



Source: Complaint & Investigation Cell, NCW, India

4. **Risking their life:** At the height of the pandemic, it was an army of **frontline women** health workers-one million **ASHAs** (accredited social health activists), 1.2 million **Anganwadi** took on responsibilities at considerable risk to themselves.

Women has **disproportionately borne the brunt of pandemic** due to the following reasons:

1. Many women are being **forced to 'lock down'** at home with their abusers. This has increased the **vulnerability** of women to sexual exploitation.
2. **Lack of close contact** with friends, **lack of privacy** and **patriarchal mindset** are major reasons that make women the **victim of men's frustration**, resulting **anxiety, panic and depression**.
3. **Helplessness**, for example, women are **not able to** report crime at women cells in police stations in Delhi, which are under project "**violence-free home- A women rights**".
4. **Lack of support services:** Lack of access to women NGO's **counselors** during domestic violence has posed challenges to women. As women were **unable to move** beyond telephonic or web counseling this increased risks to women.
5. **Loss of employment and financial independence** made them more vulnerable to exploitation, because now they are more dependent on others.
6. **Double discrimination** for marginalized women such as **poor women** or women having **low status in the society** as they face restrictive **social norms and gender stereotypes**.

UN-WOMEN has **recommended** following to reduce the impact of the pandemic on women:

1. Ensuring women's **equal representation** in all **COVID-19** response planning and decision making.
2. Driving **transformative change** for equality by addressing the **care economy** paid or unpaid.
3. **Targeting women and girls** in all efforts to address the socio-economic impacts of Covid-19.
4. A robust system to **safeguard women and girls from gender violence**. China's online campaign **#AntiDomesticViolenceDuringEpidemic** can be adopted as good practice to end domestic violence.

Women can be the **hardest hit by this pandemic** but they will also be the **backbone of recovery**. The need of the hour is to devise an **inclusive strategy** to fight the pandemic and implement proposed **recommendations holistically**. (535 Words)