

All fuss and no funds as the G7 Communique fails on gender equality: joint response from the co-chairs of the W7

13 June 2021 - Gender equality was advertised as one of the priorities for the G7 Summit this year when the UK took over the Presidency.

In a year when women have been the front-line responders to the Covid-19 pandemic, while disproportionately carrying its costs, hard cash was needed to stop the global rollbacks on gender equality. The Women 7 ([W7](#)) - the G7's official Engagement Group on gender equality - called in its Communique for specific financial commitments to promote gender equality in response to the pandemic. These calls were echoed by the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) - appointed by the Prime Minister to advise him on the issue. Yet the G7 [Leaders' Communique](#) released today, while making some important statements on the need for measures to promote gender equality, has almost no tangible political or financial commitments.

"We have seen a lot of fuss but no funds", says Jessica Woodroffe, W7 Co-Chair and Director of the Gender and Development Network. Extolling the value of girls' education while slashing proven aid programmes - including on education - is sheer hypocrisy." Jessica Woodroffe added, "Clearly the Prime Minister was not entirely on top of his brief when he suggested "Building Back Better" in a 'feminine way' - let's hope he meant 'feminist' - prioritising a just, equitable and green recovery that centres care."

Hannah Bond, W7 Co-Chair and Director of Gender Action on Peace and Security says, *"That women and girls around the world face discrimination as a result of their gender has been recognised at G7 Summits over many years. As the world continues to combat the Covid-19 pandemic and its ongoing disastrous impacts on women and girls, there is an urgent need for the UK to demonstrate global leadership in this area by putting tangible and resourced commitments on the table."*

What the G7 Communique says, and doesn't say, on gender equality

1. No new money for gender equality

The W7 Communique, endorsed by the GEAC, called for tangible funding commitments in vital areas such as violence against women and girls, sexual and reproductive health and rights, women's political participation and Women, Peace and Security.

Girls' education was supposed to be the Prime Ministers' flagship issue yet he was unable to persuade G7 leaders to agree on a collective level of funding, perhaps because he had lost all moral authority by cutting UK aid spending on education this year. There was just confirmation of the UK's annual contribution to the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education - a pre-cycling of money that will have to be re-announced when the UK Chairs the Global Education Summit in July. The UK's contribution of £430 million fell short of campaigners' targets and only the EU and Canada also made pledges.

2. Build Back Better World ignores the care economy

The GEAC, along with the W7, L7 and C7 Engagement Groups, had called for G7 leaders to put public investment in health and care services at the heart of economic recovery. This is especially because the pandemic had put into sharp focus the role of the 'care economy' in maintaining our societies. While the G7 Communique recognises the importance of care work, their ['Build Back Better World'](#) plan makes no mention of this and is more about recovery for G7 industries than it is about promoting gender equality around the world.

3. Global responsibility and international action

The G7 leaders' ambition to ensure 'prosperity for all' fell well short of the mark. Ensuring governments in the Global South have access to sufficient funds to promote gender equality is a central part of equitable recovery. The GEAC recommendations made specific references to the UK's 0.7% of GNI commitment to foreign aid, but no mention of this is in the Communique.

Also missing from the Communique, was the G7's full backing of the [TRIPS Waiver](#) within the World Trade Organisation. This will unnecessarily prolong the development and distribution of Covid vaccines as the world continues to grapple with the pandemic.

4. Shared democratic values and racial justice

Championing 'shared democratic values' has been a major theme for the Leaders and we welcome recognition of the importance of condemning and tackling racism in all its forms. This is an important first step, but of course concrete action is now needed.

What the G7 Communique says on other key gender equality concerns

In a number of paragraphs, such as that on care and on intersecting discriminations, there is some recognition of the issues and problems. However, this has tended to be isolated and not linked through to concrete actions or commitments. Therefore we will watch closely as to what this actually means in practice. In other paragraphs, such as that on the Women Entrepreneurs, the Leaders are still moving in the wrong direction.

Care - Paragraph 25: *The crisis has also shown the importance of social protection systems and the critical role and incredible contribution of caregivers in our societies, often unpaid and often*

disproportionately women, and the importance of improving decent working conditions for these caregivers as part of our recovery plans.

Trade - Paragraph 28: *We support G7 Trade Ministers' commitments to review our trade policy to ensure it supports women's economic empowerment, and recognise the importance of developing a strong evidence base of gender-disaggregated data and analysis. We invite Trade Ministers to support the wider WTO membership to deliver an ambitious outcome at MC12 to bolster women's participation in trade and economic empowerment.*

Online safety - Paragraph 34: *We invite Interior Ministers to work on a G7 agreement on sharing of information and best practice on tackling existing and emerging online forms of gender-based violence, including forms of online abuse.*

STEM - Paragraph 36 says: *We will therefore work together to promote stronger collaboration on research and development, and promote principles of research security and integrity and open science building off the historical levels of collaboration seen in the past year to internationally beneficial results. Central to this should be building a diverse and resilient science and research community, inclusive for all groups including women. Domestically we will seek to redress the imbalance in women's and girls' under-representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) which acts as a barrier to access to these growing industries*

Climate - Paragraph 37: *We welcome and encourage business, civil society and regional commitments to global climate and biodiversity ambition through science based targets, including the Race to Resilience and Race to Zero campaigns. Together we welcome the active role and participation of vulnerable communities, underrepresented groups and will work towards achieving equality, including gender equality, in the climate and environment sector. We will continue our efforts to progress the Equal by 30 Campaign for gender equality in the energy sector.*

Gender equality - Paragraph 44: *Gender equality is at the heart of an open, inclusive, and just society. Persistent gaps in gender equality affect access to basic services as well as decent work, equal pay, social protection, education, technology and many other areas. Unequal division of unpaid care responsibilities in the home and low pay for paid care work also limits women's empowerment, social and economic participation and leadership.*

Gender equality and intersections - Paragraph 44: *Gender equality intersects with other characteristics and our actions need to take account of these intersections in a meaningful way, including tackling racism in all forms and violence and discrimination against LGBTQTI+ populations. We recognise the devastating and disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, which risks reversing hard-won gains especially with regards to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, education and jobs.*

Political participation - Paragraph 45: *Achieving gender equality needs to be underpinned by the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of decision-making. We are*

committed to close alignment with the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) and commend the organisation of the first G20 Ministerial Conference on women's empowerment.

GEAC - Paragraph 45: *We thank the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) for its work and recommendations, and look forward to receiving the GEAC's full report in the Autumn. We agree to a consistent and sustained focus on gender equality to project our global leadership on this issue, and intend to convene the GEAC as a standing feature of all G7 Presidencies. We know that we cannot make true progress towards gender equality without robust data and a way to track it over time. We invite the GEAC to work with existing accountability mechanisms such as the Accountability Working Group and the Taormina Roadmap to monitor G7 commitments to achieve gender equality on an annual basis.*

Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights - Paragraph 46: *We reaffirm our full commitment to promote and protect the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all individuals, and recognise the essential and transformative role they play in gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, and in supporting diversity, including of sexual orientations and gender identities. We commit to working together to prevent and address the negative impacts on access to SRHR from the COVID-19 pandemic, with specific attention to the most at risk, marginalised and inadequately served groups.*

Gender Based Violence - Paragraph 46: *In recognition of increased violence against women and girls during the COVID-19 crisis, we commit to preventing, responding to and eliminating all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV). We will achieve this through women's empowerment and by scaling-up implementation of evidence-based, accessible survivor and victim-centred policies, prevention and support programmes, including through our pandemic response and recovery at home, in partner countries and in conflict zones. We acknowledge our collective responsibility to beneficiaries and partners, their communities, and survivors to do more to address sexual exploitation and abuse in international aid.*

Sexual Violence in Conflict - Paragraph 46: *We condemn GBV against women and girls and denounce the use of sexual violence in conflict situations and underscore that such acts may constitute crimes against humanity or war crimes. We note the varied legal and institutional frameworks which currently address conflict and invite Foreign and Development Ministers to consider how best to strengthen international architecture around conflict-related sexual violence.*

Girls' Education - Paragraph 47: *COVID-19 has exacerbated underlying inequalities, leading to one of the worst education crises in history for children around the world, but especially for the most marginalised and at risk girls. Around 11 million girls from pre-primary to secondary school are at risk of not returning to school. We commit to two new global SDG4 milestone girls' education targets: 40 million more 19 girls in education by 2026 in low and lower-middle income countries; and 20 million more girls reading by age 10 or the end of primary school by 2026, in low and lower-middle income countries. We endorse the G7 Foreign and Development Ministers' Girls Education Declaration. These targets should be underpinned by sustainable financing and so today G7 members commit to a combined total pledge of at least \$2¼ billion funding over the*

next 5 years for the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) ahead of its replenishment in July. We call on others to join with the G7 and make ambitious pledges to a fully funded GPE.

Racism - Paragraph 48: *We commit to: increase cooperation on supporting democracy, including through strengthening the G7 Rapid Response Mechanism to counter foreign threats to democracy including disinformation; strengthen media freedom and ensure the protection of journalists; support freedom of religion or belief; condemn racism in all its forms; address human rights abuses, including the failure to protect civilians in conflict...*

Women entrepreneurs - Paragraph 86: *This builds on the 2X Challenge partnership between G7 DFIs launched in 2018 and the target of an additional \$15 billion of new funding for this as announced by G7 Foreign and Development Ministers in May 2021 to help address the disproportionate barriers that women face to access capital, leadership roles, quality employment and affordable care.*

Notes:

[1] The [W7](#) is the G7's official engagement group on gender equality. Its recommendations can be found [here](#). The 2021 W7 is Co-Chaired by Jessica Woodroffe Director of the [Gender and Development Network](#) (GADN) and Hannah Bond Director of [Gender Action on Peace and Security](#) (GAPS).

Jessica Woodroffe is also a member of the [Gender Equality Advisory Council](#), appointed by the Prime Minister to advise on gender equality within the G7. The GEAC recommendations can be found [here](#).

[2] On Friday June 11th, the UK announced \$430 million towards the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education. The UK is hosting the [Education Summit](#) in July where the GPE is hoping for a full replenishment of \$5 billion.

[3] A full analysis of the impact of the UK's aid cuts on gender equality can be found [here](#).

[4] The G7's press release on 'Build Back Better for the World' can be found [here](#).