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In-class Exercise (Individual task)

From the World Bank VDO Expert - Discuss the issues females face during the COVID-19 crisis.

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/05/22/why-are-women-and-girls-threatened-by-coronavirus>

(1) Do you agree that “This pandemic will reverse the progress toward gender equality”? Why?

(2) Using a country as an example, explain what policies the government of that country has implemented to address this problem.

1)

Yes because the pandemic is not gender neutral. It has differential impacts on both men and women as a result of a number of factors in terms of their biology and physiology, but also because of their social and economic roles in the different societies in which they live

However, there is another set of issues in the health sector. First, more women than men around the world are in the front lines of the healthcare profession as nurses, physician assistants, and other frontline workers. Pandemic and crises put tremendous pressure on systems, and it means that services are stretched, and capacity may be really thin. In previous crises, what we have learned from Ebola, SARS, or H1N1 is that sometimes girls do not return to school. School closures and economic necessity can lead boys and girls to drop out. The experience from previous crises, is that boys go back quicker, and some girls just do not return either because they are in the labor market or they have caregiving responsibilities.

In the US, the headline of a recent Washington Post article was that we should name this a "she-session," as opposed to a recession because the jobs in the sectors where women predominate are the ones that are first and hardest hit. This is not just higher unemployment but lack of income and ability to cope.

Second is that, around the world, women predominate in informal employment. These are the types of jobs that do not come with fringe benefits, like social protection, health insurance, and unemployment compensation.

Therefore, a solution is to really think about how we extend social protection programs, particularly cash transfers to those groups of workers. The other thing is the increased demands for caregiving as a result of job loss, school closures, and just taking care of the enormous number of people who are sick and require care

2)

First is saving lives. We need to take all of the social distancing measures, but part of that also mean that we need to pay attention to females as the frontline caregivers. We need to reduce their risk of exposure by ensuring that they have the right equipment and resources. We need to ensure that women can access health services. We need to ensure that certain services just are essential, and keep going.

Second is really protecting the poor and those who are most vulnerable. It is building back better in the sense of having a stronger framework for caregiving whether it is at the community level, what employers provide, or what the government subsidizes.