acid testing twice and finally returned home. This case shows that many emerging barriers occur when accessing services. In another case, because printed materials were required for documentation by many organizations such as hospitals for administrative purposes but the printing houses were mainly closed, a victim had to walk for 7 km to find a printing house to have the necessary paper printed out. As the victim had a fever, she was asked to do a test to ensure that she was not infected with the virus before obtaining other treatments in hospital for her injuries from the domestic violence.[24] Therefore, the testing requirements, isolation, and inconvenience due to the lockdown further hampered the effectiveness and efficiency of intervention in domestic violence cases.

2. Increase of Victims. — An increased number of witnesses of domestic violence, such as children and the elderly, became entangled in the violence while they tried to stop it. According to a research conducted by the All-China Women Federation in 2016, 70% of the perpetrators physically abused not only their wife, but also their children.[25] Children, especially girls, were easier to abuse during the pandemic because they were more frequently exposed to domestic violence. On May 4, 2020, in Guizhou Province, an 8-year-old girl was seriously wounded by a knife used by her stepfather and was paralyzed after trying to save her mother from her stepfather's violent attack.[26] In April 2020, a woman living in Sichuan Province, who had been physically abused by her husband for around 16 years, finally decided to call the police. During the interrogation, the husband nearly beat his son in front of the police because the son questioned him while supporting his mother.[27] It is not difficult to imagine that, if the son we not in front of the police, his father may not have controlled his abuse against his son. In another case, in July 2020, a 6-year-old girl witnessed her mother being killed by her mother's boyfriend.[28] Although it is not rare for family members to face physical abuse when they

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[24] See 疫情中的家暴受害者: 被削弱的自救系统 (*Victims of Domestic Violence under the Pandemic: the Weakened Supporting Mechanism*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/iV3UiSRdAZ41MWRHTexPOQ (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[25] See Female-Emotion, fn.4.

[26] See Guizhou Women's Union, 八岁半女童疑遭继父砍伤 (An *8-year-old Girl Was Suspected to Be Chopped Wound with a Knife by Her Stepfather*), available at https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_7405216 (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[27] See Sina News, 妻子被丈夫家暴 16 年, 13 岁儿子多次目睹险被打 (*A Wife Was Physically Abused by Her Husband for 16 Years and 13-Year-Old Son Who Witnessed the Domestic Violence Was Almost Beaten*), available at http://k.sina.com.cn/article_6017375813_166a9de4501900owig.html?from=edu (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[28] See Hunan Women's Union, 浙江女富商被同居男友活活打死: 她原本有两次活命的机会 (*A Successful Businesswomen of Zhejiang Province Was Beaten to Death by Her Boyfriend: Once Had Two Opportunities to Survive*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/cMJ75C1wY06G5r48Vc3F3A (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

try to assist the victim, during the lockdown, family members other than the direct victim tended to have more chances to witness and be involved in the violence. In March 2020, the court of Jianli County of Hubei Province issued its first protection order for both a female victim and her son (who was beaten when trying to offer help to his mother).[29] When the perpetrators and victims have to live under the same roof, for example during a lockdown, violence like this is more likely to occur. Hence, more victims are likely to be recorded from each case.

3. Increase in Reliance on Modern Technology in Responses. — Modern technology became unprecedently important in the anti-domestic violence response, in the context of COVID-19. This is because it can break the geographical and social distancing boundaries to reach the targeted individuals in a more timely manner. Under the lockdown and the social distancing policies, people tended to reduce face-to-face social interactions and many services were moved online. In Jiangxi Province, by using modern technology, a single online conference on women's rights gained 1,620,000 online audience members.[30] Some provinces developed online courses to promote anti-domestic violence law and provide psychological consultations.[31] To solve the difficulties in seeing a lawyer during the lockdown period, online meetings were organized.[32] These are all effective means of responding to the various needs of the stakeholders of domestic violence. On March 18, 2020, Jianli County of Hubei Province issued a protection order through the online program known as the Mini Court of Hubei Province, in which documents concerning domestic violence could be submitted or issued through mobile phone applications.[33] This online program promoted the efficiency and effectiveness of processing domestic violence cases. Modern technology also provides an alternative means to identify potential cases of domestic violence. For example, on February 14, 2020, in Shanxi Province, a man who was a suspected victim of domestic violence was conducting a live show on Weibo, claiming to commit suicide, which drew the police's

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[29] See Hubei Women's Union, 湖北妇联联手公益组织及时处置疫情期间家庭暴力 (*Women's Union of Hubei and NGOs Jointly Work against Domestic Violence during the Pandemic*), available at http://www.hbwomen.gov.cn/doc/2020/03/30/39947.shtml (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[30] See Jiangxi Women's Union, 162 万人观看！江西省首届"依法维护妇女儿童权益十大案例"新闻发布会召开，各地姐妹反响热烈！(*1,620,000 People Are Watching the First Media Conference of Jiangxi Province Concerning the Publication of 10 Paradigm Cases of Safeguarding Women and Children's Rights according to Law*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/0TN7QrKAiT67zJ2Y3sbR3w (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[31] See Guangxi Women's Union, 广西来宾: "跑跑"小哥助力送法维权进万家 (*Laibin City of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region: Running Boys Promoting Law to Local Communities*), available at http://www.gxwomen.org.cn/sy/gdkx/10570.shtml (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[32] See Ministry of Justice of People's Republic of China, 疫情防控期间律师会见难？"线上"见面解难题！*(Online Meetings Organized to Solve the Difficulties of Meeting in Lawyers during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/lPsRM9UVsE90uNmZNl2nQA (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[33] See Jiangxi Women's Union, fn. 30.

attention; thus, the case was handled within an hour by the local police.[34] Although in this case the man was not a perpetrator but a victim, his behavour made it easier for the police to intervene into the case. The use of modern technology has provided new solutions for anti-domestic violence responses.

III. BARRIERS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESPONSES IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

Barriers always exist in domestic violence responses because China's anti-domestic violence network has its own shortcomings and there are many aspects that need to be coordinated better. In the context of COVID-19, these weaknesses became more pronounced. UN Women found that less than 40% of the victims of domestic violence seek external help, and this number decreased further during the COVID-19 pandemic.[35] These barriers result from both, the actions of the victims themselves and external elements, such as the efficiency and effectiveness of the support network. Therefore, the weaknesses of existing protection structures of anti-domestic violence responses could further impede the response.

A. Trapped Victims

1. Collectivism and Prioritization of Group Interests. — Although some females do seek justice from public powers when they are first faced with domestic violence, many still tend not to speak out or seek external help when they face domestic violence, unless it causes serious harm to them or lasts longer than they can tolerate. As illustrated above, for many reasons, victims are more reluctant to turn to external supporting mechanisms in the context of COVID-19. This reluctance is derived from both personal and cultural or situation-specific reasons. Unlike Western countries, in which the society promotes individualism, the Chinese culture is more collectivist, which means that when there is a conflict of interest between the group and the individual, the goals of the group will prevail.[36] In their hope of returning to a normal life as soon as possible, no one wants to be a contributor to virus transmission. This became an important consideration in the context of public emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. For personal reasons, victims feared being infected by the virus or being discriminated against by others.

2. Lack of Access to Information. — Access to information is key to the anti-domestic violence response. Although the Women's Federations, as the most influential Chinese

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[34] See Haokan Videos, 男子疑遭受家暴直播烧炭自杀，警方 1 小时"地毯式"排查成功解救 (*The Police Intervened within One Hour upon Receiving Information about a Man Who Was Suspected of Committing Suicide in an Online Live Show after Being the Subject of Domestic Violence*), available at https://haokan.baidu.com/v?pd=wisenatural&vid=13098096662019531731 (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[35] See Mlambo-Ngcuka, fn. 2.

[36] See Wikipedia, *Collectivism*, available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivism (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

mass organization promoting women's rights, have now adjusted their working method by disseminating anti-domestic violence information through an online platform, the coverage of the population is still limited. This is because not all people who have access to the internet pay attention to or search for online information concerning domestic violence. Mostly, domestic violence information and online training was disseminated by certain organizations targeting specific groups of people, predominantly those who followed their online WeChat account. This excluded a large number of people who are also in need. But the situation can improve with the development of the internet and the growing number of internet users. According to the National Statistics Bureau, by the end of 2018, the total population of China was 1.395 billion people, among whom women account for 681.87 million.[37] The Statistical Report on Internet Development in China showed that, by March 2020, China had 900.04 million netizens, among whom mobile internet users accounted for 800.97 million.[38] In rural areas where the awareness of anti-domestic violence is the weakest, only 46.2% of the population have access to the internet.[39] Due to of the sheer number of the Chinese population, the number of online internet users are high, and hence dissemination of information concerning anti-domestic violence is increasing. However, there is still a huge gap between the needs of the general public and the information sources and providers.

Figure 1 shows sources of the 75 total domestic violence-related articles published on the website of the All-China Women's Federation, from January 1 to July 30, 2020.

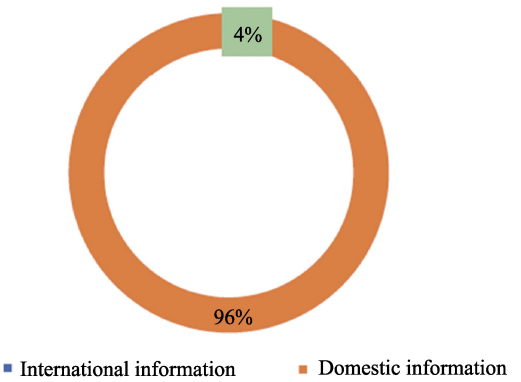

Figure 1 Information Sources

Source: Data counted on articles published on Women's Federation WeChat Account.

[37] See The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 我国大陆 2018 年末总人口接近 14 亿 (*The Total Population of Chinese Mainland Is Nearly 1,400,000,000 at the End of 2018*), available at http://www.gov.cn/shuju/2019-01/21/content_5359797.htm (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[38] See China Internet Network Information Center, 中国互联网络发展状况统计报告 (*Statistical Report on Internet Development in China*), available at http://www.cac.gov.cn/rootimages/uploadimg/1589535470391296/1589535470391296.pdf?filepath=ZBWvETi1XzcBKtOIkqelkI6LjXtsGgSA5nY19tMgqpxXM3yR3AbrYaldQRZRixKUS2HIKQQ6RgOUhhY5QbgarDEjTcORl73kmCTdYOvdSjs=&fText=全文%20 第 45 次《中国互联网络发展状况统计报告》2020425 (last visited Nov. 5, 2020).

[39] Id. at 20.

As indicated, 96% of the information are from Chinese domestic sources. Among the 4% of international information, there are 3 articles, 2 of which are on the United Nation's call for actions to combat domestic violence in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Information from domestic sources (see Figure 2) can *inter alia* be classified into three types: information concerning law, policies, measures, or the analysis of domestic violence cases; advocacy to raise public awareness; and the introduction of inter-sector coordination mechanisms. Although all this information can be regarded as raising awareness, advocacy was selected as a single category because it focuses on online lectures, materials, or tips prepared for the general public (when obtaining tips on how to protect themselves from domestic violence and receive psychological counselling).

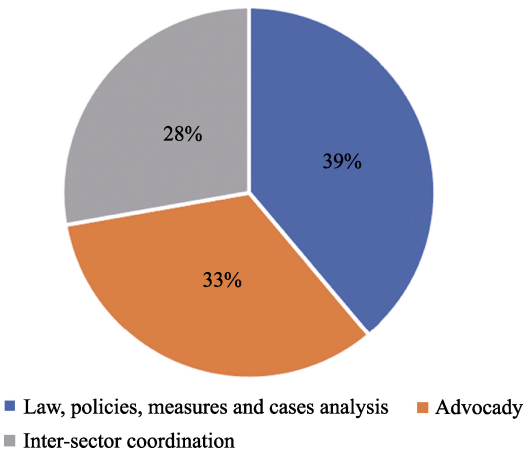

Figure 2 Types of Domestic Information

Source: Data counted on articles published on Women's Federation WeChat Account.

Among the articles concerning domestic violence (see Figure 3), only 13% (10 articles) are COVID-19 related. This means that the context-specific concerns have not been addressed timely and adequately.

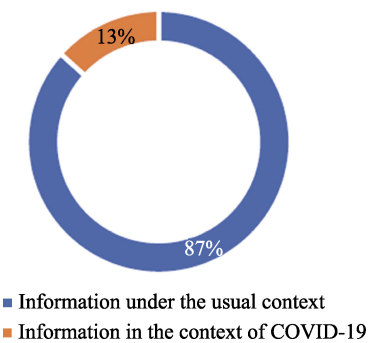

Figure 3 COVID-19 Related Information

Source: Data counted on articles published on Women's Federation WeChat Account.

Based on the research of the websites of 31 provincial units (municipalities and autonomous regions) there are 200 articles total on domestic violence (see Figure 4), which can be found easily. In addition, 8 websites are not sufficiently user-friendly for readers to find the necessary information. This is because many provinces fail to update their websites frequently, either because there is a lack of activities concerned, or that the WeChat account has replaced some functions undertaken by the traditional websites. The chart below shows the number of articles concerning domestic violence, published from January 1 to July 30, 2020, on the official WeChat account of the Women's Federations, namely the branches of the All-China Women's Federation, at the provincial level.

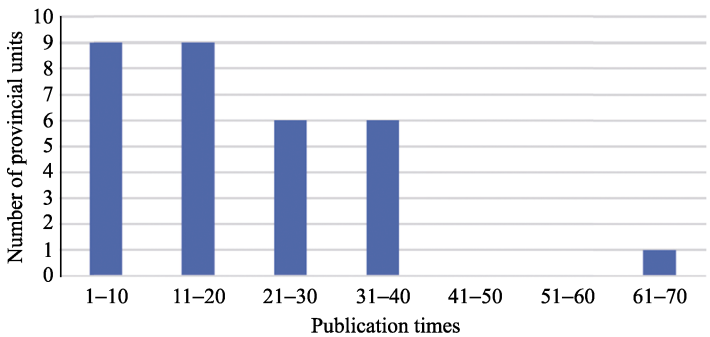

Figure 4 Publication Numbers Regarding Domestic Violence on Wechat Account of Women's Union, January 1 to July 30, 2020

Source: Data counted based on articles published on Women's Federation WeChat Account.

Among the 31 provincial Women's Federations, 9 provinces published less than 10 domestic violence-related articles, which is inadequate, 7 provinces published more than 30, and the largest number reached was over 60. The articles vary in terms of themes. Most of the domestic violence-related information is of a routine nature (e.g., introductions to anti-domestic violence law, policies, new measures, paradigm cases, inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms). Less than a third of these articles are closely linked to domestic violence in the context of COVID-19, such as tips on prevention, protection, and resilience for both the victims and professionals during the full circle of domestic violence, taking into consideration the specificities of the pandemic. Although women's unions of lower levels, such as at the city or even district level, also publish anti-domestic violence information, the focus and quality of the information from the provincial level always reflect the general picture of the entire province. Therefore, this article focuses on information at the provincial level. In general, information on anti-domestic violence was inadequately delivered to the public. As a result, the victims were not informed of how to access the services in a timely manner. People who do not have access to a smart phone are also left behind. Women's unions, at all levels, are not adequately prepared to offer timely and adequate information that is necessary for the victims to cope with domestic violence during the pandemic.

3. Fear of Reprisal. — Due to the fact that victims and perpetrators were usually confined to the same home, this makes it easier for perpetrators to control the victims. As with the situation in other countries, victims may need to reach out to a crisis hotline while the perpetrator is nearby.[40] Many victims of domestic violence were afraid of making phone calls because of fear of being heard by the perpetrator.[41] In Jiaxing City of Zhejiang Province, a female victim had to take pictures of her injuries and send them to her flat mate to get help to call the police.[42]

B. Challenges Faced by Traditional Supporting Mechanisms

The lockdown policies made it difficult for the victims of domestic violence to seek help from traditional support networks, such as access to alternative residences, shelters, and other services that are essential to victims. It also made it difficult for outsiders to intervene when domestic violence occurred. These barriers can be reflected in the following aspects:

1. The Police. — Under the Anti-Domestic Violence Law of China, the police are obliged to act immediately upon receiving a call that reports domestic violence. The police's responsibilities include timely intervention, conducting investigations, assisting the victims to seek evidence and access to other services, etc.[43]

In the context of COVID-19, the police's capacity in anti-domestic violence responses varied, from region to region and city to city. Jiangsu Province, located in the east of China, is one of the provinces with rich experience and resources related to anti-domestic violence responses. It usually adopts more advanced measures to address the issue. During the pandemic, the police invested resources, recorded, and analyzed cases of domestic violence. They paid particular attention to the same cases that were intervened in by the police more than once, to avoid acceleration of the violence.[44] However, in

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[40] See Congress Research Service, *Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19*, at 1 (2020), available at https://ersreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN11323 (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[41] See Emma Graham-Harrison, Angela Giuffrida, Helena Smith, & Liz Ford, *Lockdowns around the World Bring Rise in Domestic Violence, the Gradian*, Mar. 28, 2020, available at https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/mar/28/lockdowns-world-rise-domestic-violence?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[42] See All-China Women's Federation, 浙江嘉兴建立"3+X"家事辅导机制化解矛盾 "三色"定级实现家门口维权新模式 (*Jiaxing City of Zhejiang Province Developed the "3+X" Family Consultation Mechanism of Solving Conflicts Based on the Three-Colors Model to Achieve a New Model of Doorstep Rights Protection*), http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/10/ 99200112.html (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[43] See The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 中华人民共和国反家暴法 (*Anti-Domestic Violence Law of China*), Art. 15, available at http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2015-12/28/content-5028411.htm?url_gype=39&object_type=webpage&pos=1 (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[44] See Jiangsu Women's Union, 常州市新北区组织反家暴联席会议 (*Xinbei District of Changzhou City Organized Anti-Domestic Violence Coordination Meeting*), available at https://www.jswomen.com.cn/show/token/ad41fa6df5f892a9881c473444ea62e2.html (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

other part of the country, especially in the west where there was a lack of adequate resources and professional staff (especially in the villages) during the pandemic, many resources were directed to the response of the virus. The police intervention in anti-domestic violence responses became minimal. Police intervention might also have been interrupted by the lockdown.[45] This does not mean that the police completely neglected cases of domestic violence. Many cases were handled by them, but not all victims received timely assistance from the police.[46]

2. The Local Community, Civil Society Organizations, and NGOs. — In the context of COVID-19, local communities played a significant role in detecting or monitoring potential cases of domestic violence. In Jinhua City of Zhejiang Province, a girl victim of domestic violence reported at the checkpoint of her residence compound that she was beaten by her foster father.[47] Staff at the checkpoint called the police who finally found that the girl was trafficked by her so-called father and helped her restore contact with her biological mother.[48] This is not a common practice. In general, the community checkpoints are not requested to monitor situations of domestic violence. The checkpoints are mainly responsible for checking people's body temperatures and the registrations of people and cars. However, they do not pay special attention to suspected unlawful conducts or crimes. This also shows a lack of anti-domestic violence mechanisms at the community level, because of which the girl had to talk to people at the checkpoint. Practically, it has been reported that many existing mechanisms for domestic violence have been halted.[49]

Certain local NGOs have noticed the necessity of disseminating anti-domestic violence information and tips, but it is hard for the information to reach the public during the lockdown. In Jingzhou City of Hubei Province, a volunteer initiated a campaign to stop domestic violence. She awoke at around 2 am to post her advocacy slogan in the elevator, advising the residents to foster a positive family environment and to avoid using violence.[50] This provides a clear picture of the situation that the civil society organizations must face during the pandemic.

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[45] See Yuanzhong Family and Community Development Service Center, 疫情期间家庭暴力受害人求助咨询解答指南 (*Guidelines to Counseling for Victims of Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/qSp14zOcFHLgiCMKxsXQTQ (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[46] See ZHANG Wanqing, 那些因疫情而生的家暴 (*Domestic Violence Caused by COVID-19*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/sBSb-A4y7NDN7GxDiTKiNA (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[47] See ZHANG Liutao, ZHANG Ruowan & CHEN Liping, 女孩遭"家暴"求助疫情检查点，牵出一起 7 年前拐卖儿童案 (*A Girl Victim of Domestic Violence Sought Help from the Community Checkpoint, Unveiling a Case of Children Trafficking*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/cskIxD6gkHjDWiJsYXl1DQ (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[48] Id.

[49] See Hehuan Phsycological Services, 后疫情时期反家暴工作指南 (*Guidelines on Anti-Domestic Violence in the Post-Pandemic Era*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/luEqaAh7IR2Bfua RmtQnXw (last visited Nov. 9, 2020).

[50] See Female-Emotion, fn. 4.

3. Shelters. — Access to shelters became difficult during the pandemic. Shelters are predominantly organized by the civil affairs departments or organizations with mandates for social relief and social welfare. In February 2020, the State Council issued a notice with the aim of ensuring the smooth functioning of social relief and social welfare organizations. The notice emphasized that access to shelters should be guaranteed to certain groups of persons, including the elderly, children, juveniles, persons with mental disabilities and persons living on the streets.[51] Women in need or victims of domestic violence are not explicitly mentioned. This does not mean that the policies do not cover them. However, when it comes to the implementation of such policies, some local personnel tend to read the text of the policies strictly, and thus leave female victims of domestic violence out. In practice, due to the lack of shelters for different groups of people in need, shelters for domestic violence victims have been transferred to homeless people in certain cities.[52] According to an NGO working team in Hubei Province, some shelters have been occupied for the treatment of patients with COVID-19.[53] Due to the shortfall of shelters, victims have no place to go. For example, on 31 January 2020, a woman who was repeatedly threatened by her former husband, who tried to force her to re-marry him, had to stay at her friend's home for 20 days and then move into her private car to avoid being bothered by this man.[54]

To solve the problem, some provinces have issued policies to ensure access to shelters for victims of domestic violence. For example, the Women's Union and the Youth League Committee of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region have jointly issued policies to ensure access to shelters for victims of domestic violence.[55] Tianjin City has policies ensuring a budget for temporary shelters for victims of domestic violence.[56] In Heilongjiang Province, policies ensure that victims of domestic violence can obtain assistance from the police and the civil affairs department, so as to access temporary shelters from organizations that are responsible for social relief or social welfare.[57] Although these are

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[51] See Ministry of Civil Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 国务院联防联控机制印发《关于进一步做好民政服务机构疫情防控工作的通知》(*Notice of the State Council Concerning the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 to Improve the Services of Civil Affairs Institutions*), available at https://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-02/28/content_5484612.htm (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[52] See Mlambo-Ngcuka, fn. 2.

[53] See Jiangxi Women's Union, fn. 30.

[54] See HUANG, fn. 22.

[55] See Guangxi Women's Union, 自治区妇联、共青团广西区委联合召开妇女儿童和青少年工作新闻发布会 (*Press Release on Women, Children, and Juveniles Jointly Launched by the Women's Union and the Youth League Committee of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/3c224NaSP8Ho6AyTb- 6B8A (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[56] See Tianjin Women's Union, 制止暴力 法律呵护爱的港湾——反家暴地方立法亮点纷呈 (*Stop Violence: Advantages of Local Legislation against Domestic Violence*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/XlAXTUcmiN8HNbEzdn9DSg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[57] See Heilongjiang Women's Union, 《中华人民共和国反家庭暴力法》实施四周年啦！(*Four-Year Anniversary of Anti-Domestic Violence Law of the People's Republic of China*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ bVCCXjovCeC6uw8OgqasYw (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

some examples of best practice, they cannot change the general picture of the country, where there is still a shortfall of shelters for victims of domestic violence.

4. Other Services. — Access to health-care services, legal aid services, and transportation services have also been hampered by the pandemic. Since hospitals were flooded with COVID-19 tests and treatments of people suspected/diagnosed with the virus, the healthcare system was under high pressure. It was difficult to obtain the necessary services. During the pandemic, hospitals required victims to book services in advance, even for simple treatments/services where this is usually not required.[58] To avoid overcrowding, hospitals let patients to visit doctors at different times.[59] These administrative requirements prolonged the process for victim of domestic violence to obtain the necessary medical certificate for legal action that they wanted to take. In certain areas, victims of domestic violence were recommended to first contact the community, women's unions, or the police to help them arrange treatment at the hospital.[60] The same situation also occurred when accessing legal aid. For example, due to a larger number of consultations flooding the legal aid center of Jilin Province, it took longer for phone calls to be answered. Sometimes, the call was answered only after several dials.[61] Documents for the application of legal aid had to be sent by postal services to the legal aid center; however, the delivery services were halted for a certain period, which further delayed the process.[62] Accessing transportation services was also a problem. In February 2020, a notice issued by the Ministry of Transport read that, during the suspension of in-city and inter-city public transportation, measures should be taken to ensure access to transportation services for key groups of persons, including medical personnel, public services staff, the elderly, vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities, the sick, and children.[63] Although females are usually considered a vulnerable group in

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[58] See The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 国务院联防联控机制印发《关于科学防治精准施策分区分级做好新冠肺炎疫情防控工作的指导意见》(*Guiding Opinions of the State Council on Scientific, Precise and Graded Measures for the Prevention and Control of COVID-19 Pandemic*), available at http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2020-02/18/ content_ 5480514.htm (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[59] Id.

[60] See Guangzhou Women's Union, 疫情期间遇到家暴怎么办？维权指南来了 (*How Should You React to Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19? Here Are the Guidelines*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/lcOqgM0Vv_UjMZPLL69NDg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[61] See Rule of Law of Xi'an, 吉林省法律援助中心为您讲解：疫情期间妇女相关法律政策知识 (*The Legal Aid Center of Jilin Province Provided Lectures on Laws and Policies Concerning Women in the Context of COVID-19*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/6eUiXk4R9F-qSvvCWQNX1Q (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[62] Id.

[63] See Ministry of Transport of the People's Republic of China, 关于统筹做好春节后错峰返程疫情防控和交通运输保障工作的通知 (*Notice on the COVID-19 Prevention and Control and Transportation Arrangement after the Spring Festival*), available at http://hljx.spb.gov.cn/xxgg_2938/202002/P020200218377616058950.pdf (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

China, they are not explicitly mentioned in this document. As a result, many women, especially victims of domestic violence, did not think that this notice ensured their access to public transportation service. At a local level, the police or transportation service providers sometimes forgot to include women in their services.

IV. GOOD PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

The following measures are identified as best practices, based on two main reasons: 1) they set precedents in the anti-domestic violence response; 2) they help build stronger anti-domestic violence networks.

A. Measures to Assist Victims

1. Conduct Assessments and Identify Risks of Domestic Violence.— Due to the fact that acts of domestic violence are also usually confined to the home due to the lockdown policies, it is important to check the households to discover the potential risks. In Sichuan Province, the police visited communities, households, small shops in the streets, and passengers to promote anti-domestic violence laws and find sources of information related to domestic violence.[64] In Qinghai Province, women's unions at the county, community, and village levels deployed female leaders to conduct in-house visits to track the psychological status and risks of domestic violence of each household.[65] During the process, by 8 March 2020, the local women's union successfully intervened in 4 cases of domestic violence, facilitated 1 warning notice being issued, and granted legal assistance in 2 domestic violence cases.[66] In Hangzhou City of Zhejiang Province, the local women's unions were responsible for conducting risk assessments of domestic violence against juveniles, based on whether the children have good relationships with their parents and whether physical abuse against children had occurred before.[67] The final assessment was classified into three categories, marked as three-star, two-star, and one star, based on the degree of risk (from a high to a low level).[68] Corresponding measures

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[64] See Guizhou Women's Union, 组织化动员 社会化发动 黔东南州妇联多形式宣传贯彻《贵州省反家庭暴力条例》(*Organizing, Mobilizing and Socializing, Women's Union of Qiandongnan Prefecture Publized and Implemented Anti-Domestic Violence Regulation of Guizhou Province*), available at http://www.gzswomen.org.cn/bmxx/qyb/wqdt/202004/t20200427_57660112.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[65] See Qinghai Women's Union, 平安区妇联疫情防控与普法维权同行 (*Women's Union of Ping'an District Provided Legal Services during the COVID-19*), available at http://www.qhflh.gov.cn/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=117&id=11713 (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[66] Id.

[67] See All-China Women's Federation, 杭州江干妇联合教育局制定意见 依据星级预警分类关爱涉家暴未成年人 (*Women's Union of Jianggan District of Hangzhou City Work in Collaboration with the Education Bureau to Monitor and Offer Help to Juvenile Victims of Domestic Violence Based on the Alert System of Risk Assessment*), available at http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/15/99200446.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[68] Id.

were taken to monitor the situation based on how many stars were granted to the case. Usually if a case was marked with more stars, it means that more professional support is needed to restore the situation. Thus women's unions and the education institutions were made responsible for monitoring the three-star families; family advisors and the local volunteers had to monitor the two-star families; and the one-star families were monitored by the community or the staff of the resident compound.[69] Similar measures were adopted by Jiaxing City of Zhejiang Province, but the risk assessment was recorded based on families. The local women's union assigned staff to conduct household visits to assess the risks of domestic violence once a month.[70] Based on the severity of conflicts, families were classified into three colors: red indicated high risk, yellow meant moderate risk, and blue represented low risk.[71] In Changzhou City, a database was created to keep records of juvenile victims of domestic violence.[72] The local women's union was responsible for tracking and monitoring the risks of domestic violence and reacting to the highlighted cases.[73] These practices enabled the relevant staff to monitor the situation and take quick and targeted measures to the families in need.

2. Practical Manual and Guidelines for Victims of Domestic Violence. — Women's unions, at different levels, published standardized manuals and guidelines for victims and professionals. These manuals are essential for the anti-domestic violence response. Take the Women's Union of Guangzhou as an example. It issued Guidelines on Protection of Victims of Domestic Violence during COVID-19, to provide technical and practical advice to address domestic violence.[74] The Guidelines cover the whole cycle of domestic violence, including prevention, protection, and resilience. For example, during the lockdown, it is advised to hide sharp and harmful tools, such as knifes, to reduce serious harm;[75] avoid face-to-face confrontations with the perpetrators;[76] make sure mobile phones, keys, identity certificates and a rescue plan are reachable, to leave home conveniently;[77] stay in different rooms than the perpetrators and lock the perpetrator out,[78] etc. Information also covers how to seek help from the police, the court, social workers, legal aid mechanisms, psychological consultations, etc. The manuals play a critical role for the victims to access information and services that are essential to them.

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[69] Id.

[70] See All-China Women's Federation, fn. 42.

[71] Id.

[72] See All-China Women's Federation, 六部门信息共享为未成年人撑起"保护伞" (*Information Sharing between Six Sectors Concerning the Protection of Rights of the Juveniles*), available at http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/11/99200158.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[73] Id.

[74] See Rule of Law of Xi'an, fn. 61.

[75] Id.

[76] Id.

[77] Id.

[78] Id.

The Women's Union of Sichuan Province issued a practical manual to aid in victims' access to support mechanisms and self-protection tips, as well as to provide a guideline for professionals on how to handle cases of violence against children, how to answer helplines, etc.[79] These manuals were mainly published on the WeChat account where they can easily be accessible for both the public and other relevant organizations that might have an interest to re-publish it on their own social media platforms. The manuals are helpful but there is a lack of standardized documents or standardized indicators that can be applied to all stakeholders across China. For example, some cities explicitly state in their legal aid policies that domestic violence should be included as legal aid cases,[80] while in other policies of cities it is not as clear.

3. Green Passes for Victims' Access to Relevant Services.— In many cities, green passes have been granted for victims of domestic violence so that they can access essential services. In Tianjin City and cities in Heilongjiang Province, district courts have granted the green pass in domestic violence cases where a protection order can be issued 2 days after the submission.[81] Hubei Province issued policies to grant green passes to pregnant women and children, to ensure their access to healthcare services.[82] The green pass also included access to temporary shelters, psychological intervention, legal aid, and authenticate services that are free of charge,[83] accessing services for injury identification and authentication,[84] reducing or waiving financial charge for juveniles in the litigation process,[85] etc. In May 2020, the Ministry of Justice issued a policy to waive financial proof for applicants of legal aid services who are not able to provide the relevant

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[79] See Qinghai Women's Union, fn. 65.

[80] See Pingxiang Women's Union, 疫情期间，如何申请法律援助？(*How to Apply for Legal Aid during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/IRbmvUR-TpZhDbzAhl8kzg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[81] See Higher People's Court of Tianjin City, 疫情期间遭家暴？法院：别怕、甭忍！咱有"定心丸"！(*Domestic Violence during the Pandemic? The Supreme People's Court of Tianjin City: Do Not Be Afraid and Never Tolerate It*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/JRAiOJy7iwKPqSuhfkTbRg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020); Heilongjiang Women's Union, 黑龙江公安局和妇联开展反家暴措施 (*Anti-Domestic Violence Measures Taken by the Public Security Organ and Women's Union of Heilongjiang Province*), available at http://www.hljwomen.org/ article/list/view/id/50757 (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[82] See Hubei Women's Union, "疫"路有我 维权同行 (*Protection of Rights in the Context of COVID-19*), available at http://www.hbwomen.gov.cn/doc/2020/04/02/40033.shtml (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[83] See Hubei Women's Union, 省妇联2019年度法治建设工作总结 (*2019 Work Report of Women's Union in Hubei Province*), available at http://www.hbwomen.gov.cn/doc/2020/01/21/38027.shtml (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[84] See Guangxi Women's Union, 广西贺州开辟反家暴伤情鉴定"绿色通道" (*Hezhou City of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Granted Green Pass for Identification of Injuries from Domestic Violence*), available at http://www.gxwomen.org.cn/gzyd/fnwq/wqrd/10807.shtml (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[85] See All-China Women's Federation, 云南法院全方位护航未成年人健康成长 (*Protecting Juveniles by Yunnan Courts*), available at http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/03/99199292.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

materials due to the pandemic, and to grant legal aid to urgent cases.[86] In April 2020, in Heilongjiang Province, a 4-year-old girl physically who was abused by her father and his girlfriend was granted legal aid.[87] These measures reduced the burden on victims of domestic violence, and further encouraged them to seek help from the supporting mechanism, which in turn contributed to the protection of their rights.

4. Psychological Support. — As illustrated above, in the context of COVID-19, psychological or mental disorders or distress can be an important driving factor in domestic violence against women. Evidence shows that, during the pandemic, women were more emotionally sensitive and were more likely to express their feelings to reduce their anxieties.[88] Figure 5 shows the frequency of information regarding psychological support that has been provided to the public, especially females.

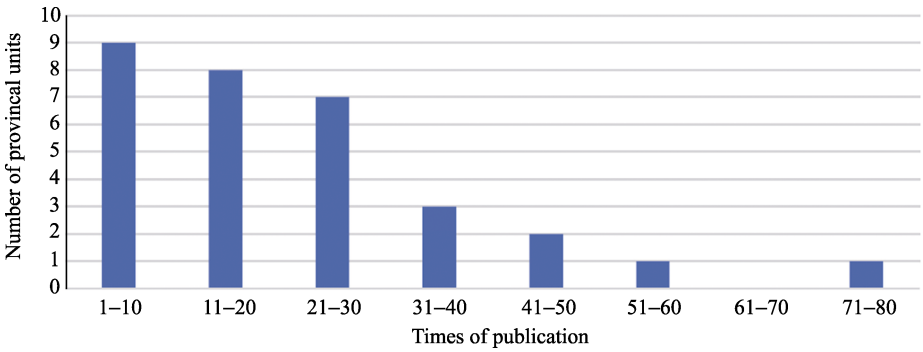

Figure 5 Information Regarding Psychological Support on Wechat Account of Women's Unions at Provincial Level

Source: Data counted based on articles published on Women's Union WeChat Account.

As demonstrated, all 31 of the women's unions at the provincial level have published information regarding psychological support on their WeChat accounts. Most provinces have published material 11–30 times in 7 months. The most frequent publications of information on psychological support came from Hubei Province, which happened 76 times, while the least frequent publications came from Inner Mongolia, in which

[86] See Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China, 司法部办公厅关于印发《关于开展"法援惠民生 扶贫奔小康"品牌活动的实施方案》的通知 (*Circular of the General Office of the Ministry of Justice on Printing and Distributing the Implementation Plan for the Brand Actioity of "Legal Aid to Benefit People's Lives and Help the Poor to Trend a Well-Off Life"*), available at http://www.moj.gov.cn/government_public/content/2020-05/ 12/tzwj_3248420.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[87] See ZHU Xuan, "生父也参与殴打 4 岁女童", 已指派法援律师 (*A 4-Year-Old Girl Physically Abused by Her Biological Father Was Granted Legal Aid Services*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Q2Xpm0PI8z3AomtE_BQrWg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[88] See Hunan Women's Union, 疫情当前，心理恐慌？别怕！全国三八红旗手携 30 名专家提供"云咨询" (*Panic under the Pandemic? Not to Worry, Woman Pace-Setter and 30 Experts Will Provide You with Assistance Online*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/pkZvkHmMOgYpXCkmJmsulQ (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

psychological support only appeared 2 times. The gaps exist because psychological support is mainly organized for the treatment of COVID-19-related psychological needs, but from which the public can also benefit in preventing or reducing the psychological harm derived from domestic violence. The information includes 24-hour telephone helplines, online consultations and services, tips on better communication with partners or children, guidelines on how to reduce pressure and anxieties, measures to control negative emotions and reduce conflicts with family members, etc. It is difficult to assess whether it is useful or practical for victims of domestic violence to access these services.

Different groups of women might have different psychological needs. Figure 6 shows psychological support for different groups of women, provided by the Women's Union of Hubei Province.

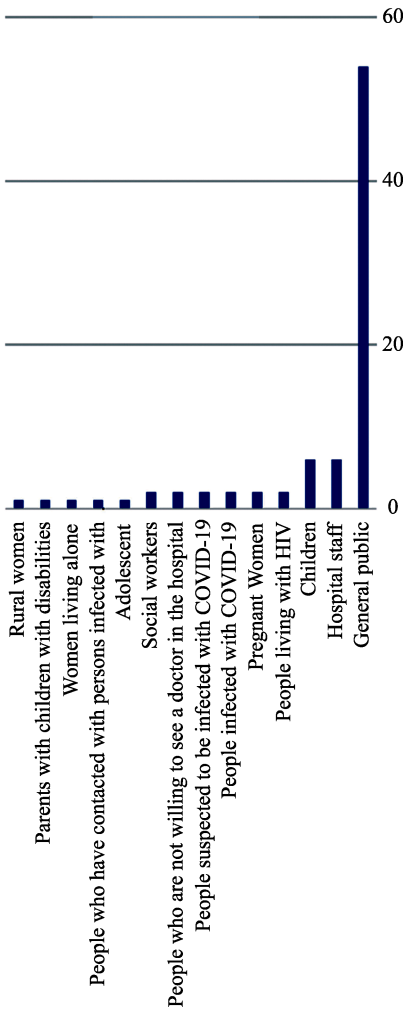

Figure 6 Information Concerning Psychological Support Provided to Different Groups of Persons Published on the Wechat Account of Women's Union of Hubei Province

Source: Data counted based on articles published on Women's Union WeChat Account.

As demonstrated, most of the information is prepared for the general public, but there is also support for other vulnerable groups, including new groups generated from COVID-19 like those who have been infected by the virus, those who have had close contact with persons infected with the virus, and traditional groups like rural women, children, adolescents, etc. Online psychological support can take place in various forms, such as lectures, training sessions, Q&As, communications on targeted themes or issues, quizzes, consultations for victims, etc. After the online sessions, audiences were encouraged to join WeChat groups where they could seek further guidance or peer support.[89] This practice helps provide targeted support that serves the best interest of each group.

In addition to psychological support that people can access through online platforms, psychological face-to-face consultations have also been organized in areas where people have difficulties in accessing the internet. In Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, a women's union deployed 52 psychological advisors to 643 villages in 6 counties that were hit by COVID-19, benefiting 100,000 people.[90]

5. Online and Offline Activities to Raise Awareness. — Activities that raise awareness, which are organized online or offline, are critical. For example, short cartoons and movies have been posted to social media and online platforms to raise public awareness about eliminating domestic violence. They are easily accessible on smartphones and can be forwarded to targeted groups. In Chongqing Municipality, 11,000 children's home programs at the community level have organized online training sessions for children, covering the subject of anti-domestic violence.[91] In Sichuan Province, the Women's Union has initiated a public debate on domestic violence that is accessible for internet users.[92] In places where people are not able to access the internet or do not own smartphones, traditional media has to play a more active role in raising awareness and information dissemination. In Hubei Province, newspapers and printing materials were prepared and distributed in cities, counties, and villages; television programs were designed to broadcast advertisements and promote anti-domestic violence laws.[93] In

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[89] See Jiangxi Women's Union, 答疑：疫情期间，心情焦虑怎么办？(*How Should You Deal with Anxieties during the Pandemic?*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/UbqVdGkED-eyPqF0FloA3A (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[90] See Ningxia Women's Union, 宁夏妇联架设心理援助热线 助力疫情防控阻击战 (*Women's Union of Ningxia Offered Psychological Services during the Pandemic Helped Fight the Pandemic Prevention and Control*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/CH-tvTeMfQVz8iTF1aj-NA (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[91] See Chongqing Women's Union, 重庆市 1.1 万个儿童之家联动开展暑期儿童安全教育实践活动 (C*hongqing Municipality Offered Safety Education to 11,000 Children's Homes during Summer Holidays*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/8gy4j2I3R-aMWuZFjfmeMg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[92] See Sichuan Women's Union, 妇联工作周报 (*Weekly Work Report of Women's Union*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/GDes1YCvavxb8H8H4y2iGw (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[93] See Hubei Women's Union, fn. 83.

Guizhou Province, dissemination of materials to local markets, street shops and resident compounds was conducted.[94] Jiahe County of Hunan Province also distributed materials of anti-domestic violence at the train station.[95] Although these examples fall within best practice, compared to the needs of the community, the beneficiaries are just the tip of the iceberg.

B. Measures to Support the Traditional Mechanism

For the purposes of facilitating the process for cases of domestic violence, modern technology has been applied by the police, the women's union, the court, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved. Most of the beneficiaries are people who followed the relevant WeChat account or who registered to certain applications on smartphones.

1. Online Application Developed to Report Domestic Violence against Children. — In July 2020, the first online application for reporting illegal acts impairing the rights of children, such as domestic violence against children, was published.[96] The online application allows the submission of pictures and videos as evidence through its system.[97] Professionals working in local communities, elementary and middle schools, kindergartens, training institutions, children's activity venues, medical institutions, child welfare institutions, relief organizations, NGOs, hotels, and other child-related service organizations are required to install this application on their phone and to report cases when they occur.[98]

2. Online Virtual Court. — Applications for courts, also known as mobile courts, can facilitate online litigation services, telephone consultations, etc.[99] Through these platforms, case registration, material submissions, payments, and other user-friendly processes can be conducted through the system. The online platforms can be easily installed on a smartphone and activated on a mobile phone with internet. In Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, an online channel was created for submission of the materials of domestic violence, the application of protection orders, or the registration of

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[94] See Guizhou Women's Union, 普定县工青妇到易地搬迁点开展法治宣传活动 (*Legal Promotion Activities Conducted by Women's Union, Workers, Union and the Youth Union of Puding County*), available at http://www.gzswomen.org.cn/xxkd/xqjxx/202003/t20200317_55282030.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[95] See Hunan Women's Union, 3 月 8 日嘉禾县妇联组织反家暴倡议 (*Anti-Domestic Violence Campaign Organized by Women's Union of Jiahe County on 8 March*), available at http://www.hnwomen.org.cn/2020/03/06/223776.html (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[96] See Yunnan Women's Union, 打造"未成年人的 110" ——全国首个"强制报告 APP"上线 (*First Online Application for Reporting Domestic Violence against Juveniles in China*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/9cIjHX_jSjNIClK7YWqfwg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[97] Id.

[98] Id.

[99] See ZHANG, ZHANG & CHEN, fn. 47.

cases to the court.[100] The courts also developed a new working method online, known as the virtual court, to handle cases during the pandemic.[101] The online virtual court could be downloaded to smartphones. It had three channels that could be accessed by the judges, clerks, and parties, respectively. By completing a simple registration process, a code for an online session for the case concerned is sent to the phones of the people involved in the session. The judge can start the online session when everybody involved is ready. All the necessary materials can be submitted through the system. The virtual court has ensured the efficiency in responses to domestic violence. In March 2020, an applicant received a protection order in 48 hours through the online virtual court.[102] According to the Anti-Domestic Violence Law of China, a protection order should be issued within 72 hours, and within 24 hours for urgent matters.[103] It seems that the 48 hour period is the normal timeframe for issuance of a protection order, but considering the pandemic and the lockdown policies, it proves great efficiency.

3. Other Online Platforms. — WeChat chatting groups, which are different from the WeChat official account, are also useful for keeping people having similar needs together, offering correspondence services, and facilitating group discussions. Lu'an City of Anhui Province established around 1,900 WeChat groups to disseminate information on law, regulations, cases, and providing legal consultations for the villagers.[104] These practices ensured timely services for people in great need. Online training can also be organized through TikTok and WeChat.[105] Access to WeChat groups might be restricted in number but live sessions on TikTok can be easily accessed by people who have installed TikTok on their phone. As the examples show, modern technology has largely promoted anti-domestic responses. Although this demonstrates significant progress compared to the past, there is much that still needs to be done.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations aim to strengthen the traditional anti-domestic

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[100] See LIANG Xiansen, 家事法官教你疫情期间反家暴正确姿势 (*Family Law Judge Teaches You How to Combat Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/VMfm4cYhpLrolTHTIH-wUg (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[101] See QIN Yan & LI Jingming, 七星法院: 利用广西法院"云间"网上庭审系统实现远程庭审 (*Qixing Court: Remote Trial Is Realized by Using the "Cloud" Online Court Trial System of Guangxi Court*), available at http://gxfy.chinacourt.gov.cn/article/detail/2020/02/ id/4790678.shtml (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[102] See Guangxi Women's Union, 女子跳车求救, 法院 48 小时加急发出人身安全保护令！ (*A Woman Jumped from Her Car to Seek Help from the Police, and the Court Issued an Urgent Protection Order in 48 Hours*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/91moS2wIh4uq3M4Mb8kdTQ (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[103] See The State Council of the People's Republic of China, fn. 43, Art. 28.

[104] See Changan Gaocheng, 六安市畅通法律援助绿色通道保障疫情期间民生 (*Lu'an City Granted Green Pass for Legal Aid Services to Protect People's Livelihood during the Pandemic*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ oxTRqS9VyCsoB0sg1eoFVw (last visited Nov. 15, 2020).

[105] See ZHU, fn. 87.

violence network and promote new measures that contribute to an adequate response in all situations, including the COVID-19 pandemic and public health crises of the future. Since the traditional network is weak, the recommendations aim to address this aspect, as it is the foundation of the entire structure, without which no anti-domestic violence response can be initiated effectively.

A. Measures to Empower Women and Victims of Domestic Violence

1. Economic Empowerment. — Women themselves play a vital role in reducing their chances of becoming a victim of domestic violence when they possess the adequate awareness and the necessary skills to address the problem. As stated by UN Women, financial strains from loss of employment, job uncertainty, and reduction in income results in uncertainty and loss of control, enhancing power imbalances in family relations, thus generating violence against partners, spouses, children, or other family members.[106] Ensuring women's economic empowerment can be helpful in the reduction of domestic violence, especially in situations where women easily face financing crises, such as in the context of public health. Therefore, measures should be taken to secure women's employment and income in the context of a pandemic. Social protection and relief mechanisms should be prepared to provide women with economic assistance in the context of COVID-19.

2. Raising Women's Awareness for Combating Domestic Violence. — Awareness raising activities should be enhanced through education and training, propaganda, public campaigns, information dissemination, and other channels to ensure that women have opportunities to obtain the necessary knowledge against domestic violence, including general knowledge and context-specific knowledge, such as in situations like COVID-19. For instance, in Changzhou City of Jiangsu Province, couples must pass a test on anti-domestic violence law to obtain the certificate of marriage.[107] General knowledge encompasses knowledge on how to prevent and protect females from domestic violence, and if it happens, how to cope with it. The knowledge should include law, policies, measures, mechanisms, and support networks that are essential. Practical, anti-domestic violence information should also be available for females. For example, Zhejiang Province has adopted measures allowing couples to check whether their partner has a record of domestic violence prior to their marriage. This is a practical and useful

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[106] See UN Women, *Prevention: Violence against Women and Girls & COVID-19*, available at https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/brief-prevention-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-COVID-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3049 (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[107] See All-China Women's Federation, 江苏常州新人领证先答法律测试卷 (*Couples Should First Pass a Legal Test in Order to Obtain the Marriage Certificate in Changzhou City of Jiangsu Province*), available at http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/09/99199992.html (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

information that should be applied across China and be known to all women.[108] Context-specific knowledge includes knowledge on how to prevent and protect females from domestic violence in public emergency situations, such as in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to access key information and services under the situation. Women should be informed that when domestic violence occurs, saving their life should always be considered the supreme rule. Once life is endangered, even if there is risk of being infected with COVID-19, the victim of domestic violence should try to escape from their home.[109]

3. Ensuring Access to Healthcare and Other Essential Services. — Access to quality healthcare is an essential human right for victim of domestic violence, especially during the pandemic. The right to heath should be placed at the center of protection and resilience for domestic violence victims. During the pandemic, it is important to declare services for domestic violence victims as essential.[110] Healthcare facilities and personnel should be available for the treatment of domestic violence victims. Information concerning access to healthcare should be available for the public, particularly for the people with potential risks of facing domestic violence. Enhancing surveillance in the healthcare system can also facilitate targeted support and intervention to victims of domestic violence.[111] Similarly, comprehensive policies and effective mechanisms should be put in place, to ensure the victims of domestic violence are not forgotten.

B. Measures to Strengthen the Support Network

1. Identifying Gaps and Room for Improvement. — Research and data collection are of great importance to a comprehensive understanding of the situation, risk factors, needs, and gaps in anti-domestic violence responses, both in general and during a public health crisis situation. COVID-19 could provide valuable experiences and lessons. Data can help to identify the availability of services, what affect the services most, and how to improve it. These data can be a good facilitator for evidence-based policies, interventions, and programs. Modern technology can be used to fill the gaps. Big Data and online devices can be deployed for information and data collection during the pandemic.[112] But privacy

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[108] See All-China Women's Federation, 浙江义乌建专门查询制度 涉家暴？婚姻登记一查就有 (*Records of Domestic Violence Can Be Checked Prior to Marriage Registration in Yiwu City of Zhejiang Province*), available at http://www.cnwomen.com.cn/2020/06/23/99201224.html (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[109] See HUANG, fn. 22 at 10.

[110] See OHCHR, *COVID-19 and Women's Human Rights Guidance*, available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/COVID-19_and_Womens_Human_Rights.pdf (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[111] See Joht Singh Chandan, Julie Taylor & Caroline Bradbury-Jones et al., *COVID-19: A Public Health Approach to Manage Domestic Violence Is Needed*, 5 The Lancet Public Health, 309 (2020), available at https://doi.org/10.1016/ (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[112] See UN Women, *Violence against Women and Girls Data Collection during COVID-19*, available at https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/vawg-data-collection-during-COVID-19-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=2339 (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

and confidentiality should be ensured in gathering and processing information online.[113] For example, gaps in how to provide solutions to ensure victims' access to the police, to immediately halt the violence, should be addressed. Lessons could be learnt from Spain, where women used a code message "Mask-19" to contact the police. The support network can also be expanded by exploring additional available resources to reduce the difficulties of discovering cases of domestic violence. For example, in the UK, postal workers and delivery drivers were enlisted to persons with responsibilities to report on cases of domestic violence, and South Africa engaged telecom mobile companies to deliver anti-domestic violence messages.[114]

2. Training Professionals to Ensure Quality Services. — Training should be organized for first aid responders, personnel working at emergency shelters, women's organizations, governmental officials, community leaders, village leaders, childcare staff, etc. Training subjects should cover relevant issues concerning domestic violence. This could include laws, policies, measures, practical tips, case analyses, psychological services, project design, risk management, technological skills, etc. The inclusion of anti-domestic violence plans into public health emergency responses, such as the COVID-19 response, would be the best practice to prepare for future use. For this purpose, good quality training manuals should be developed.

3. Direct Resources and Adequate Funds. — Specific funds addressing domestic violence in the context of a public health emergency should be put in place. In Guangxi Zhuang Antonomous Region, the government provided an allocated fiscal budget to family-related work, which would facilitate the implementation of local projects.[115] Lessons could be learnt from the US Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, which provided a wide range of housing types that could be funded as emergency and immediate shelters.[116]

C. Include Men in the Anti-Domestic Violence Response

1. Raising Men's Awareness in Combating Domestic Violence. — In the fight against domestic violence, men are often forgotten. This not only means that male victims gain little attention, but for the purpose of this paper, it means that males (who constitute the largest number of perpetrators of domestic violence) should be included in the training and education programs for anti-domestic violence responses. Men's awareness of

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[113] Id.

[114] See UN Women, *COVID-19 and Ending Violence against Women and Girls*, available at https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-COVID-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006 (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[115] See Guangxi Women's Union, 广西壮族自治区妇女联合会2020年部门预算 (*2020 Budget of Women's Union of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region*), available at http://www.gxwomen.org.cn/zwgk/ggxx/10698.shtml (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[116] See Congress Research Service, fn. 40 at 2.

anti-domestic violence should be improved. In a case that occurred in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, a woman jumped out of her car at a checkpoint on the highway when the police were checking body temperatures of passersby, because she was subjected to verbal and physical abuse by her husband and wanted to report her husband to the police.[117] When the police initiated the investigation process, the man was furious and tried to stop the police's intervention because he considered domestic violence a family issue that was not any of the police's business.[118] This is not an isolated incident. Many men still have no knowledge of what constitutes domestic violence and what are its consequences. There is an urgent need to raise men's awareness in this regard. The Women's Union of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region has established programs to provide psychological, medical, and social support to the perpetrators of domestic violence.[119] This practice should be promoted across China. In another case, the Women's Union of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region reported that, after an online anti-domestic violence training session, a male audience wrote to them that he gave up the thought of using extreme measures to take revenge on his wife.[120] As a common practice, advocacy campaigns for ending domestic violence are usually organized during International Women's Day or Mother's Day. However, it is very necessary to do the same on Father's Day or when men are under public attention.

2. Imposing Serious Sanctions for Perpetrators. — Perpetrators of domestic violence against women should face more serious punishments in the context of public health emergencies. If the victims or the perpetrators are separated, as is practiced in Italy, in the context of public health emergencies like the COVID-19 outbreak, the perpetrators should be asked to leave the home, instead of the victims.[121] In Guizhou Province, once the government officials conducted domestic violence acts at home, the police copied the warning notice to the employer of the perpetrator as a deterrence measure. The employer is obliged to criticize and educate the perpetrator.[122] However, it is difficult to understand the effect of this policy. The representative of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference of Guangdong Province also proposed to enlist perpetrators of domestic violence who caused serious consequences as persons with poor social credit.[123] Being

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[117] See Guangxi Women's Union, fn. 102.

[118] Id.

[119] See Ningxia Women's Union, fn. 90.

[120] Id.

[121] See Congress Research Service, fn. 40.

[122] See Guizhou Province People's Congress, 贵州省反家暴条例 (*Anti-Domestic Violence Regulation of Guizhou Province*), Art. 25, available at http://www.gzrd.gov.cn/dffg/gzsdffg/28576.shtml (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[123] See 21st Century Report, 8000 万女性面临家暴？广东政协委员：将情节严重加害人列入失信名单 (*Are 80 Million Women Facing Domestic Violence? The Guangdong Representative of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference: Enlisting Perpetrators Who Engaged in Serious Domestic Violence as People with Poor Social Credit*), available at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/PnViLc2jebUah4QiIGzGog (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

on the list of poor social credit, the person is subjected to a wide range of restrictions with respect to access of luxury services, commercial, financial, and other activities.[124] The practices at the provincial level are not commonly used across China, but they can be applied if they are proven to be practical, useful, and proportionate.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that traditional support mechanisms are inadequate for addressing domestic violence against women in the context of COVID-19. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights pointed out that "women are absent from local, national and global COVID-19 response teams, policy spaces and decision-making."[125] China also faces several challenges in addressing domestic violence during the pandemic. Many provinces have sought solutions to reduce the difficulties of providing services to victims. Among the solutions, modern technologies can play a significant role in breaking restrictions derived from the lockdown policies. However, the current solutions are far from perfect, and some best practices can still be polished and improved further. More research should be done to identify gaps and find long-lasting solutions for victims. In the case of China, it is rather urgent that the traditional anti-domestic violence network is strengthened, while introducing innovative solutions to combat domestic violence during public health crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

[124] See Lawyers Website, 2019 年被纳入失信人名单有什么影响？如何解除失信人 (*What Are the Consequences of Being Enlisted as a Person with Poor Social Credit in 2019? How to Be Remered from the List*), available at http://www. maxlaw.cn/n/20191009/959704933132.shtml (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).

[125] OHCHR, *Joint Statement by the Special Rapporteur and the EDVAW Platform of Women's Rights Mechanisms on COVID-19 and the Increase in Violence and Discrimination against Women*, available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26083&LangID=E (last visited Nov. 20, 2020).