Safety Planning during COVID-19 Pandemic

What is a safety plan: safety planning is thinking about how to stay safe while living with **domestic and family violence** and what steps you might need to take if you have to leave quickly.

Safety planning might look different during the COVID-19 Pandemic and measures such as social isolation, quarantine and restricted movement can put women at greater risk of violence. Women that have not experienced violence before may do so for the first time and women with a history of surviving violence may face increased risk and severity.

A safety plan does not replace calling Police or support services. Essential services are still operating so please call Police: 111 or the Vanuatu Women's Centre: 161 for urgent help when needed.

Things to consider in your Safety Plan:

- Think about the easiest and safest way to get out of the house quickly. This might be through a certain door, window or gate.
- Check how you can travel to a safe place even if there are travel restrictions. Consider are there buses or can someone come and pick you up. Think about where you will go… and if you can't go there where else you can go to stay safe. In an emergency what is a safe public place where you could go?
- Have a safe word or phrase with friends and families to ask for urgent help without having to ask for help directly. You can use this safe word or phrase in a phone call, text or instant message to ask for help without your partner knowing. If you children are old enough teach them the safe word or phrase word as well.

- If you need to leave the house remember to take all your assistance devices with you, such as glasses, crutches, wheel chair.

- Keep your identification and vaccination card in a bag that you can get to easily if you need to leave quickly.

- Have an emergency bag packed and hide it somewhere safe: a trusted friend, family or neighbours house. What to include in your emergency bag:

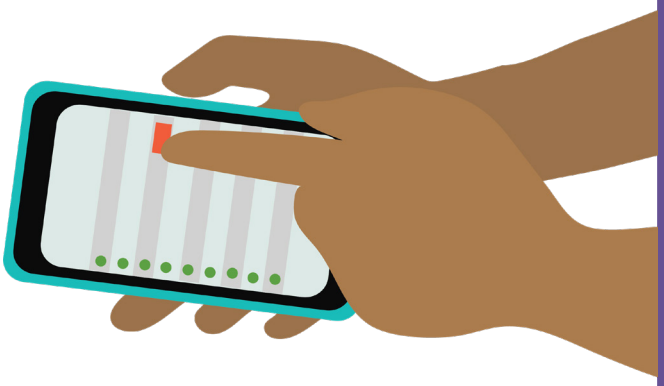
  - Important documents
  - Food
  - Cash and cards
  - Clothes for you and the children
  - Sanitary products
  - Phone charger
  - Regular medications
  - Important contact numbers

- If you think there is going to be conflict/violence/an argument what space in the house or outside can you move to (somewhere that has access to outside space, is not a closed in area like the bathroom).

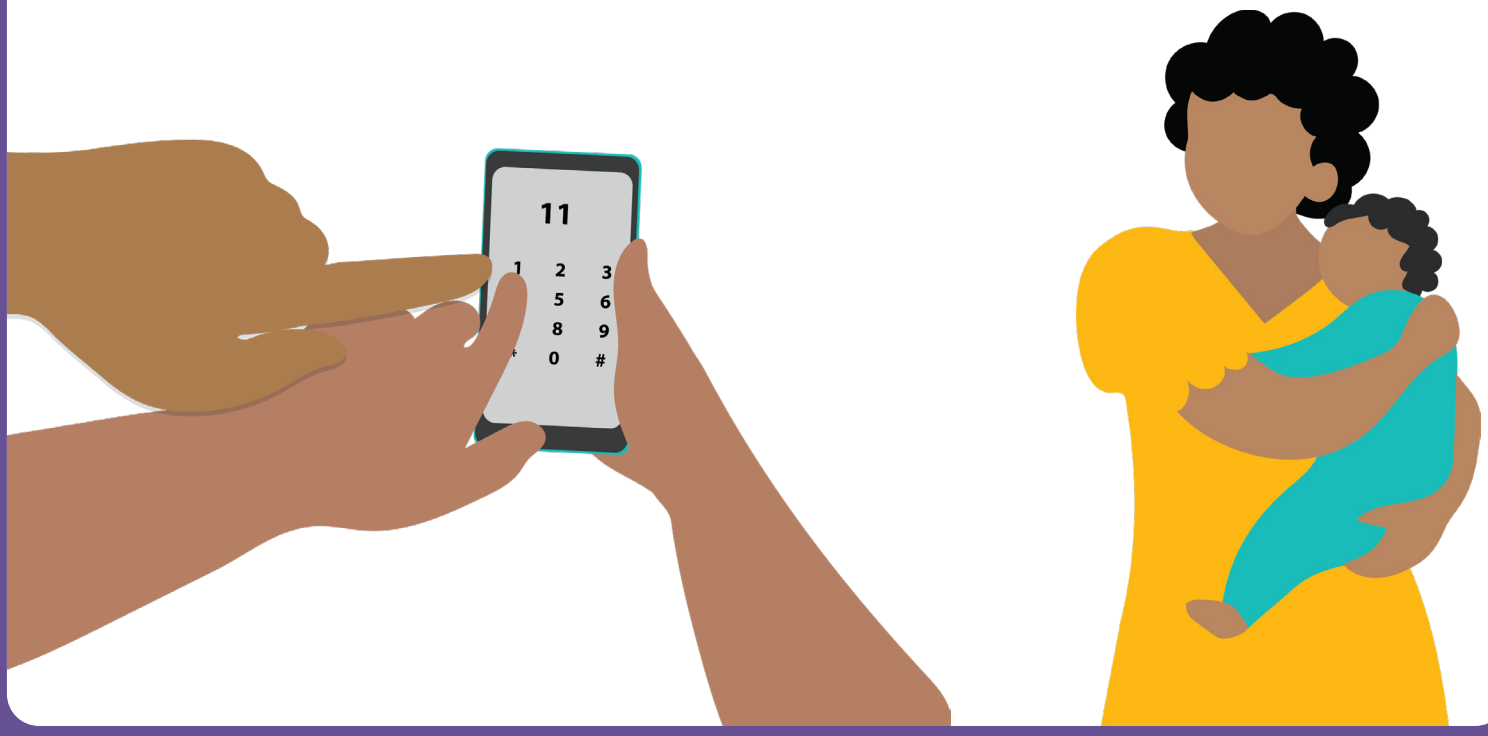
Other Safety Considerations:

- If you seek help online or on your phone think about the following actions:

  - Clear browser history
  - Clear recent calls
  - Delete text message
  - Delete email
  - Check location sharing settings



- Create a network of safe and supportive people and talk with them about the support you need and whether they can provide it during the COVID situation.
- See if you can find someone your partner respects that could work with him to stop his use of violence (trusted faith or community leader, family friend).
- Involve trusted religious or community leaders, Police or others
- Emergency numbers and support services. Police: 111 VWC: 161

Safety Planning with Children:

- Tell your children that everyone has the right to be safe, so you have come up with a plan to use in case of emergencies. Make it suited to their age, a plan for younger child will look different for a teenager.
- Let your children know what's happening isn't their fault and that they didn't cause it.
- If your children are old enough teach them when, how and who to contact in an emergency. This can include trusted friends, family member, Police or faith leaders or others.
- Find a safe place your children could go if they were in danger (a room in the house, the neighbours, police station, church).
- Talk with them and ask them their ideas about ways that they can stay safe. Remind them that their own safety is the most important thing even if they want to protect you when you are experiencing violence, they should not step in.
- Identify a room or space in the house/yard they can go to when they are afraid and something calming/soothing they can focus on for comfort.
- Remind children that no matter what happens you love them and that you are there for them.