Capitalism and Corona: -The disproportionate impact on Women and girls in South Asia context

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Abstract

As we all know, the global lockdowns in response to the pandemic have caused widespread economic disruptions in countries from Europe to Asia to the United States, which leads the world in corona virus cases and deaths. There is also rising inequalities of all kinds, due to the current pandemic, including gender inequality. In the long run, its impact on women's health rights, psychological wellbeing and freedom could harm everyone. A pandemic-induced health crisis has rapidly ignited an economic crisis with yet unknown consequences for financial stability, and all of this is playing out against the backdrop of a climate crisis that cannot be addressed by "business as usual." This is alarming cause of "capitalism' and growing market economic, where we see less negotiation power of common people, especially those who are marginalized. The stress of the lockdown doubled with the fear of job-loss is a mental burden hovering over many families. Financial independence (in case of working couples) is at stake and women who are already vulnerable to Covid job losses have more to fear.

The pandemic has affected women and girls in many ways, especially in developing countries due to huge inequality, poverty, and strict patriarchal norms. The impact is huge in the areas of economic, health as well as psychological sphere. As stated by UN Chief, Antonio Guterres, this struggle to fight against surging violence against women and girls, we need to bring ceasefire to such horrifying global shadow pandemic.As more countries report infection and lockdown, more domestic violence helplines and shelters across the world are reporting rising calls for help (UN Women, April 20). In India, between March 25 and May 31, 1477, complaints of domestic violence were made by women. This 68-day period recorded more complaints of child marriages and trafficking which is increasing during the COVID-19 school closure especially in Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India. On the other hand, as the lockdown became new normal in the life of women and girls, risk of unintended pregnancies spiked up all over the world.

Moreover, due to various social, cultural, and economic factors, women are facing a sharp increase in caregiving responsibilities,with even less freedom, space, or economic security. Acute stress, overburdened responsibilities, meeting expectations to maintain the stereotype

social roles,women are at risk now.Especially, caregivers, frontline healthworkers, domestic helps are facing concern in the pandemic.

How can we deal with such situation- In the long run? - DO we have answers?

The WHO states that "women's health is inextricably linked to their status in society. It benefits from equality and suffers from discrimination. Today the status and wellbeing of countless millions of women worldwide remains tragically low". The writing on the wall is clear- we have deprioritised women's physical, social, and mental health for far too long. The pervasive issue of women's mental health is not invisible but made culturally invisible. The cost of blindsiding this reality is too high.

Most importantly, we need to focus on

- Prioritising women's and girl's health from all perspectives
- Essential health care and access
- Flatten the inequality curve first
- Proper legal and counselling support to survivors
- Appropriate measures to tackle the situation of child marriage and trafficking

The pandemic provides an opportunity to build a resilient, healthy, fair, and zero-carbon economy, against capitalism with more social support and negotiation power for women in a stigma free equal society.