

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VOICE TO RELEASE 'WE MUST DO BETTER' REPORT
TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

VOICE, A cutting-edge feminist humanitarian organization tackling violence against women and girls in crisis settings, has released its first report of 2021, titled "We Must Do Better". Supported by UNICEF, the 30-page report is a startling assessment of humanitarian aid for women- and- girl-led organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We Must Do Better" documents the impact and effects of the humanitarian system's failure to meaningfully respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG) with the necessary funding and support that women- and girl-led organizations say they need. The aid industry's response has been particularly evident with the pandemic, but follows suit with the ways in which the humanitarian aid system is inherently racist, colonial, and a perpetuator of the same violence it claims to protect women and girls from.

VOICE releases the report with a statement:

"We want to communicate that this information is nothing new. We've known about this problem in the aid industry for decades; those in the halls of power do not listen to the women- and girl- led organizations on the ground in these countries, and they are not invited into the conversation about how to best meet their needs. We've seen it in many other situations of emergency and disaster response, and COVID-19 is no different. The survey we've conducted has helped us capture some of the conversation about what these women have been seeing during the past year of a global crisis, and how it impacts their organizations and communities."

"We Must Do Better" summarizes the experiences of over 200 women-led organizations, with input from actors across 41 countries on 6 continents. The report

captures how they have been operating during the pandemic, detailing some of the challenges they face, and organizing their responses into three major overarching themes or categories; namely, the effect of COVID-19 on their access to adequate funding, the lack of health care and resources in the communities they serve, and the societal norms and gender inequalities that are inflicting harm on women and girls in these contexts.

Findings include how the rate of domestic violence has significantly increased around the world, while access to services for domestic violence has almost ground to a halt. Furthermore, women are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 because they make up over 70% of frontline healthcare workers around the world, yet have the least access to healthcare.

The report explores not only what has gone wrong in terms of a response from the humanitarian aid sector, but also details response services and empowerment approaches that have succeeded locally, driven by the expertise of local women and girl leaders. “We Must Do Better” offers a way forward rooted in feminist principles, with recommendations for how the aid industry can wake up and actualize its promises to protect the women and girls it is meant to serve.

“We Must Do Better” is aptly set to launch the week of International Women’s Day, with a VOICE conversation series to follow via podcast, and a Listening Session with UNICEF taking place March 15.

ABOUT VOICE

VOICE is a cutting-edge feminist organization that works with women and girl-led organizations in crisis and emergency settings all over the world. We are a team of skilled humanitarians with extensive experience working on violence against women and girls, and we believe that women and girls themselves are the solution to eradicating the violence they face. VOICE amplifies the expertise and experiences of our extensive network of women activists and organizations, and we support their impact with the resources they say they need. To learn more about VOICE, visit www.voiceamplified.org.

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