** **

***Webinar Concept Note (external version) – Social Protection and Violence against Women and Girls in the Indo Pacific - Responding to COVID***

***Tuesday 18 August 2020 (1 – 2:30pm - Australian Eastern Standard Time)***

**Purpose**

This webinar, curated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (DFAT), will explore the potential role of social protection to respond to the ‘shadow pandemic’ of violence against women and girls (VAWG) during COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific. It will specifically look at intimate partner violence (IPV), and cash transfers, the most common social protection, and focus of research to date. The webinar will present emerging evidence, practitioner perspectives, as well as examples of emerging practical innovations from programing, within the context of social protection approaches and experiences to address IPV. It will seek to pinpoint key opportunities and actionable recommendations for actors working on social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific region and at the intersection of long-term and emergency (humanitarian) situations.

**Introduction**

Evidence on the impact of COVID-19 shows that existing gender inequalities are intensifying for women and girls, with a documented ‘shadow’ pandemic of VAWG as one of the most pernicious impacts of the crises. VAW is now recognised as public health issue, a major violation of human rights, and an impediment to the social and economic development of communities and countries. Evidence from other crises shows that crises and poverty related stresses can intensify discriminatory gender and age-related social norms, and be drivers for VAWG. Moreover, under extremis of COVID19-related lockdown and quarantine measures, survivors of violence are unable to exit violent households, or access support services.

The COVID−19 pandemic has demonstrated the critical importance of robust social protection (social security) systems in the face of crisis. Social protection systems help individuals and societies manage risk and volatility and protect them from poverty and destitution. 195 governments, including Australia, have rapidly established and expanded social protection instruments to protect families, businesses and the economy from the impacts of the pandemic. The Australian Government’s [*Partnerships for Recovery: Australia’s COVID-19 Development Response*](https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/aid/partnerships-recovery-australias-covid-19-development-response) identifies social protection as a key area for support to help our neighbours weather the crisis, return to prosperity and enhance resilience over the long term, and sets out objectives to improve gender equality and reducing VAWG in all aspects of our support.

Recent research has identified [the promising potential of cash transfers to effectively address intimate partner violence (IPV)](https://www.igwg.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GBV-Task-Force-Cash-Transfer-Paper_Mixed-Methods-Review-of-CT-and-IPV-in-LMICs_Heise.pdf) in low and middle income countries, when designed well. In other contexts, programs targeting women can increase intra-household tensions, including backlash in the form of VAWG. However, within the Indo-Pacific region, there is a paucity of research and evidence. Moreover, an overarching question on the extent to which existing evidence on reductions, largely in South America, can be generalised and applied to diverse settings and whether these programmes provide a sustainable approach for IPFV prevention and exacerbated by COVID.

This webinar will provide a more in-depth look at the role of social protection in responding to IPV during COVID19, what the evidence really says, and share some practice-based learning from practitioners on the ground, and in other regions.

**Objectives of the webinar:**

1. Provide a broad snapshot of emerging evidence on the impacts of cash transfers on mitigating VAWG and implications for shock sensitive social protection responses to COVID-19 and the ‘shadow’ pandemic of GBV;
2. Promote the importance of GBV considerations in social protection as a response to COVID-19; and
3. Pinpoint key issues, opportunities and approaches for addressing GBV in social protection responses to crises.

**Overarching questions:**

1. *What is the current evidence base/research on the role of cash transfers in having positive impacts on violence against women and girls? What does it say about the factors and conditions that influence this positive impact and where are the gaps in knowledge? What about the potential of unintended consequences?*
2. *How can social protection policies and program, contribute to addressing the shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Indo-Pacific? What are the differences in application across our region, for example what are the differences in application of social protection policies and programs in MICs and LICs?*
3. *What are promising examples of how social protection programs (on the ground) are addressing GBV in the Indo-Pacific?*
4. *How can and are cash transfers responding to the GBV impacts of the pandemic on women in crises and conflicts through humanitarian mechanisms? Are there particular challenges or opportunities that humanitarian mechanisms present to using cash transfers to respond to GBV?*

**Speakers:**

**Stream 1 Research, Evidence and Learning: Independent Social Policy Consultant & Associate Adjunct Research Professor, University of North Carolina**

Amber Peterman, Ph.D. joined UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti in 2015 as a Social Policy Specialist and now works as a consultant with joint affiliation as an Associate Adjunct Professor at UNC Chapel Hill. Amber focuses on gender, violence and adolescent wellbeing and safe transitions to adulthood with the Transfer Project evaluations of social protection and cash transfers in Africa. She has led research in over a dozen countries and brings significant experience in large-scale surveys and impact evaluation in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. Amber previously worked as an Assistant Professor at UNC Chapel Hill and as a Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) in Washington DC., Kampala and Dakar. Amber obtained her PhD in Public Policy with focus on international maternal and child health from UNC

**Stream 2 Melissa Alvarado, Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) Regional Program Manager, UN Women, Asia-Pacific Regional Office.**

Melissa Alvarado is the Ending Violence against Women (EVAW) Regional Programme Manager at UN Women, Asia-Pacific Regional Office. Melissa has been working specifically on ending violence against women and children for 20 years, through program management and design, policy and legislation development and implementation, developing interagency response systems, technical assistance, capacity building, advocacy and research. Her work is informed by years of experience advocating for and directly supporting survivors of violence against women and children in crisis.

**Stream 3 Pacific/Fiji perspective: Nalini Singh, Executive Director, Fiji Women’s Rights Movement**

Nalini Singh is the Executive Director of the Fiji Women’s Rights Movement (FWRM). Nalini Singh is a feminist and a social development specialist with over 17 years’ experience in design, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of women’s rights and development programmes in the Asia Pacific. Her particular interests are the issues of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), decent work and organisational capacity strengthening. Nalini is a graduate of the University of the South Pacific with a Bachelor of Arts.

**Stream 4 Learning from humanitarian practice – implementation and field realities: Lara Quarterman, Independent Consultant**

Lara is an independent consultant specialising in gender, protection, and inclusion. For over 15 years, she has been working to improve humanitarian responses and development efforts to better meet the needs of women and girls, including the risks of gender-based violence and access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Prior to becoming a consultant, she was a Humanitarian Adviser with DFID leading on violence against women and girls policy and programming, and has worked with UNHCR, IOM, ILO, the World Bank, and international NGOs. She is currently providing advice on gender equality and social inclusion to Social Protection Approaches to COVID-19: Expert Advice Helpline (SPACE).

**Format and Technology**

Zoom – participants can register at: <https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-indo-pacific-region-responding-covid-19>.

**Chairs/Moderators:**

**Julie-Ann Guivarra, Ambassador for Gender Equality, DFAT**

Ms Guivarra is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade where she served most recently as Australia’s Ambassador to the Kingdom of Spain, Andorra and Equatorial Guinea. In this role Ms Guivarra became Australia’s first female indigenous Ambassador.

Prior to that appointment she served as Australia’s lead services negotiator for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) while she was Assistant Secretary of the South East Asia Investment & Services Branch. She has multilateral experience, serving as the Counsellor (Agriculture) in the World Trade Organisation.

**Sarah Goulding, Assistant Secretary, Education, Social Protection and Human Development Finance Branch**

****Sarah Goulding is the Assistant Secretary for Assistant Secretary, Education, Social Protection and Human Development Finance Branch with responsibility for Australia’s investment in a portfolio of social protection, health, education, climate and environment multilateral funds. Previously she has held the position of Senior Specialist Gender Equality, strengthening Australia’s focus on women in leadership, women’s economic empowerment and ending violence against women and girls through Australia’s aid programmes.

Sarah joined the former AusAID in 2003. She has led a range of policy and programme portfolios, including fragility and conflict and governance engagement. She has overseen country and regional Australian Aid programmes in the Asia-Pacific in a broad range of sectors, including health, education, private sector development and economic reform. She served in Suva as the head of Australia’s aid program to Fiji and Tuvalu, and on the board of Tuvalu’s sovereign wealth fund.

The proposed audience is international, comprising DFAT Canberra and international staff, members of [www.socialprotection.org](http://www.socialprotection.org) (social protection practitioners, policy-makers, and experts), members of the Social Protection Inter-agency Cooperation Board Gender Equality Working Group (development and UN agencies, NGOs and research organisations) and key actors working in the humanitarian and gender and development sectors).

**Agenda**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Welcome  | Julie-Anne Guivarra |
| Introduction to speakers | Sarah Goulding |
| Evidence on the role of social protection to address VAWG (10 minutes) | Dr Amber Peterman |
| A regional Indo-Pacific perspective (10 minutes) | Melissa Alvarado |
| Gender Sensitive Social Protection in Fiji (10 minutes) | Nalini Singh |
| Learning from humanitarian practice – implementation and field realities (10 minutes) |  Lara Quarterman  |
| Q&A (15 minutes) | Moderator: Sarah Goulding |
| Closing | Julie-Anne Guivarra |

**Contact for the webinar**

Tess Connolly, Gender Equality Adviser, Human Development, E: tess.connolly@dfat.gov.au