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Violence against women in the Philippines

Violence against women has intensified in many countries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Philippines is no exception.¹ Community lockdowns can increase violence against women, and exceedingly stringent stay-at-home orders have trapped victims with their abusers. The one-household-one-quarantine-pass policy, inadequate public transportation, and strict curfews have restricted both mobility and the ability to seek help,¹⁻³ as reflected by a 27.2% drop in reported cases to the Philippine National Police.^{1,4}

With government institutions prioritising the pandemic response, resources have been scarce for women experiencing violence. Reproductive health services have been largely inaccessible; many women have been left unemployed and economically dependent on their partners. Additionally, low level of trust in authorities means that many women are less likely to report cases to authorities,² but internet queries associated with violence against women have risen by 63% during the pandemic.⁵

The Anti-Violence Against Women and Children Act was passed in 2004, in the Philippines.⁶ However, follow-up data on implementation, which could guide the subsequent steps of action, are unavailable. Active surveillance and further research to create a robust data infrastructure on violence against women in the Philippines are needed. We agree with the *Lancet Public Health*⁷ that strategies to address violence against women must be multifaceted and centered on enduring solutions. Intersectoral collaboration between policy makers, non-governmental organisations, community leaders, women advocates, and the health sector must be intensified to deliver adequate and timely medical, psychiatric, legal, financial, and housing assistance for victims.

We declare no conflicts of interest.

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- 7 The Lancet Public Health. Violence against women: tackling the other pandemic. *Lancet Public Health* 2022; 7: e1.