

## Keeping women and girls safe: Guidance for religious leaders and communities

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced people to stay home for long periods, and taken away jobs, has created conditions that could lead to gender-based violence. Women and girls also have unique needs that may be interfered with by various restrictions to stop the spread of the virus.

The following are some guidelines for religious leaders and communities to cater for the needs of women and girls.

- When forming coronavirus response teams in the church or community, ensure that women are adequately included.
- Advocate gender balanced national and regional response teams to ensure women and girls' interests are accommodated in the response plans.
- Churches can turn some of their facilities into temporary rescue centers to provide a safe space for women and girls who face abuse in their homes.
- Religious and community leaders should provide counseling to affected individuals.
- Give priority to the safety of the victims, which means reporting cases so that the abuser is removed.
- Set up temporary GBV desks in partnership with specialists in the churches and other facilities in the community.
- Form support groups on social media or other acceptable ways to share information on how to access further support and provide spiritual guidance.

