




CALL TO ACTION FOR G7 STAKEHOLDERS

**Leaders recommend key gender equality actions
in COVID-19 response and recovery**

The COVID-19 pandemic upended global plans to review 25 years of progress toward gender equality and women’s empowerment, as set forth in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995. This pandemic has become a magnifier of inequalities, particularly those based on gender and race. This poses a serious threat to women’s employment and livelihoods as it deepens pre-existing inequalities, exposes cracks in

social, political and economic systems, and brings to light the collective reliance on universal and comprehensive social protection systems in a time of crisis. COVID-19 also threatens to be a conflict multiplier that will precipitate new threats and challenges to women’s security, while also creating new opportunities and demands for women’s participation in peacemaking and peacebuilding.





Women are frontline workers and are critical to effective response and recovery. They need to be provided safe and secure workplaces, including occupational safety and health training and equipment (e.g. personal protective equipment, menstrual hygiene products), as well as decent working conditions and adequate remuneration, including equal pay for work of equal value, without discrimination. The OECD has estimated that the cost to the global economy of gender-based discrimination in social institutions is USD 6 trillion (7.5 per cent of the global GDP).¹ This is likely to be increased further by the COVID-19 crisis.

Globally, millions of women are employed in sectors at high risk of severe COVID-19 impact in terms of job losses and a decline in working hours, suggesting that women's employment is likely to be hit more severely than men's by the current crisis.² In the United States, which holds the 2020 G7 Presidency, women have borne the brunt of pandemic-related layoffs during confinement, experiencing nearly 60 per cent of jobs lost since March across all sectors, with the most impact in retail, leisure and hospitality.³ Nearly 60 per cent of women around the world work in the informal economy, earning less, saving less, and at greater risk of falling into poverty.⁴

LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE G7


COVID-19 is an opportunity for G7 leaders to take bold, decisive and inclusive action to build a more resilient and more equitable future. It will not be the last pandemic or crisis we face globally, including future climate-related challenges. The G7 is a global leader and how its members respond to COVID-19 with respect to tackling inequalities and discrimination will have implications for the global community.

Partnerships are critical to ensure that we do not reverse the progress we have made on gender equality and women's rights. Along with governments, representatives from the private sector, workers' organizations and civil society play a key role in establishing an equitable and gender-transformative labour market, now increasingly reliant on digital technology.

At the same time, women are critical to economic recovery. Across the G7, women control over 70 per cent of consumer spending.⁵ They represent 40-50 per cent of the paid workforce and growing, and 30 per cent of small business owners who are the dynamic engine behind small- or medium-sized enterprise growth globally.⁶

Those with caring responsibilities, informal workers, low-income families – particularly single mothers – and young people are among the hardest hit. For example, youth unemployment in the US jumped from 11.5 per cent in February to 32.2 per cent in April 2020.⁷ Globally, more than one in six young people have stopped working since the onset of the pandemic and those young people who still have a job have seen their working hours cut by 23 per cent.⁸ The COVID-19 crisis has also made starkly visible that the world's economies and the maintenance of our daily lives are built on the invisible and under-valued unpaid labour of women and girls. Globally, women undertake 75 per cent of unpaid care and domestic work.⁹ Most women are in sectors that require face-to-face interaction (service, tourism, health) and therefore are unable to work remotely and may require additional care support for children or older family members as they leave their homes to work.

The WE EMPOWER G7 Programme works on women's economic empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community. As part of this programme, the European Union, UN Women and the International Labour Organization (ILO) convened Ministers, CEOs and representatives of business associations, trade unions, civil society and academia alongside the OECD at a virtual **High-Level Roundtable (HLRT)**, "Gender Equality and COVID-19 Crisis Response and Recovery: The G7's Role," on 12 May 2020.



The roundtable was hosted by UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, European Commission Head of Service for Foreign Policy Instruments Hilde Hardeman, and ILO Deputy Director-General for Policy Deborah Greenfield. The two discussion groups were led by Gabriela Ramos, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences and former OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20, on the topic of Women in Business Supply Chains, and Vicky Smallman, Director Women's Right and Human Rights at the Canadian Labour Congress, on Women in Decent Work.

The objectives of the HLRT were to: (1) Highlight the important role of women's economic empowerment for the G7, building on recommendations from past **G7 Leaders Summits**, particularly **the G7 Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment** adopted in Taormina and the **Gender Equality Advisory Councils of the Canadian and French Governments**; and (2) Exchange perspectives on how COVID-19 has impacted women in the world of work and the key role of G7 stakeholders in the immediate response and long-term recovery.

CALL TO ACTION


HLRT participants call on G7 Member States to work cohesively, strategically and collaboratively with each other and key G7 stakeholders to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in COVID-19 crisis response and recovery to build a better future that is resilient and regenerative through the following actions:

1. Collect and report intersectional gender statistics and sex, age and race disaggregated data to inform crisis response and recovery plans.

Governments, the private sector and civil society need to join forces, along with international organizations, to collect gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data to map out the impact of the crisis and to inform policy making, crisis response and recovery decisions. Such data could also help tackle gender biases in software and artificial intelligence. The data should be evidence-based and reflect the intersectional nature of identity so that it showcases the experiences of all women and girls and helps ensure that resources are provided to those that need it most.

2. Ensure women's equal representation, participation and leadership in all COVID-19 response planning and decision making in both the public and private sector so that response and recovery policies are effective, inclusive and responsive to the needs of all women and men, girls and boys, particularly those from marginalized and minority backgrounds.

All institutions responsible for COVID-19 response, recovery and preparedness for future crises should strive to have a gender balanced and intersectional approach to recruiting leaders and members of task forces, crisis management commissions, decision-making bodies and other relevant response teams. Women's organizations, which are often at the front line of community and humanitarian responses, need to be consulted and supported. Beyond the sectors immediately addressing the crisis, there should be sustained efforts to increase the number of women holding senior leadership and board roles in government, private sector and civil society. Affirmative action is a tool to be considered. This crisis provides an opportunity to address these pre-existing inequalities and harness women's skills, talents and perspectives as we rebuild.



3. Design and implement gender-responsive crisis responses, aligned with international labour standards and intersectional approaches, with long-term solutions and stimulus packages to tackle the new challenges posed to the changing world of work.


Governments should strive for full and productive employment, ensuring that there are safe and healthy working conditions, minimum wages and labour rights including collective bargaining and labour protections. Emergency and stimulus packages, as well as long term recovery strategies, must support and protect women and other persons in vulnerable situations (e.g. migrants, refugees, forcibly displaced persons, disability, indigenous and tribal people and other minorities), essential workers without adequate support, and those in the informal sector who may be unable to access resources. Policy makers at all levels must strongly consider gender-responsive budgeting to understand the differential impact of the crisis on women and budget funds accordingly.

4. Expand gender-responsive laws and invest in universal social protection.

The allocation of additional resources in COVID-19 response plans to address intersectional discrimination against women is important. This includes safeguarding of investments in effective and affordable access to quality health care, including sexual and reproductive healthcare – modern contraception, safe abortion, maternal health services and safe childbirth, and telemedicine. This also includes work on the legislative side to ensure that laws are representative of the specific needs of women and girls.¹⁰ Immediate income and food support is needed to avoid deepening gender inequalities, through contributory and non-contributory social protection systems, and to increase women's resilience to future shocks. This must include robust investments in social policies and social security for those in the formal and informal economies, such as access to paid sick leave, maternity protection, paid parental and family leave, affordable health coverage, unemployment benefits, cash transfers and high-quality childcare. Mitigating the potential negative impacts of the pandemic on security and conflict is essential to improve social protection and free up resources to be allocated to social spending.

5. Mitigate the pandemic's impact on enterprises and employment, with a tailored and gender-responsive approach to reaching women-owned micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including through supply chains, as well as hard-hit sectors and occupations where women are over-represented.

The pandemic has exacerbated the existing challenges faced by women starting and running businesses in terms of access to all financial and investment products and services and supply chains.¹¹ This also includes virtual access to free training and business networking opportunities. Creating jobs and GDP growth is critical to the COVID-19 response and recovery to help business owners to come back more resilient from the crisis. Access to credit, including through credit guarantees, is important for MSMEs which are more likely to close their businesses for an extended period with substantially reduced or no revenue. Both governments and businesses can leverage their procurement systems and purchasing power to encourage the production of goods and services from women-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs. There are many tools to promote responsible business conduct throughout the supply chain.¹²



6. Incorporate effective measures to prevent and address work-related discrimination and violence against women and girls, ensure women's access to justice, and allocate adequate resources in COVID-19 national response plans with a goal of reducing the risks and "flattening the curve" of domestic violence.

As people shelter at home to "flatten the curve," many women are at increased risk of violent behavior behind closed doors, with little ability to leave home or reach out for help. It is imperative that governments and other stakeholders meet the heightened demand for emergency shelter and domestic violence hotlines and address gender-based violence as a key part of national and international response plans. In times of crisis and recovery, as in times of prosperity, all stakeholders should strive to achieve a world of work free from violence and harassment.¹³ The pandemic cannot be an excuse to slow down the repeal or amendment of discriminatory laws, passage of progressive legislation that advances gender equality, or financing and monitoring of its implementation. Women need access to affordable court systems, virtual if necessary, when their rights are violated, including during the pandemic, and access to integrated social, psycho-social, economic, and legal services.

7. Ensure that economic and social recovery packages recognize and place a value on unpaid care work and care jobs; provide adequate level of childcare and other care services; and support family friendly policies that engage men and domestic partners to equally share the responsibilities of unpaid care and domestic work.

COVID-19 has laid bare the crisis of care with women bearing most of the responsibilities. We need to ensure that there is access to adequate and flexible paid parental, family and sick leave. Lack of access to quality and affordable care services as well as the additional burdens of care that women carry out are barriers to women's full economic participation. It is important to promote investment in the care economy, including the quality of care jobs. Advertising and other media campaigns can be leveraged to engage men and domestic partners and address gender norms around care.

8. Ensure that gender equality is front and centre of learning and skills development during response and recovery.

There must be concerted efforts to improve girls' education and access to skills development, both in national education systems as well as through official development assistance (ODA) to ensure that COVID-19 does not further disrupt girls' access to education. School closings have a proportionally greater impact on girls, due to fragile situations and economic upheaval, pre-existing digital gender gaps as well as cultural and social norms. Women and girls must have equal and affordable access to technology and connectivity, especially as working and learning virtually will continue to be part of our lives for the foreseeable future. Throughout the response and recovery phase, women must have access to skills development, including reskilling, cross-skilling and upskilling. This must include training across sectors, including a focus on STEM jobs and entrepreneurship, with a particular emphasis on jobs that mitigate climate change.

9. Invite businesses to sign and implement the Women's Empowerment Principles that foster responsible business conduct.

The private sector and their representatives are key to response and recovery. They need to commit to sign and implement the [Women's Empowerment Principles](#) by ensuring gender-balanced hiring, equal pay for work of equal value, gender-responsive supply chain practices, domestic violence policies, parental and family leave and flexible work arrangements that take into consideration employee roles both at work and at home. This is the time to share best practices, policies and strategies to encourage companies that are hiring, retaining and promoting women from the beginning of their careers to executive level. Companies' pandemic responses will be major determinants of how they will be viewed by stakeholders and shareholders alike in the future.

10. Encourage financial stakeholders to leverage the power of capital markets and movements of resources to steer responsible business conduct and foster inclusive corporate cultures.

The "better normal" must include investing in companies with work cultures that value and prioritize gender equality, diversity and inclusion and reflect employees' responsibilities outside the workplace. This includes a commitment to increasing investments in women-led enterprises and start-ups.

LINKAGES TO OTHER COVID-19 CONVENINGS

Women's Forum for the Economy and Society

Chiara Corazza, Managing Director of the Women's Forum for Economy and Society carried the HLRT recommendations forward to the Women's Forum, 'G7 Call to Action - Beyond Recovery: Designing an Inclusive World' on 28 May 2020. The Women's Forum for the Economy & Society is a global platform for action to highlight women's voices and vision and build a more inclusive economy and society. On 28 May, the Women's Forum

brought together thousands of committed influencers from across sectors to address the unequal impacts of the COVID-19 crisis, mobilizing women's leadership across countries, companies and communities at every level. This convening was dedicated to launching the Women's Forum call to the G7 leaders to urgently take action on seven key issues for an inclusive recovery. See www.womens-forum.com

Women Leaders Roundtable on COVID-19 and the Future

Gabriela Ramos, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences and former OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20, co-convened with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka the Women Leaders Roundtable on COVID-19 and the Future on 20 April 2020. The roundtable addressed the disproportionately negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on women and girls and the need to identify and prioritize policy measures that facilitate a more

gender-inclusive recovery path. The roundtable participants called on governments and stakeholders to mainstream gender equality in the response efforts to build back better.¹⁴ They identified four key action areas: health-care systems and care work, economic impact, gender-based violence, and women, peace and security and humanitarian aid.

HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS

Heather Barnabe

CEO, G(irls)20

"The impact of COVID-19 will have a disproportionate impact on women and girls' participation in the economy and thus, economic recovery policies require an intersectional, feminist lens to be effective and support women's economic empowerment."

Ann Cairns

Executive Vice Chair, Mastercard

"The world hasn't been designed with women in mind or women involved. The World Economic Forum says it will take 257 years before we reach gender parity. We must not wait that long, it's time to act. Let's design a better world for women, which will create a better world for everyone. Government's should also work with business to enable and support women owned MSME's to digitize their businesses which increases their ability to reach new markets, access credit and transact securely."

Chiara Corazza

Managing Director, Women's Forum for the Economy and Society

"In the light of the COVID-19 crisis, women have to be fully associated to design a more just and inclusive economy and society. Gender divide is being exacerbated by this pandemic, and we see how women are disproportionately impacted. The most powerful economies in the G7 countries have to lead by example by mobilizing women's leadership to build inclusive societies and bring back not only an economic recovery, but also dignity and justice for all. Before the crisis, 240 million jobs were expected to be created by 2025 and 28 trillion dollars were expected to be added to the world GDP if women and men were equally represented in the economic sector. It is now even more imperative that women are given the same opportunities as men to be the leading force shaping the new world that humanity needs."

Nyasha Duri

Youth Representative, G(irls)20

"Working class women of colour, especially those who are from black, indigenous, and or LGBTQI+ backgrounds, often face the most challenges while being disproportionately affected, yet remaining underserved across the board globally. We must ensure an inclusive future for everyone in all areas: COVID-19 is a once in a lifetime chance to respond to this by doing better through our sustainable recovery."

Amanda Ellis

Global Futures Laboratory/Wrigley Global Institute of Sustainability, Arizona State University

"A gender-sensitive response to COVID-19 benefits everyone! It is key to achieving a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable world for all."



Anna Falth

Manager of WE EMPOWER – G7 and Head of the WEPs Secretariat, UN Women

“COVID-19 places even more care burden on women in the home, while exposing them to greater income insecurity and increased levels of domestic violence. We need a coordinated and people-centred approach. Business has a key role to play to ensure employee wellbeing, and address the differentiated needs of women in their supply chains and customer base.”

Hilde Hardeman

Head of the European Commission’s Service for Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI)

“We can say that the COVID-19 crisis is gender-biased looking at its impact on women-owned businesses, on the burden women are facing during the crisis, at the increase of gender-based violence, but the COVID crisis is also an opportunity to rebuild back better. Our efforts should now concentrate on putting women at the centre of the recovery.”

Katja Iversen,

President and CEO, Women Deliver

“Women Deliver’s top recommendations to the G7 include: implement a gender lens AND marker to all your COVID-19 response, recovery, stimulus packages; safeguard maternal, sexual and reproductive health and rights; and engage women as leaders in the whole effort. We need to use the opportunity to put good tracks down for a better and more gender equal future. Tracks that cannot be taken up afterwards. Tracks that can lead to gender equality and economic justice for girls and women. Because we know that a gender equal world is healthier, wealthier, more prosperous and more peaceful.”

Michael Kaufman

Co-Founder, White Ribbon Campaign and author of *The Time Has Come: Why Men Must Join the Gender Equality Revolution*

“The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the impact of women’s and men’s unequal responsibilities for caregiving work – both in the workplace (where such work continues to be economically devalued) and in the home (where women still do much more childcare, elderly care and domestic work.) We must use this moment for bold initiatives to address these inequalities. The COVID-19 crisis also gives us the great opportunity to develop policies and public education to actively promote the goal of men doing half of care work in our homes.”

Rebecca Marmot

Chief Sustainability Officer, Unilever

“We don’t want the recovery to mean going back to the same old system. We need reinvention after COVID-19 which will rely on governments, business and civil society collaborating with agility and flexibility. One of business’ strongest contribution to the response has been through access to jobs and livelihoods. Putting a gender lens on COVID-19 responses will ensure that existing inequalities are not exacerbated, and move us towards a more gender-equal society.”



Paolo Mascaro

President of Valore D

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

"The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a crisis reaching far beyond health, challenging fundamental aspects of the ways in which we have previously arranged our social and economic structures. Women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs and are more likely to be employed in the informal economy with less access to social protections. I call on leaders at the virtual G7 Summit to explicitly recognize this and ensure that their COVID-19 response intentionally, strongly and permanently redresses these long-standing inequalities in order to create inclusive, equal and more resilient societies."

Irene Natividad

President, Global Summit of Women

"This pandemic revealed that the largest cohort of employers globally are small and medium-sized enterprises, not major corporations. Well, women-owned businesses comprise 30 per cent of SMEs, the dynamic engine behind small business growth around the world, so let's work to develop and to sustainably grow more them in the post-COVID-19 economy."

Gabriela Ramos

UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences and former OECD Chief of Staff and Sherpa to the G20

"Women have been at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic as they take on the majority of care work – paid and unpaid. Unfortunately, we know that even prior to the crisis they were not fairly compensated for taking on this unequal burden of care. The COVID-19 crisis has only magnified these inequalities. Women are also disproportionately affected as essential workers, smaller-scale entrepreneurs, and employees in tourism, air travel, and retail, for various reasons including lack of social protection or lack of financing. We need to apply a gender lens in our recovery efforts. Let's turn this crisis into an opportunity to redress the inequalities that women face."

Guy Ryder

Director-General, International Labour Organization

"The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare in the cruelest way the extraordinary precariousness and injustices of our world of work. It has similarly highlighted the always essential role of the working heroes of this pandemic. People who are usually invisible, unconsidered, undervalued, even ignored. Health and care workers, cleaners, supermarket cashiers, unpaid carers in their homes and communities – a large majority of women, frequently migrant workers, too often numbered among the working poor and the insecure. The ILO calls for a human-centred COVID-19 response and recovery that builds a better normal and tackles these injustices and the challenges of climate, digital and demographic transition."



Marlène Schiappa

Minister of State for Gender Equality and the Fight against Discrimination in France

“Gender equality remains a foreign policy priority for France in the context of this crisis. Even though the current pandemic reshuffled the G7’s agenda, women’s empowerment should not be set aside, especially when considering a coordinated approach towards economic recovery. We know the consequences of the pandemic on women’s economic empowerment: women are at the front-line to respond to the crisis in a lot of sectors, including the health sector, and at the same time they have to deal with an increase of domestic care work at home. During the 2019 French G7 Presidency, G7 leaders adopted the Biarritz Partnership for Gender Equality, including a compendium of national legislative measures and actions. France will keep promoting it and encourage other countries to join.”

Vicky Smallman

National Director, Women’s and Human Rights Department, Canadian Labour Congress

“The COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare the impacts of an economic model that privileges growth over community, profit over people. It has underscored the important roles that decent work, social protection, robust public services and social dialogue can play in building strong, resilient economies and communities. The pandemic is not gender neutral – so we need a gender-responsive recovery. The traditional, patriarchal “shovel-ready” stimulus packages are not appropriate.”

Sara Tanan

Youth Representative, G(irls)20

“The Covid-19 pandemic is deepening economic, social and political pre-existing inequalities around the world and is having a devastating impact on women and girls, especially those from disadvantaged and marginalized communities. This is why global national responses to the crisis must be inclusive, accessible and receptive to all women’s needs. From healthcare and education services to economic subsidies and access to critical technologies, from policies providing protection against gender-based violence to those preventing intersectional discrimination against women in all social, economic and political spheres, we demand the G7 leaders provide more equal solutions for women of all backgrounds.”

Mischa Thompson

Director of Global Partnerships, Policy and Innovation at the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (U.S. Helsinki Commission)

“This crisis only serves to highlight how women continue to lead whether as heads of state, in the workplace or in the home.”Bis este senet expererefe soleste dolora si suntur aut optas corerehe

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