



## W7 Policy Asks – Leaders’ Track Consultation Document

### Summary

We welcome the aspirations of the G7 Leaders in looking towards the longer-term challenges the world faces, as well as addressing the immediate priorities created by the pandemic. Whether the focus is on health, climate, democracy, economic recovery or jobs, gender equality will have to play a central role to ensure successful outcomes are achieved.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated long-standing structural gender inequalities. At the same time, it has also exposed how women and girls who experience other forms of intersecting discriminations have disproportionately borne the pandemic’s impacts – whether as frontline responders, through increased unpaid care work, due to restricted access to social protection and public services, or as a result of their employment in vulnerable sectors.

We call on G7 Leaders to recognise that gender equality and the fulfilment of women’s rights is an aspiration that must be present across the Leaders’ Summit if we are truly to build back better for all. Below we propose recommendations related to four of the areas prioritised in the Leaders’ track:

- **Trade and prosperity**

Promote fair and equitable trade, including the waiver of certain provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to facilitate the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 during the pandemic. Cancel all outstanding sovereign debt across private, bilateral and multilateral creditors, in order to increase fiscal space for equitable economic recovery in countries across the Global South.

- **The climate crisis**

Provide financial support for gender-just climate action that is accessible for local and national women’s rights organisations.

- **Health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**

Provide equitable access to vaccines, protect health and care workers (who are predominantly women), and safeguard women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights during the health crisis.

- **Open and democratic societies**

Enable women and girls – in all their diversity – to fully participate in political decision making whether on COVID-19 recovery, economic policy, peace and security, or the climate crisis. Address structural racism, both domestically and internationally, to ensure truly democratic societies.

## Trade and prosperity

The pandemic has laid bare the existing inequalities and vulnerabilities between and across societies, as well as the interdependence of the global economy.<sup>1</sup> To truly build back better, in a way that promotes rather than undermines gender equality, will require rapid measures to prevent a global recession and promote prosperity across the world – prioritising those countries most at risk from the secondary economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immediate action and financing are urgently required to prevent another global debt crisis while allowing governments in the Global South the necessary fiscal and policy space to provide universally accessible social protection, invest in the care economy and promote decent work. Action is also necessary to regulate and promote trade in a way that contributes to international obligations, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such measures would build on the [G7 Taormina road map](#) and ensure that a more equitable recovery is possible.

We call on G7 Leaders to promote sustainable equitable recovery in the following ways:

- Avert a major global debt crisis and increase fiscal and policy space for equitable economic recovery in countries across the Global South through **the cancellation of all outstanding sovereign debt across private, bilateral and multilateral creditors**, and the issuing of special drawing rights.
- **Promote democratic and inclusive global economic decision-making on sustainable and equitable recovery** and ensure that international financial institutions respect the policy space of national governments.
- **Commit to fair, sustainable trade and investment policies and practices** that are subject to international human rights standards and in line with the SDGs. This includes supporting the proposal from two-thirds of World Trade Organisation members for a temporary waiver of certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement in the interest of prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>
- Exclude trade and investment provisions that protect investors at the expense of women workers and **support the establishment of a United Nations binding treaty on business and human rights** with a focus on women's human rights.
- **Promote decent work by ratifying, funding and enforcing ILO conventions on collective bargaining and freedom of association**, as well as Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, throughout G7 supply chains.
- **Recognise the importance of the care economy in securing prosperity for all** by ending harmful donor-imposed austerity conditionality and enabling governments to invest an additional 2 per cent of GDP in social infrastructure. This must include robust gender-responsive public health and care services to reduce women's unpaid care burdens and create decent work for women in the public sector.
- **Finance a global social protection fund** to kick-start universal, publicly funded national protection schemes for low-income countries.

## The climate crisis

The world's richest nations are the most responsible for the climate crisis, which impacts on the rights of all women and girls, undermines efforts to combat poverty and inequality, and

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, R. and A. Narayan. 2021. 'What COVID-19 can mean for long-term inequality in developing countries', *World Bank Blogs*, 7 January. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/what-covid-19-can-mean-long-term-inequality-developing-countries>

<sup>2</sup> World Trade Organisation. 2020. Waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19, IP/C/W/669, 2 October. <https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q://IP/C/W669.pdf&Open=True>

fuels food insecurity, fragility and conflict. Even before COVID-19, the climate crisis had increased economic inequality between rich and poor countries by 25 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

Women and girls are more likely to experience climate impacts, yet their experiences and leadership are undervalued in responses. Women and girls are critical agents of change, and their leadership is essential to understanding climate impacts and developing effective mitigation and adaptation responses that leave no one behind.

We call on G7 Leaders to respond to the climate crisis with the following actions:

- **Step up financial support for gender-just climate** action by ensuring that at least 20 per cent of climate funding aims to achieve gender equality as a principal objective and 100 per cent as a significant objective.<sup>4</sup> Ensure this funding is accessible to local and national women's rights organisations. In addition, commit in 2021 to working towards a new ambitious agreement on climate finance, with a post-2025 goal where all finance is gender-responsive, the majority is grant-based and at least 50 per cent is for adaptation.<sup>5</sup>
- **Increase levels of climate finance accessed by local and national women's rights organisations, including indigenous groups.** Address legal, structural and cultural barriers to women's leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making and policymaking around climate change mitigation and adaptation.<sup>6</sup>
- **Ensure that both COVID-19 recovery plans and economic stimulus packages lead in implementing the Paris Agreement,** including its commitment that all climate actions promote gender equality. Prioritise phasing out fossil fuels and subsidies, and actively seek to reduce gender and other inequalities by investing in the care economy and reducing barriers for women and marginalised groups to access decent jobs in clean energy sectors.
- **Endorse, finance and fully implement the UNFCCC five-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan.**<sup>7</sup> Incorporate gender considerations into climate change plans at all levels – local, national, and international – including but not limited to nationally determined contributions.
- **Develop and implement accountability mechanisms** to hold corporations hosted in G7 states responsible for environmental degradation and attacks on women human rights and environmental defenders.
- In response to the growing debt crisis, **set up an automatic interest-free moratorium on debt payments for developing countries experiencing climate disasters.**

### **Health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights**

Alongside equitable access to vaccines globally, recognising the role of women health workers will be central to equitable COVID-19 recovery. Women make up 70 per cent of the global health workforce and can face violence in performing their roles, a risk that may now

<sup>3</sup> Diffenbaugh, N.S. and M. Burke. 2019. 'Global warming has increased global economic inequality', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116.20, 9808–9813. <https://www.pnas.org/content/116/20/9808>

<sup>4</sup> OECD. 2016. "Definition and minimum recommended criteria for the DAC gender equality policy marker". <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Minimum-recommended-criteria-for-DAC-gender-marker.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Latest estimates for 2017–18 show only 20 per cent of reported public climate finance took the form of grants, while 80 per cent was loans and other non-grants. See Oxfam. 2020. *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2020: Assessing progress towards the \$100bn commitment*. Oxford: Oxfam. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/climate-finance-shadow-report-2020>

<sup>6</sup> WEDO. 2020. Feminist climate finance brief: recommendations for Canada's climate finance pledge. New York: WEDO. <https://wedo.org/feminist-climate-finance-brief-recommendations-for-canadas-climate-finance-pledge/>

<sup>7</sup> See 'Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan', 3/CP.25, in UNFCCC. 2014. *Report of the Conference of the Parties on its twenty-fifth session, held in Madrid from 2 to 15 December 2019*, FCCC/CP/2019/13/Add.1, 16 March. <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-enhanced-lima-work-programme-on-gender#:~:text=In%202014%20the%20COP%20established,responsive%20climate%20policy%20and%20action>

be amplified with contested access to finite supplies of COVID-19 vaccines.<sup>8</sup> They also do the majority of paid and unpaid care work.<sup>9</sup> Even before the pandemic, at least half the world's population were not receiving essential health services, a state of affairs that has significantly worsened as countries' health systems strain during the crisis.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, essential women's health and SRHR services – like access to contraception, prenatal and maternal care, and safe abortion – are often the first to be deprioritised in the face of crisis.<sup>11</sup>

In line with the emerging framework produced by the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on Bodily Autonomy and SRHR, co-led by France, we call on G7 Leaders to take the following actions:

- **Ensure that every woman, youth and adolescent girl**, regardless of their financial situation, nationality, sexual orientation, race, religion, status as a parent or any other form of discrimination, **has access to free, timely, non-judgemental and accessible SRHR services and contraception in a nearby location.**
- Safeguard girls' and women's essential SRHR during the pandemic, including access to services, supplies and information.
- **Advocate for safe, legal and accessible abortion services** as part of the human right to healthcare and ensure the pandemic is not used as an excuse to restrict access to SRHR.
- **Ensure an age- and gender-responsive approach to the design of universal health coverage models and implementation to support health systems and services that are available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality for all.** Support dedicated health budgets for adolescent SRHR services to remove user fees and out-of-pocket payments for health services.
- Ensure **equitable global access** to COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and medication, including through COVAX, and support the roll-out of effective mass vaccination programmes that use a gender and diversity lens to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised. Ensure that excluded groups, including refugees, internally displaced people, migrants, ethnic minorities and stateless populations are included in national vaccination programmes.
- **Ensure health and care workers**, who are overwhelmingly women, are paid a living wage and have access to safe and decent working conditions.

### **Open societies: Women's leadership and participation**

Open democratic societies require the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all their diversity. This is especially critical given the continuing impact of structural racism, which has historically excluded many from democratic processes; the shrinking space for civil society globally; and sustained attacks on women's rights and women human rights defenders. Moreover, as the COVID-19 recovery unfolds, it is essential to ensure women, girls and marginalised communities have a meaningful voice in all decision-making, putting equity at the centre of recovery ambitions. Open societies also require commitment and funding for gender analysis mainstreamed across all other areas of ODA.

<sup>8</sup> George, A.S., F.E. McConville, S. de Vries, G. Nigenda, S. Sarfraz, and M. McIsaac. 2020. 'Violence against female health workers is tip of iceberg of gender power imbalances', *BMJ* 371: m3546. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3546>; Harman, S., A. Crabb-Herten, R. Morgan, J. Smith, and C. Wenham. 2020. 'COVID-19 vaccines and women's security', *The Lancet* 397:10272. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)32727-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)32727-6)

<sup>9</sup> WHO. 2019. *Delivered by women, led by men: a gender and equity analysis of the global health and social force*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/health-observer24/en/>

<sup>10</sup> WHO and World Bank. 2017. *Tracking universal health coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report*. Geneva and Washington: WHO and World Bank. [https://www.who.int/healthinfo/universal\\_health\\_coverage/report/2017/en/](https://www.who.int/healthinfo/universal_health_coverage/report/2017/en/)

<sup>11</sup> A 10 per cent drop in the provision of essential reproductive health services due to COVID-19 could translate to an additional 15 million unintended pregnancies, 28,000 maternal deaths, and 3.3 million unsafe abortions a year across 132 low- and middle-income countries. See Riley, T., E. Sully, Z. Ahmed, and A. Biddlecom. 2020. 'Estimates of the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sexual and reproductive health in low- and middle-income countries', *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 46, 73–76. [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/article\\_files/4607320.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/article_files/4607320.pdf)

In line with Agenda 2030, and the emerging framework produced by the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on Women's Leadership and Feminist Movements, co-led by Canada, we call on the G7 Leaders to support open societies in the following ways:

- **Commit to achieve 20 per cent of ODA for gender equality** as a 'principal' and 100 per cent as a 'principal' or 'significant' objective within five years.<sup>12</sup>
- **Guarantee space for meaningful participation by women's and girls' rights organisations, in all their diversity**, and other civil society groups that are not traditionally allowed a seat at the table. Ensure that they are represented and heard in governance and decision-making processes related to COVID-19 response and recovery.
- **Increase flows of funding to women's rights and girls' rights organisations and movements**, recognising the barriers that marginalised women – including LGBTQIA+ communities – face.<sup>13</sup> Currently, only 1 per cent of international aid earmarked for gender equality reaches women's rights organisations globally.<sup>14</sup> Of this, a tiny amount – only 0.5 per cent – reaches Southern women's and girls' rights organisations.<sup>15</sup> This proportion needs to be substantially increased.
- **Acknowledge the role that structural racism plays in undermining democratic freedoms** and agree a plan to decolonise ODA as a means of correcting historic legacies.
- In line with commitments by Canada and France, along with a number of non-G7 countries, **adopt feminist approaches to foreign policies** that centre human rights, prioritise decolonising relationships between the Global South and North, promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts in foreign policy doctrine, and ensure security, diplomacy and trade levers contribute to internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments.<sup>16</sup>

### For more information

The W7 is a group of civil society organisations promoting gender equality and women's rights within G7 processes. This is an interim document prepared in consultation with groups from the W7 and the G7 Global Task Force Gender Working Group in advance of the W7 Summit. The full W7 Communique will be produced after the Summit on April 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 2021.

For more information, please visit the [W7 2021 website](#) or contact Sophie Efange, Gender and Development Network Policy Manager ([Sophie.Efange@gadnetwork.org](mailto:Sophie.Efange@gadnetwork.org)).

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<sup>12</sup> OECD. 2016. *Definition and minimum recommended criteria for the DAC gender equality policy marker*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Minimum-recommended-criteria-for-DAC-gender-marker.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Between 2017 and 2019, bilateral and multilateral donors committed over US\$1 billion to support gender equality. Few of those resources have reached feminist movements, who are the real drivers of transformative and sustainable change. For decades more than 99 per cent of official development assistance for gender equality has gone to large mainstream organisations or governments, or stayed within development agencies themselves. See Lever, E., K. Miller, and K. Staszewska. 2020. *Moving more money to the drivers of change: how bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements*. Amsterdam: AWID and Mama Cash. [https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/movingmoremoney\\_mama\\_cash\\_awid\\_cmi.pdf](https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/movingmoremoney_mama_cash_awid_cmi.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> OECD. 2019. *Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment: donor charts*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2019.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> OECD. 2016. *Donor support to women's rights organisations: OECD findings*. Paris: OECD. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/donor-support-to-southern-women-s-rights-organisations.htm>

<sup>16</sup> Thompson, L. 2020. *Feminist foreign policy: a framework*. Washington: International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/feminist-foreign-policy-a-framework/>