

## Platform of Women's Organizations against COVID-19

### Concept Note

#### 1. Framework

The *Women's Voice and Leadership Programme (ALIADAS)* is an initiative of the Government of Canada, implemented by the Centre for Civil Society Learning (CESC) in six provinces in Mozambique (Manica, Sofala, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula and Maputo).

Designed to support the activities and strengthen the capacity of local organisations and movements that promote and protect the rights of women and girls and with a view to achieving gender equality, ALIADAS-WVL channels technical, material and financial resources to c.52 women's organisations, groups and networks to support the realisation of their efforts to promote social transformation by boosting a vibrant feminist movement.

Specifically, the programme aims to contribute to the achievement of three outcomes, namely: (i) improved management and sustainability of local women's rights organisations; (ii) improved performance of women's rights organisations in promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls; (iii) increased effectiveness of national and subnational women's rights platforms, networks and alliances to influence changes in decisions and policies in favour of the establishment of an egalitarian society.

In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, whose effects are expected to be overwhelming, and given the inability of institutions and essential services to respond, the ALIADAS Programme will form alliances with civil society, and women's organizations in particular, to support the implementation of various initiatives that will have an impact on the fight against the pandemic and its effects.

This Concept Note outlines the approach for establishing a platform of women's organisations and/or groups that work to promote and protect women and girls rights, to respond in a coordinated way to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The proposal is informed by evidence from women and gender relations in relation to pandemics like Ebola and Zika that show that the social effects of such pandemics severely impact on the living conditions of women who represent the majority of the Mozambican population and who constitute the poorest and most vulnerable segment.

#### 2. Context and justification

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of Mozambique, Filipe Nyusi, announced through Decree 11/2020, on March 30<sup>th</sup>, a national State of Emergency, as a measure to prevent infections and control the pandemic. The decision was ratified by Parliament through Law 1/2020 of 31 March which includes a package of administrative measures that restrict the movement of citizens and inhibits their concentration in public places, as well as in the normal course of their lives, including the carrying out of daily activities that for many are a source of income and livelihood.

The decision, which is perceived as necessary and timely, taking into account the severity of the possible damage caused by an increase in the number of infections and the exponential spread of the disease in the country, raises concerns related to social justice and respect for

the human rights and security of vulnerable groups, especially women and children, which arise from the widespread recognition of the needs and weaknesses of public institutions and services, and their inability to respond to the diverse social and economic implications of the pandemic, which in a Mozambican context are characterized by:

- a peri-urban reality of high demographic concentration and poor sanitary conditions enabling easy and rapid contagion;
- a large number of citizens working in, and dependent on, the informal sector without the ability to strictly follow quarantine and social isolation measures;
- food insecurity;
- the lack of hygiene and sanitary conditions in markets;
- domestic workers without employment rights;
- overcrowded and poorly regulated public and semi-collective transport;
- the vulnerability of women and children and weak mechanisms for reporting rape and for supporting the victims of violence;
- lack of access to safe drinking water for many families and the need to use water sources on a daily basis where there are large concentrations of people.

These and other situations not only pose challenges for the implementation of the administrative measures imposed by the State of Emergency, but require careful consideration with regard to their socio-economic impact and especially on how they will impact on the responsibility to take care of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Lessons from different sources draw attention to the fact that women are more exposed to the risk of infection and to the high potential for an increase in all forms of violence, exacerbated by the pressures to which families will be subjected as a consequence of confinement and other measures taken to control the pandemic.

The closure of schools, training institutes and universities, for example, have different implications for women and men. What are the consequences for both girls' education and the domestic division of labour given that it is well known that education and home care responsibilities tend to naturally fall on women?

The Government's measures also raise concerns about the care economy which tend to be cross-cutting in relation to class and race and have a rural/urban dimension. Core issues related to domestic and informal work (including sex workers), invite us to go beyond sexual and reproductive rights and to take into consideration questions related to women's rights in general and the violation of economic rights in particular.

Most women (and their families) are supported by insecure incomes that are derived from informal work or precarious employment contracts.

The pressure on essential services, especially health services, which already face capacity constraints that hinder access, and the quality of services provided, to women may increase thus further neglecting their needs, which continue to be priorities, for example pre- and postnatal care and access to contraceptives.

The reality described above leaves no doubt as to the existence of the preconditions for an increase in gender-based violence and a deterioration in conditions for women which will manifest themselves in different ways and will have different impacts on different groups (for example, girls, elderly women, women with disabilities).

This proposal aims precisely at responding to the need for urgent and articulated intervention by the women's movement to promote women's voices and to develop prevention and response strategies for the COVID-19 Pandemic that are informed by the specific needs and priorities of women and girls at all levels and across all sectors.

### 3. Objectives

The proposed platform is fundamentally designed to create an active (and broad based) community within civil society to prevent and combat COVID-19 and mitigate its effects on the lives of women and girls.

Specifically, it is intended to:

- Support the efforts of the Government, the private sector and other stakeholders in the prevention and mitigation of the pandemic;
- Influence policies and decisions in relation to the central and priority needs of women, recognizing their vulnerability and their diversity;
- Identify and highlight the experiences, needs and priorities of women in the context of the pandemic.

### 4. Platform Composition

The platform will include civil society organisations and especially those that represent women and/or with a vocation to promote and protect women's rights. Bearing in mind the need to ensure an inclusive approach, adopting the principle of "*Leave no one behind*", the platform will integrate representatives of various women's groups, including emerging and informal groups, as well as individuals that are committed to the platform's objectives. The platform will articulate with government institutions, the private sector and the media, and particularly with those working in the areas of health, human rights and economic empowerment.

### 5. Programme Components

The proposed programme has three main components:

- i) **Prevention and mitigation of COVID-19** – this includes a set of measures aimed at preventing infections and containing their spread, by raising awareness in society in general. This component will also include actions to reduce specifically the vulnerability of women and to prevent a deterioration in their living conditions, through promoting the reinforcement of care services including the maintenance of essential services appropriate to their needs (health, drinking water, legal assistance and psychosocial support) and livelihoods.

Main actions:

- Produce and disseminate prevention and care messages in different formats and languages, taking into account the diversity and needs of women and girls;
- Mobilize communities to protect and care for women at risk, especially elderly women, handicap and health professionals;

- Establish and disseminate lines of denunciation of violations of women's rights (including labor), legal (Consultation, counseling and referral of HV cases) and psychosocial assistance;
  - Create and streamline community support mechanisms for preventing and reporting domestic violence and facilitating women's access to essential justice and health services (including shelter);
  - Promote alternative income generation activities for women in need.
- ii) **Lobbying and advocacy*** – to influence decisions favorable to mitigating the effects of the pandemic on women's lives, including specific demands for interventions aimed at building women's economic resilience. The platform will be a coalition (and a space for interaction, sharing and action) to ensure gender mainstreaming and respect for women's rights in the general guidelines of government and the sectors.

Main actions:

- Elaborate a statement from women's organizations around women's needs and priorities;
  - Lobby to influence protection and social security policies and to increase and improve the availability of essential services for women in the context of Pandemic;
  - Action Research on Women's Human Rights in the context of the COVID;
  - Monitoring the quality of essential services provided to women, specially sexual and reproductive health services in the context of COVID.
- iii) **Documentation of the effects/impact of COVID-19*** - To feed into lobbying and advocacy actions and inform concrete responses, initiatives and programmes and including gender analyses and the collection of gender-disaggregated data, etc.

Main actions:

- Establish an Observatory for Women - a space for reflection, sharing and documentation of the impacts of COVID 19 on women;
- Create and Streamline a Virtual Platform for Sharing and Learning;
- Hold a national event to share the experience of the platform.

A communication component permeates and cuts across all three areas above. Community radio, television programs and social networks will be a resource for the platform to promote and broaden the debate around concrete issues, as well as to make visible the problems of women and girls and the response actions implemented through women's organizations and the platform, in particular.

Main Actions:

- Promote and broaden the debates on concrete subjects of the Platform's action involving the different stakeholders (Public Institutions, Community Leaders, WROs);

- Make the visible the problems of women and girls related to COVID and the response actions implemented through women's organizations and the platform, in particular

## **6. Approach and Operationalization**

The platform will be adopt a holistic and multidimensional approach to the pandemic, responding in an integrated way to its complexity that favours the development of a vibrant and comprehensive movement on a national scale. Moreover, implementation will be strongly anchored in a communication component that is strongly underpinned by digital technologies to ensure coordination, the mass dissemination of key messages, and that the problems of women and girls and the responses of the different key stakeholders are clearly highlighted.

Operationalisation of the platform will be ensured by a collectively developed action plan in which the priority actions and commitments of each stakeholder are identified taking into account their vocation and capacity.

Given the intention of the platform to align with the efforts of the Government, the action plan may contain priorities defined in coordination with government institutions that have responsibility for coordinating interventions that promote and protect women, notably MGCAS.

The intervention will be informed and supported by the experience of each and every member of the platform and other key stakeholders engaged in the issue. Platform members may be involved in similar initiatives, such as, for example, the platform "Together for Mozambique", which seeks to create a global civil society movement to support the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

The implementation of the Action Plan will take into account the importance of a principled approach to collaboration and synergetic action. Furthermore, it will prioritise the mobilisation of stakeholders at local level (provinces and districts) through the networks and nuclei of women's organisations.

## **7. Geographical coverage**

The platform aims to create a vibrant women's movement, and involving other key stakeholders, in all provinces of the country, mobilized, facilitated and led by local women's nuclei and networks.

## **8. Resources**

The ALIADAS-WVL programme will contribute small rapid response funds to support the activities defined in the plan (CAD 500,000). Financial support from other organisation or stakeholders will be readily integrated into the plan.

## **9. Coordination and Management**

Responsibility for the coordination of the programme will be shared between ALIADAS, the *Forum Mulher* and other women's nuclei and networks in the provinces. However, the

members of the platform will have the freedom and autonomy to lead the coordination of specific actions according to the vocation of each one. All actions related to the management of programmatic and financial matters will be the responsibility of ALIADAS-WVL. The programme will make available to the platform its structures, mechanisms and management and monitoring tools.

### **10. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring will be ensured using ALIADAS monitoring tools. Given the unusual circumstances that prevent the free circulation of people, the programme will adapt monitoring instruments appropriate to the nature of each activity, without losing sight of their primary purpose of measuring performance and the quality of results. Virtual monitoring workshops will replace traditional field visits. These will be carried out with the leading provincial organizations – women’s platforms and networks – to capture the evolution of the programme in terms of achieving goals, the quality of the implementation, as well as the impact of actions. The workshops will also serve to systematize lessons and learning and, where required, re-programme interventions according to specific contexts.

A learning event will be held at the end of the project to share lessons and learning and identify and document follow-up proposals for the various stakeholders, including government, the private sector, and state institutions.