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Gender and COVID-19: Understanding the Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought along with it massive challenges related to health response, socio-economic impacts, and information sharing, and communities in conflict face additional hurdles in maintaining stability during this period. To mitigate the mutual influence of conflict dynamics and COVID-19 response, Search for Common Ground (Search) has partnered with the European Union to produce research on a quarterly basis addressing key themes faced across six conflict-affected countries, namely Kenya, Nigeria, Palestine, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen. Each report includes concrete recommendations for maintaining the credibility of pandemic response efforts, minimising the negative effects of the pandemic on conflict dynamics, and identifying opportunities for collaboration.

This third thematic report is an attempt to analyse the gendered effects of the pandemic, particularly as they relate to our ongoing research in each country. This research collects quantitative data on a quarterly basis to identify trends and shifts in levels of social cohesion throughout and in relation to the pandemic.¹ We collect data through quarterly surveys administered across target areas in each country and disaggregate the data in a variety of ways.² The report builds on insights from our [Quarterly Conflict Scan Reports](#) and our [two previous thematic reports](#). Data for round 3 of our quarterly reports was collected between May and July 2021 (depending on the country).

The Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion

It is well-documented that protracted health crises and the response to them, often exacerbate existing gender inequalities and inequities. Indeed, lessons learned from the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and the Democratic Republic of the Congo shed light on this phenomenon, highlighting the disproportionate impact the virus had on women and girls - the effects of which continue to be felt today.³ Gendered and traditional roles meant that women were more likely to be exposed to Ebola, including as caregivers, nurses, and cross-border traders.⁴ Women in rural areas were left particularly vulnerable due to limited access to adequate healthcare facilities, information, and other social services while many young girls were forced to drop out of school as teenage pregnancies spiked due to

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1. More information about our research methodology can be found [here](#).
2. For the purposes of this report, we disaggregate respondents using three age categories: youth (18-34 years), adults (35-49 years), and elderly (50+) as well as gender: men and women. In addition, we define "women" as being inclusive of all age categories, including young women, adult women, and elderly women. Similarly, we define "men" as being inclusive of all the age categories we track as well. Our data did not track other gendered identities, and therefore we acknowledge that "men" and "women" might be inclusive of other intersectional identities that are not sufficiently considered or acknowledged in this report.
3. Rohwerder, Brigitte. "[Impact and implications of the Ebola crisis](#)." Applied knowledge & law services (2014).
4. The Washington Post, "[Ebola striking women more frequently than men](#)," 14 August 2014.



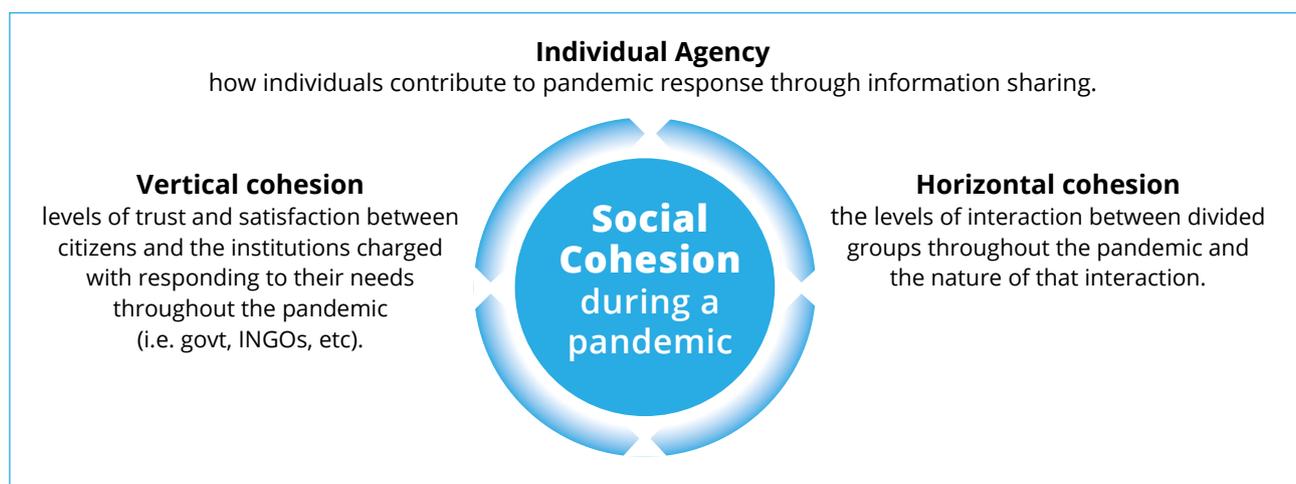
upticks in GBV.⁵ The COVID-19 pandemic has also meant detrimental reversals of, and threats to gender equality gains around the world.⁶ The world has witnessed increased rates of GBV and domestic violence, forced/early marriage, and online harassment, among others.⁷ Moreover, while women are often on the frontlines of service provision and as caretakers and healthcare workers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic – making them more vulnerable to exposure – they are largely excluded from decision-making about pandemic response.⁸ And in conflict-affected countries, which are already disproportionately affected by the pandemic, these trends are particularly acute. Search’s research across 6 fragile and conflict-affected countries reveals key insights on these trends:

- **Womens’ pandemic-related needs are largely going unmet**, causing women to be less satisfied with pandemic response services and trust authorities less, compared to men (especially in Nigeria, Yemen, and Palestine).
- **Both women and men are facing dire socio-economic consequences**. Insights from our own and other research show that both men and women are suffering critical setbacks and challenges to their socio-economic wellbeing; however, their experiences and needs often differ which are not sufficiently being taken into consideration in recovery efforts.
- **In many places, women, including young women, are among the first responders for pandemic response and are working across divides to support their communities**.⁹ Our data also shows increased rates of information sharing among women, across all age groups we are tracking, signaling their agency to raise awareness about COVID-19 within their families and communities.
- **Men are reporting reduced feelings of safety in some instances, more so than women, particularly in contexts where conflict and insecurity are on the rise** (Nigeria and Yemen). This is true for men engaging across divides with other groups, which may be influencing the way men value collaboration across divides for pandemic response.
- **Women and men are both sharing information about COVID-19 at high rates. However, access to accurate and timely information for both groups is uneven** and likely impacts the nature of information sharing. Particularly, women face additional barriers to accessing information about COVID-19 in ways that are relevant to their needs.

This report explores these trends in depth, highlighting various case studies from the 6 research countries and providing actionable recommendations for response providers based on our findings.

The Impact of the Pandemic on Social Cohesion: What the Data Tells Us Overall

Search’s research collects quantitative data on how the pandemic is impacting social cohesion across the 6 research countries. We define social cohesion as the dynamics between three different areas: **Individual Agency**, **Horizontal Cohesion**, and **Vertical Cohesion**. We measure levels of agency, horizontal cohesion, and vertical cohesion by tracking a series of associated indicators overtime in each country.



5. Save the Children, “[Children’s Ebola Recovery Assessment: Sierra Leone](#),” 2015.

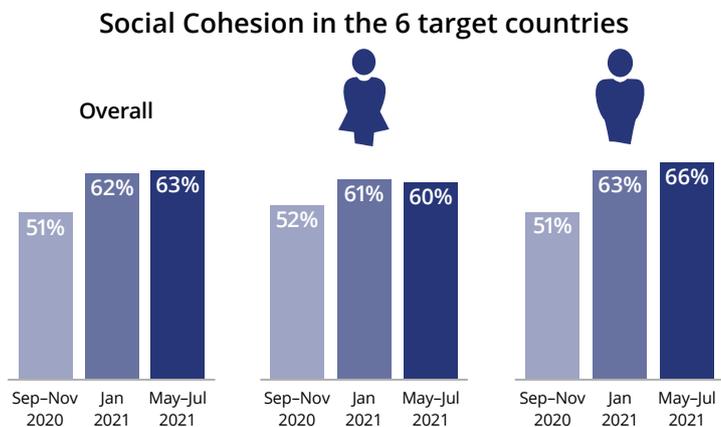
6. Azcona, Ginette, Antra Bhatt, Jessamyn Encarnacion, Juncal Plazaola-Castaño, Papa Seck, Silke Staab, and Laura Turquet, “[From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19](#)”, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), 2020.

7. UN Women, [The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19](#), 2021.

8. UN Women, “[Women ‘systematically excluded’ from COVID response, despite being worst affected](#),” March 22, 2021.

9. Search for Common Ground, [A story of resilience and fragilities: the impact of COVID-19 on horizontal cohesion in conflict-affected countries](#), July 2021.

Our data shows that social cohesion has improved overall since the beginning of the pandemic.¹⁰ Among men, these rates have continued to increase over time while women experienced a significant increase initially, between our first (September-November 2020) and second round (January 2021) of data collection, and then rates stagnated between the second and third (May-July 2021) rounds. These overall trends among women reflect fluctuations in vertical cohesion, and in many countries, women are reporting reduced levels of trust and satisfaction in authorities' pandemic response efforts.



The table below highlights social cohesion trends in each country for both men and women, noting the percentage change between rounds 1 and 3 for each category. **Individual agency¹¹** increased at higher rates among women compared to men in every country except Tanzania. There are notably high levels of increasing agency among women in Yemen and Palestine, while increases in agency are comparatively low among both men and women in Nigeria and among men in Uganda. **Vertical cohesion** trends are more volatile, with some groups and countries experiencing large increases over time while others have comparatively low increases or even decreases. Notably, Yemen and Palestine saw a significant decrease in vertical cohesion among women over time, and overall, vertical cohesion only increased by 8% among women compared to 40% among men across all countries. **Horizontal cohesion** trends are also volatile and overall increases for both men and women are low. Notably, horizontal cohesion decreased for both men and women in Kenya and Palestine. And while horizontal cohesion tends to increase at higher rates among men, in Nigeria and Uganda, men have lower rates than women.

Table 1: Evolution of Social Cohesion: Percentage change from first (Sep-Nov 20) to third round (May-Jul 21)

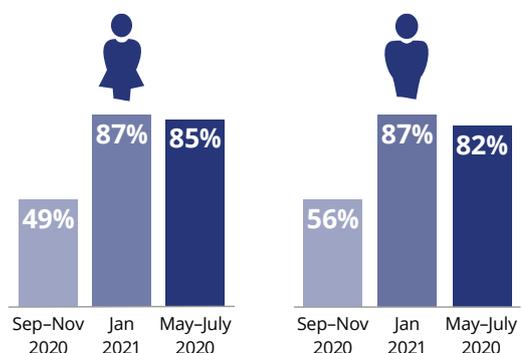
	Kenya		Nigeria		Palestine		Tanzania		Uganda		Yemen		Overall	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Individual Agency	66%	60%	19%	13%	113%	90%	35%	35%	51%	33%	416%	90%	73%	46%
Vertical Cohesion	69%	54%	35%	74%	-18%	7%	6%	2%	49%	45%	-37%	49%	8%	40%
Horizontal Cohesion	-7%	-1%	19%	11%	-3%	-10%	3%	16%	23%	19%	8%	19%	7%	9%
Social Cohesion Overall	29%	31%	27%	34%	0%	9%	9%	11%	40%	33%	-4%	53%	17%	29%
	Decreasing				Stable		Increasing							

Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Individual Agency

At the beginning of the pandemic, individual agency was relatively low with men sharing information on COVID-19 at higher rates than women. **Over time, not only has individual agency increased dramatically overall, in many cases, women began sharing information at higher rates than men.** By round 2 and 3, we see that overall rates of information sharing among men and women are relatively the same.

There are some factors that may be contributing to women's increased levels of information sharing. First, in some instances, there have been increased efforts to strengthen access to information on COVID-19 overall and in ways that meet women's needs. As such, women may be sharing information more as they gain increased access to information on COVID-19 and as the information better targets their specific needs. In other instances, where women continue to face barriers to access reliable and understandable information, women may be stepping in themselves to fill

The gender rate of Information Sharing in the 6 target countries



10. Search developed an index of indicators to track these three aspects of social cohesion throughout the pandemic and identify trends across our six research countries.

11. We measure individual agency primarily through the rate of information sharing about COVID-19, to assess whether people feel a sense of agency to take measures to protect themselves and those close to them.

information gaps on COVID-19, likely sharing information they have heard through more informal channels (i.e. informal networks, peer-to-peer, etc.). In these cases, there is a risk that the information being shared by women is rumour-based or misinformation (especially as some rumours specifically target women, e.g. on the COVID-19 vaccine and infertility among women).

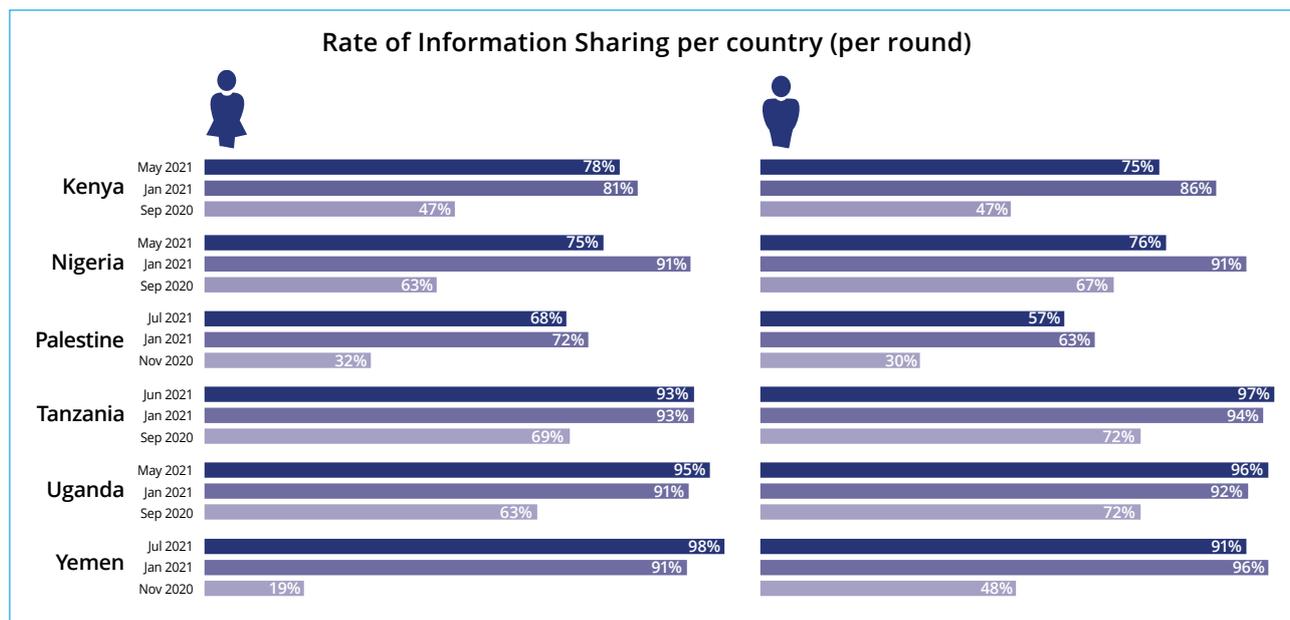


Table 2: Contextual Examples of Increased Information Sharing among Women

In **Uganda**, efforts to integrate women within pandemic response efforts and within the Ministry of Health, has helped increase access to information for women. For instance, the government started targeting women more through doing door-to-door initiatives, which helps reach women who have less access to information platforms.

In many contexts, women are the primary caregivers within their households and are increasingly sharing information about COVID-19, particularly as it relates to home and family life. While women in **Nigeria** feel that they have access to information, it does not necessarily reflect their needs. Therefore, Search created a free hotline for women to seek information about their pandemic-related needs, questions and concerns. Many women called in to ask questions on how COVID-19 impacts school openings, how the vaccine impacts maternal health, etc. as often, women have limited access to this kind of particular information on more traditional channels (radio, TV) and/or women are reluctant to share their concerns and priorities in platforms where men tend to speak more.

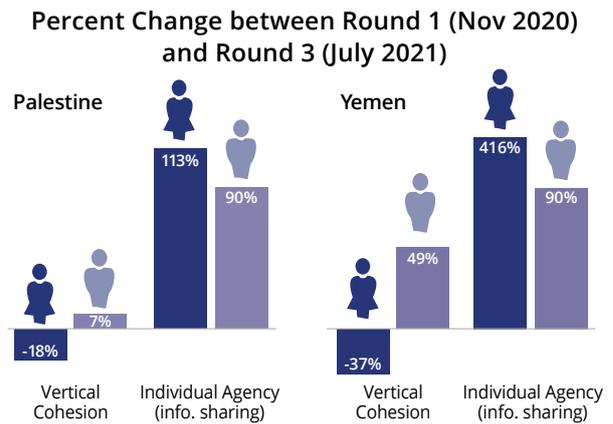
As needs continue to rise, there might be a connection between unmet needs and trust in information. In **Yemen**, women's trust in COVID-19 related information disseminated by media outlets has drastically declined over time as has their satisfaction and trust in government service provision. In addition, men often had access to information channels that women did not, such as during Friday prayers "Salat Al-joma", where attendees are men and during which specialists nominated by the Ministry of Health were sharing information about the pandemic. At the same time, information sharing among women has increased by 416%, which may indicate that women are stepping in to fill information gaps in official information about the pandemic. It may also indicate women's increased participation in the public sphere and in particular in service provision, as a result of the pandemic, and therefore making women more part of informal channels of information circulation.

Moreover, while our data shows that women and men use the same sources for obtaining trusted information about COVID-19,¹² levels of access to these sources varies, with women often facing greater barriers to access. Moreover, the "other" sources women and men seek information from are different. In July 2021, out of those who reported that they seek "other sources" for information on COVID-19 in Yemen, 20% of women reported obtaining this from health centers while no men cited this source. Given that information sharing remains high among women in the latest round of data collection, these trends might indicate women trust "other" sources of information more than sources like the radio.

12. We have a predefined list of potential outlets, as follows: Radio Stations, TV, Social Media, Friends/ Family and Other.

Drawing Connections: The Potential Link between Information Sharing and Vertical Cohesion

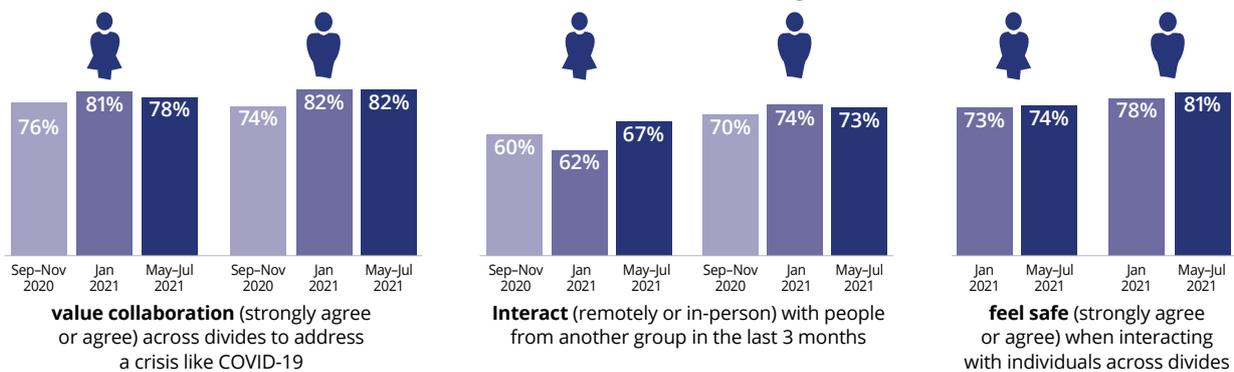
In [our previous thematic report](#), we identified a **potential link between the dramatic spikes in agency (i.e. information sharing) and declining levels of vertical cohesion (i.e. trust in institutions)**. The table below presents the data for these two indicators for men and women in **Yemen** and **Palestine**, where we see the highest increases in information sharing between rounds 1 and 3, coupled with declining or comparatively lower increases in vertical cohesion. Notably, women demonstrate sharp declines in vertical cohesion alongside the highest increases in agency across our six research countries.



Horizontal Cohesion has Improved Slightly for both Men and Women, yet Gendered Concerns Related to Feelings of Safety and Interaction Across Divides are Worrisome

Our research measures horizontal cohesion by tracking indicators on actual interaction across divides (online or in-person), value for collaboration across divides for pandemic response, and feelings of safety when interacting across divides.¹³ **Overall, horizontal cohesion improved slightly between the first and third rounds of data collection for both women (+7%) and men (+9%).**

Horizontal Cohesion Indicators in the six target countries



In general, **women have fewer opportunities than men to interact across divides**. While this was already the case before the pandemic, lockdown measures further inhibited women's chances to interact with others outside their close communities. However, our data shows that interaction across divides for women has gradually increased overtime. Anecdotal evidence from Search's programming on the ground suggests that increased pandemic response interventions that target women, might be the reason for increased opportunities for interaction. Value for collaboration among women is comparatively higher than actual interaction but has not increased much since the start of the pandemic and in some instances, has actually decreased (whereas for men it has increased more since the beginning and has remained at a high level). In some countries, we see declining value for collaboration among women despite increasing actual interaction, signaling that women may be interacting out of necessity rather than utility or willingness. While feelings of safety when interacting across divides is relatively high and has remained stable over time, compared to men, fewer women report feeling safe during this kind of interaction.

Pandemic-related Opportunities for Improved Horizontal Cohesion among Women in Uganda

In **Uganda**, food markets were allowed to continue operating during lockdowns, which are primarily operated by women. Host community and refugee women took the initiative to spend nights together at the market in order to avoid transportation during the lockdown and reduce the risks of contracting COVID-19. This collaboration likely contributed to increased levels of women valuing collaboration across divides, rising from 72% in September 2020 to 85% in May 2021.

While men generally have more opportunities to interact across divides than women, their rates of actual interaction are comparatively lower to their value for collaboration to respond to the pandemic, **indicating that men lack opportunities for this kind of interaction** during the pandemic. Indeed, value for collaboration increased notably for men between rounds 1 and 3 while actual interaction remained relatively stable since the beginning of the pandemic. Feelings of safety among men have increased over time; however, in some countries, feelings of safety among men are actually sinking and reducing the value men have for collaboration.

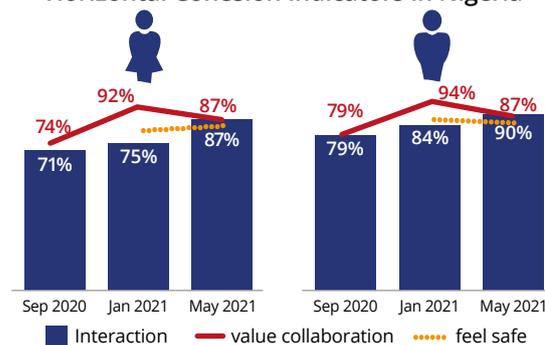
13. We started to measure this indicator in the second round of data collection in January 2021.

Increased Conflict and Insecurity is Impacting Horizontal Cohesion among Men

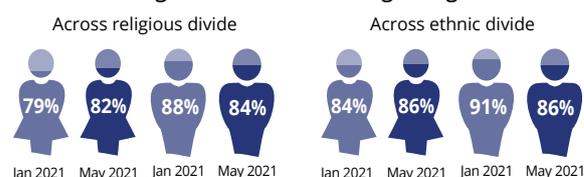
In **Nigeria**, our data shows that actual interaction across divides increased; however, **men's feelings of safety when interacting across divides (religious and ethnic) declined alongside their value for collaboration to respond to the pandemic.** Women's value for collaboration has also seen setbacks despite increased interaction, yet their feelings of safety during this kind of interaction actually increased. Over the past year, **Nigeria** has witnessed upticks in violence and insecurity.¹⁴ As men often have more opportunities to interact across divides, they may face increased risks for violence and tension during this kind of interaction.

In **Yemen**, which has also witnessed increased insecurity and violence over the past months, we see similar trends. Women are interacting much more across divides compared to the start of the pandemic, yet their value for collaboration across divides is decreasing. Moreover, their feelings of safety during this kind of interaction has increased slightly. These trends suggest that women might be interacting out of necessity (to provide for their families and themselves), and while they do not necessarily value this kind of interaction, they do not perceive it as a threat to their safety. On the other hand, men's actual interaction across divides has only slightly increased while their value for collaboration has notably increased since the first round; however, their feelings of safety are declining. While men might see the utility for interaction and collaboration, increased insecurity and violence are likely affecting their perceptions of safety.

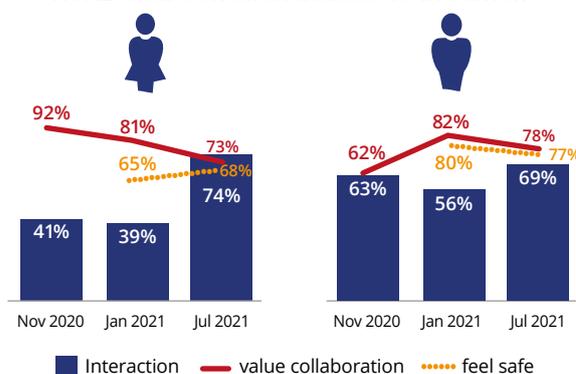
Horizontal Cohesion Indicators in Nigeria



Feeling safe when interacting in Nigeria



Horizontal Cohesion Indicators in Yemen

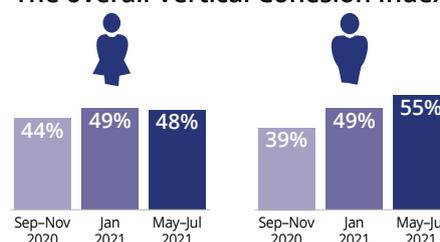


Gendered Disparities Influence the way Men and Women Trust Pandemic Response Efforts

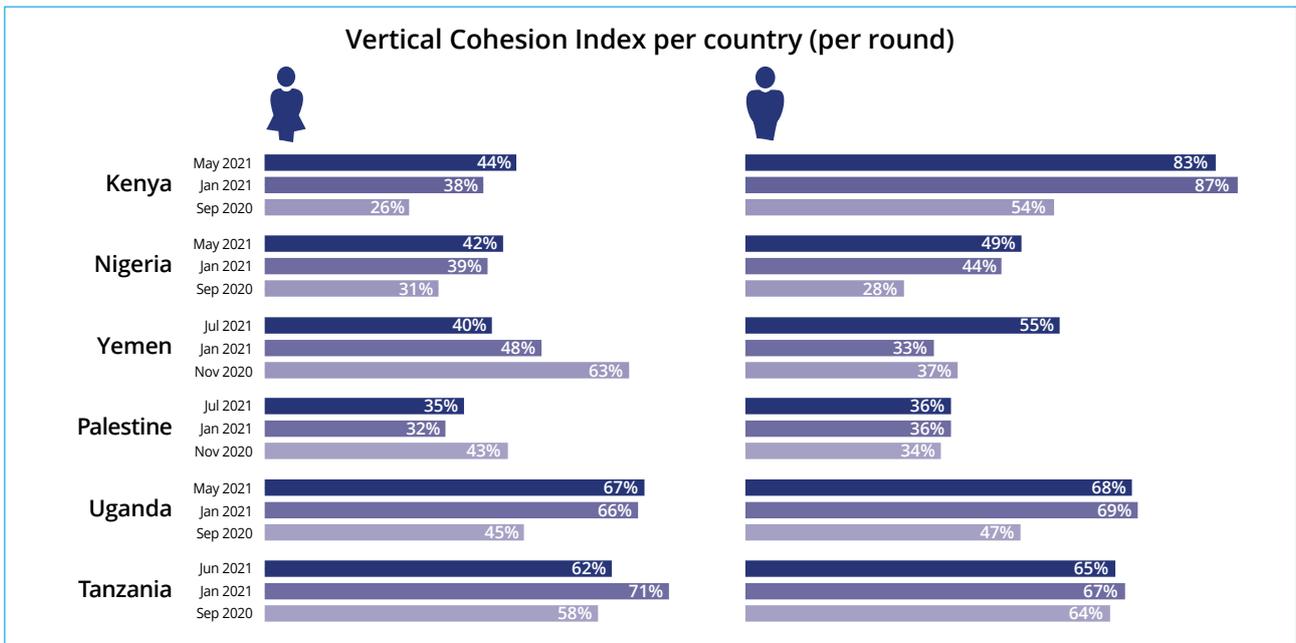
Out of the three social cohesion pillars we are tracking, vertical cohesion has a comparatively low average overall. As noted in our first thematic report, mistrust in authorities is a particular challenge to effective pandemic response in conflict-affected societies, particularly given the limited capacities of governments to respond coupled with pre-existing trust deficits.

Our research finds that there is a significant gap between women and men regarding vertical cohesion. **On average, women's overall vertical cohesion levels increased by only 8% compared to 40% for men between the first and third rounds of data collection.** In several countries, at the start of the pandemic, women had higher trust in their government and higher satisfaction levels with service provision than men. **By round 3, we see a reversal in these trends, and in all six research countries, men now have higher levels across all of the indicators we are tracking for vertical cohesion.** This is a clear indication that pandemic response efforts are failing to meet the needs of women in many places, likely because women are not sufficiently integrated into decision-making about pandemic response, as cited earlier. Looking at each country level, in many countries vertical cohesion is increasing over time (with notable exceptions being Palestine and Yemen); however, when disaggregating by gender, men's overall levels of vertical cohesion are increasing, whereas trends for women are more volatile.

The overall Vertical Cohesion Index



14. United Nations, "Remarks by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths Senior Officials Meeting on the humanitarian situation in the Central Sahel", January 2022.



Despite some differences at the country level, on average, women and men are **requesting governmental services** at the same levels. However, overall averages for both groups are low and in places like Nigeria, service requests sank from 24% in September 2020 to a mere 10% in May 2021 among women despite increasing needs (from 16% to 13% for men, respectively). Moreover, at the beginning of the pandemic women had higher levels of **satisfaction with these requested services** than men. Over time, trends have become more volatile among women, with slight increases in some countries and dramatic decreases in others. For men, satisfaction has increased drastically over time, rising from 27% to 51%. For services provided by all actors combined (governmental and non-governmental), the average level for women has not changed yet increased significantly for men (+12%).

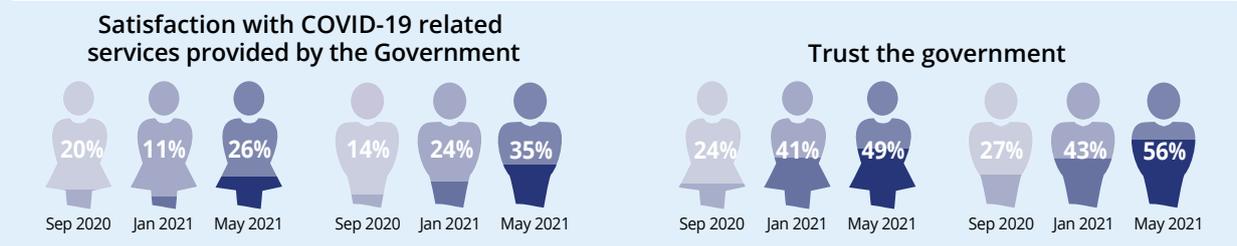
At the beginning of the pandemic, on average, women **trusted their government** more than men (52% vs. 49%, respectively). Overall trust among women has only increased slightly between the first and third rounds, while men's trust in the government has increased dramatically, rising from 49% to 62%. There are similar trends for trust in non-governmental actors. Declining trust levels among women likely reflects lower rates of responsiveness from authorities to respond to women's service requests. On average, 19% of women in the third round did not receive a response to their service requests compared to 8% of men. Moreover, lack of gendered strategies to account for women's needs is also likely influencing trust levels.

Gendered Strategies are Critical for Successful Pandemic-related Service Provision

In **Uganda**, in-kind assistance was distributed among households, which was mostly managed by women as the primary caregiver in the household. However, this support shifted to cash-based assistance, creating a scenario where men are more likely to have control over this kind of assistance. Anecdotal evidence from Search's programming on the ground suggests that men often misuse cash-based assistance, and instead of investing it in household and family-based needs, they often spend it for personal use. While overall levels of vertical cohesion among women has increased over time in Uganda, strategies such as these could undermine women's trust and satisfaction in the government's response efforts.

In **Kenya**, both men and women's satisfaction with service provision, while relatively low, have notably increased between the first and third rounds. This could be attributed to new strategies by the government of Kenya to address increasing GBV rates.¹⁵ But while the government has made efforts to address the economic impact of the pandemic, women's needs and considerations have not been sufficiently integrated into the recovery efforts, which might be the reason for overall higher levels of trust and satisfaction among men compared to women.¹⁶

Kenya



15. In May 2021, the Kenyan government declared GBV services as an essential service that should remain accessible during the pandemic.
 16. UN WOMEN Kenya and others, "COVID-19 Gender Assessment", 2020.

Gender and the Economic Implications of the Pandemic

Our research attempts to track the economic impact the pandemic is having across our six research countries by collecting data on loss of a household's main source of income. Overall, in the third round, 54% have reported a loss of income across all six countries, and this goes as high as 60% in Nigeria and Uganda. On average, 56% of men report this kind of loss while women report 51%, over the same reporting period.

Though our data does not show significant differences across gender regarding loss of a main source of income, men and women are experiencing the economic impact of the pandemic in different ways. First, women's income may not be the primary source of income in a household, so the data may not fully reflect women's realities. In many countries, women largely make up the informal sector, which has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and has far fewer labor and social protections than the formal sector. Research suggests that jobs occupied by women are 19 percent more at risk than for jobs occupied by men as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ Moreover, socio-cultural traditions dictate that women have to stay at home with their children during school closures, reducing their access to livelihood opportunities. This means that the burden of unpaid care is particularly felt by women, creating a scenario where women's employment is dropping faster than average.¹⁸ It is well documented that reduced economic opportunities for women often result in less influence for them over decisions at the individual, household and community levels.¹⁹

Recommendations

Overall, data trends suggest that women's needs are likely going unmet and that women are disproportionately affected by the socio-economic effects of the pandemic. Response efforts must incorporate women's leadership and participation within decision-making to ensure needs are being met and avoid exacerbating gender inequities.

- As outlined throughout the report, women face disproportionate consequences of the pandemic, ranging from increased GBV, to backsliding of gender equality gains, to lower responsiveness from service providers to address women's needs, etc. Increased targeting and integration of women within response and recovery efforts is critical to ensuring their needs and perspectives are included. However, to do this, adopting gender-sensitive strategies remains critical, starting by including more women in pandemic response decision making bodies, from the local to the national level. In many cases, men may feel overlooked when interventions solely target women, which often inadvertently puts women at risk for backlash from men. As the secondary effects of the pandemic grow, and both men and women face increasing socio-economic and psycho-social pressures, often in different ways, it is important that response providers are able to adapt to these growing needs and create opportunities for both men and women to take ownership of strategies that are safe, accepted by, and integrate the needs of both genders.

Mistrust in government is increasing among women and response strategies should seek to strengthen that trust, particularly as vaccines are rolled out in conflict-affected countries.

- While overall averages for vertical cohesion increased over time, they are relatively low compared to the other social cohesion indicators. In some countries, vertical cohesion has actually declined. As vaccines are being rolled out in conflict-affected countries, uptake of the vaccine will remain a challenge if citizens do not trust those charged with distributing them. Based on our findings, this may be a particular challenge when targeting women, as their trust levels in the government are now lower than men's and have actually decreased since the start of the pandemic, whereas men's has increased in many places. Moreover, our data shows that women in particular are less trusting of and satisfied with services from both governmental and non-governmental service providers and that these service providers are less responsive to their needs than to men's. Since women have stepped up in many places to play a leading role in COVID-19 prevention and awareness raising, and given their influential roles within their communities and families, reestablishing their trust and satisfaction in the government and in service providers will be a critical piece to ensuring uptake of the vaccine in 2022. Governments should adopt key strategies such as targeted media campaigns, consultations with women at the grassroots level, incorporating women into decision-making structures for COVID-19, and directly addressing their varying socio-economic and protection needs. Moreover, local organisations, including women-led organisations, can serve as a trusted interlocutor between citizens and government while ensuring a diversity of needs are met. As such, governments should seek trusted local partners to bolster response efforts and strengthen trust.

17. Madgavkar, Anu, Olivia White, Mekala Krishnan, Deepa Mahajan, and Xavier Azcue. "COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects." *McKinsey Global Institute* (2020).

18. Ibid

19. Lakshmi Ratan, A., Roever, S., Jhabvala, R. and Sen, P. (May 2021). "Evidence Review of COVID-19 and Women's Informal Employment: A Call to Support the Most Vulnerable First in the Economic Recovery." Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Response providers should adopt gendered strategies to improve access to and resonance of COVID-19 related information.

- While our data shows that women and men have the same sources of trusted information, the level of access to these sources often varies, and women tend to face greater barriers to access information than men. Moreover, the barriers to access are not homogenous - some groups face greater challenges than others (i.e. rural women may face additional barriers compared to women living in urban settings). And although men and women typically have the same sources for trusted information, they often differ in what “other” or “additional” information sources they rely on most (i.e. women turn to healthcare centers for information more than men, whereas men can more easily access information through religious structures). Response providers should integrate an approach that taps into the leadership and input from a diversity of women and men to craft strategies that incorporate the needs and considerations of all. For instance, the Ugandan MoH’s strategy to integrate more women into their planning process, enabled them to reach more women effectively. Additionally, information should be accessible to a diversity of education and literacy levels as well as translated into local languages and dialects.
- Beyond challenges related to access, response providers should also take into account how and why information resonates with different groups and adopt gender-sensitive information campaigns that respond to those considerations. For instance, in Nigeria, women tend to resonate with COVID-19 related information that relates to family life and are more likely to listen to and share information when the information is presented in a way that includes these aspects.

Feelings of safety when interacting across divides generally remain lower among women, but we see some worrying drops in feelings of safety among men in countries like Nigeria and Yemen. Response providers should pay attention to these warning signs and proactively mitigate the potential for rising tensions, conflict, and/or isolation between groups.

- Feelings of safety when interacting across divides went up marginally for both men and women, but when disaggregating the data at the country level, certain trends stand out. Overall, fewer women feel safe when interacting across divides than men. However, a greater number of countries saw a decrease in feelings of safety during this kind of interaction among men than women. Heightened insecurity and escalating conflict; increasing socio-economic pressures and perceived competition; and masculinity norms might be contributing factors to these trends. Response providers in those countries should understand and monitor these early warning signs closely, and ensure any measures to address the pandemic and its secondary impacts (eg. socio-economic recovery programming) carefully include and mitigate these dynamics. Moreover, gendered approaches to response and recovery should ensure both men and women have access to decision-making processes so that these gendered considerations do not go overlooked. To increase women’s feelings of safety, it’s important to have female service providers and female friendly referral centers.