

Covid-19 Feminist Recovery Plan to Achieve Substantive Gender Equality

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Introduction

A Covid -19 feminist recovery plan to achieve substantive gender equality¹

The far-reaching consequences of COVID-19 on local, national, and global economies have yet to be fully realized but the pandemic has clearly exacerbated existing sex, gender, and other inequalities. There has been a global surge in cases of domestic violence and an exponential increase in the burden of women's care and domestic work, both paid and unpaid, which enables the continuation of daily life. Of equal concern are the pre-existing gaps in social and legal protections which are inherently discriminatory and increase women's risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and which many have described as a "shadow pandemic" no less deadly than COVID-19 itself.

Women, who make up more than half of the world's population, have suffered more harm as a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis² and many important gains made by women in recent decades are in the process of being rolled-back. Overall, women have lost paid jobs and earnings in disproportionate numbers but women's overrepresentation amongst essential workers has led to an increase in paid work hours in the informal economy, absent the necessary social and legal protections, along with significant health-related risks. The lack of equal representation of women in the policy arena accompanied by their lack of control over public resources does not bode well for a just and sustainable COVID-19 recovery.

Macroeconomic policy choices affect women and men differently because of their different positions in the economy, both market (paid) and non-market (unpaid) work.³ Discriminatory sex and gender-based stereotypes are embodied and reproduced in the policy frameworks that determine how women and men are positioned in the economy and whose contributions count. Additional stereotyping and exclusion based on grounds such as race, ethnicity, age, health status, pregnancy, migration status, disability, and sexual orientation, among others, compound the economic disadvantage and exclusion experienced by individuals and entire communities.

As noted by a United Nations (UN) women's human rights mechanism, the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, "there has been a systemic failure to properly integrate the biological function of reproduction and the gendered function of unpaid caring into macroeconomic policy in a holistic, effective and coherent way, to ensure that reproduction and caring go hand-in-hand with the overall economic empowerment of women."⁴ Further, economic policy choices are also political choices which governments do not exercise with an equal level of authority and freedom globally. What individual governments can do in response to a crisis depends largely on how much independence and flexibility they have to make macroeconomic policy decisions which respond to the needs of their people rather than external pressures. No doubt, their effectiveness also depends on what they determine as priorities, as well as their capacity for good governance, management, and prevailing levels of corruption in addition to the strength of their own national legal frameworks.

A human rights-based approach provides an important way to look at systemic disadvantage that is absolutely crucial to tackling structural inequality and discrimination. Inequality is not just a result of individual acts of prejudice and discrimination but is built into the structures of society as economies are designed to undervalue care work which is mainly provided in the home and unpaid. This has a ripple effect: from low pay, to precarity in the jobs that women undertake, to occupational segregation. Women continue to bear the primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work. The structure of the working day privileges full time work, which makes the double burden of paid and unpaid care work

very difficult for women to manage and increases their exclusion from paid job opportunities with better social protection.

A human rights framework provides guidance on the obligations and positive duties of governments to address inequality by eliminating all forms of discrimination. Discrimination based on sex and gender is prevalent in the world of work where a pregnancy can be the basis for dismissal and paid maternity leave is not guaranteed to all women workers. Further, discrimination based on sex and gender underlies all forms of GBV, which is compounded by intersecting forms of discrimination based on, but not limited to, grounds such as race, ethnicity, age, occupation, disability, and migrant status. This translates into disparities in access and further disadvantage to women and girls belonging to specific racial and ethnic groups, rural women, adolescent girls, those with disabilities, and informal women workers, many of whom are migrants. These workers are generally more vulnerable to both gender-based discrimination and violence.

The scope of GBV under international law has been expanded to explicitly recognize many reproductive health harms including, for example, unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion and maternal mortality, which are linked to the denial of women's right to control their fertility and recognition of reproductive rights. Additionally, many risks to women's reproductive health are occupational. Gender-based discrimination and violence exact a large societal toll from women and girls, the scope of which is yet to be recognized in legal and policy frameworks. For example, domestic violence has an impact on one's ability to work, not only via physical injury, but also due to mental health status that affects both number of days worked as well as productivity.⁵

Gender equality is a human rights imperative. Consequently, it is relevant for policy makers to fully recognize the cost, at a macroeconomic level, of different forms of inequality. According to a study released by the OECD in 2016, gender-based discrimination in formal and informal laws, social norms, and practices restricting women's rights and access to opportunities costs the global economy an estimated 12 trillion USD.⁶ According to UN Women in 2016, the cost to the global economy of violence against women was 1.5 trillion USD, equivalent to 2% of the global gross GDP.⁷ In some countries, the cost of violence against women can reach up to 3.7% of their GDP, according to the World Bank.⁸ There are many studies that demonstrate the cost of violence against women to specific nations. However, governments are yet to systematically recognize these costs as losses to their economies and be accountable for the fact that they result from harmful policy choices. There is an urgent need for accountability for these losses that translate into violations of women's most basic human rights and perpetuate gender-inequality.

Purpose

The Center for Women's Global Leadership's (CWGL) approach to eliminating discrimination and violence against women in the world of work is guided by feminist values that emphasize equality and equity, individual autonomy, agency, and political inclusion. CWGL remains deeply concerned about the systematic erosion of women's well-being and human rights that has been profoundly accelerated by COVID-19 and the attendant economic crisis, which will continue unless halted by strategic policy interventions and advocacy. The question is how to ensure a fair and safe transition for women and specific populations in situations of vulnerability and risk? CWGL believes that a just and sustainable economic recovery will not be possible without fully accounting for women's unrecognized contributions to economic growth and well-being, supporting their pivotal role in the health and care sectors, and factoring in the cost to the economy and society of pervasive GBV combined with multiple forms of discrimination.

This paper discusses a set of core concerns for building a better future for women, from the perspectives of macroeconomic policy, human rights, and women's labor. We offer recommendations to be considered at the international, regional, national, and local levels for gender equitable policy change. The four areas we focus on are: 1) A feminist analysis of macroeconomic policies in general; 2) The difficulty of countries in the Global South being able to implement independent macro policies; 3) Social protection; and 4) A gender responsive employment recovery. These intersect with certain aspects of women's reproductive health and gender-based violence. It presents a set of recommendations based on a multidisciplinary analysis, identifying new areas for research and advocacy.

Methodology

This report is the culmination of a process initiated by CWGL in the fall of 2020. After a brief literature review around the issues of care work, feminist macroeconomics, human rights, and COVID-19 recovery reports, the CWGL team engaged in a consultation process with leading experts in the field from different parts of the world. The consultation process occurred over three months and consisted of group and individual meetings held via zoom with members of the CWGL team and members of our working group, some of whom were asked to give thematic introductory remarks followed by collective discussion. In addition to three consultation meetings with the larger group, two more meetings were held with experts from the New Zealand Human Rights Commission.⁹

The first consultation meeting focused on issues of human rights and economic policy especially at the macro level, as well as on questions of what is a caring economy, social protection, and workers' rights. The second meeting narrowed in on employment and labor, what a just recovery would look like, as well as economic policy issues such as gender budgeting and understanding systemic disadvantage. Finally, the third meeting focused on the "Purple Economy" (which is described below) and debt, on how to integrate environmental issues and care in economic policy, and issues of global inequality in relation to borrowing and debt. The content of this report borrows a great deal from the discussion in all three meetings and our other two consultations. We have not identified each of these references by name although their work is cited extensively, and we are very grateful for all the input that we received from the experts. (See "Annex" on page 23)

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Analysis and Recommendations

1. Macroeconomic Policy: A Shift to a New Kind of Economy

Macroeconomic policy affects all of us, no matter how removed our lives seem to be from the heights of policymaking. The prices of the goods we buy, the wages we earn at work, the working conditions we endure, the quality of the public services we access (including medical care), even how long we live – all these things, to a certain extent, are shaped by macroeconomic policy. The prevailing dominant methodology for evaluating macroeconomic policy is deeply flawed. This methodology is drawn from neoclassical economics—the intellectual basis for neoliberal policy—and is concerned, first and foremost, with questions of efficiency.¹⁰

Decisions made in macroeconomic policies—such as government spending, taxation, monetary policy, and financial regulation—have distinct distributive consequences for women and men. These decisions shape the kind of constraints on policies to promote gender equality and extend beyond consideration of distributive outcomes. The unpaid and nonmarket work that women perform, such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of the sick and elderly, and childcare are unrecognized and uncounted in macroeconomic variables used to formulate policy. The economic consequences of these unpaid activities are far-reaching and, in the COVID-19 context, important to the well-being of society, affecting productive activities in the market economy and creating the foundation for the long-run sustainability of our economies.¹¹ Feminist economists have since long pointed out the importance of valuing care work, both paid and unpaid, and how this labor is undervalued, marginalized, and unaccounted for in mainstream economics.¹²

Unpaid and paid domestic work sustains the reproduction of everyday activities for families and communities but is largely unrecognized as contributing to economic development. Unpaid care work provides, and produces, a huge amount of goods and services for human development, health, education, and sanitation. The ILO estimates the monetary value of unpaid care work to be around 11 trillion USD, or 9% of global GDP.¹³ This unpaid labor which includes caring, nurturing, cleaning, educating, and providing health, social, and community services is performed globally mostly by women who do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men. As reported by UN Women, the pandemic has significantly intensified women's unpaid care work and their domestic workloads in the areas of cleaning, childcare, teaching, cooking, and shopping for their family.¹⁴

In addition, women who participate in paid work do so often in feminized labor such as domestic work, paid care work, and the informal economy, which are areas of the economy that are systematically undervalued, socially unprotected, and thus highly vulnerable to economic crisis. In the midst of the global pandemic, domestic workers are a key group of workers that have been dismissed with no compensation or access to social protection. Since at least 11 million of the world's 67 million domestic workers are migrants, they face particular barriers in accessing social protection, public services, and travel documents.¹⁵

At the same time, as access to formal and informal childcare alternatives decline, the rise in demand for unpaid childcare provision is likely to fall more heavily on women, which will further constrain their possibilities of participating in the workforce or re-entering it after having lost their jobs. The COVID-19 crisis has brought the care economy into mainstream focus by making care part of the public conversation, bringing attention to the importance of paid and unpaid care work in our economy and everyday lives. Although feminist economists have long tried to bring attention to care and economic

policy, there is a need to go beyond recognizing the importance of care in the existing economic model and to start building and implementing frameworks for a caring economy.

Many vital activities that are typically deemed women's work, including reproductive labor and care and domestic work, are neither monetarily valued by the market nor adequately supported with investments by the state, thereby signaling pervasive discrimination against women in economic policy. In 1991, the UN CEDAW Committee expressed to governments that "the measurement and quantification of the unremunerated domestic activities of women, which contribute to development in each country, will help to reveal the economic role of women."¹⁶ Taking the position that such measurement and quantification should be used for policymaking, the Committee has since encouraged governments to: (i) conduct time-use surveys;¹⁷ (ii) quantify and include the unremunerated domestic work of women in the gross national product;¹⁸ and (iii) report to the Committee on the progress that is made in the incorporation of the unremunerated domestic activities of women in national accounts.¹⁹

In 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights reiterated the duty of governments, declaring that "public policies should position care as a social and collective responsibility and treat unpaid caregivers and those they care for as rights holders."²⁰ A human rights-based approach to care envisions women as human beings with equal rights and inherent dignity, while recognizing the societal value of their reproductive roles and care work. The exclusion of care work from economic policy frameworks is neither accidental nor justifiable: it is a profound design flaw rooted in discriminatory gender-stereotypes and unequal power relations that has cost women dearly. The UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has deemed the "disparate feminization of unpaid care responsibilities a structural barrier to women's economic security and well-being and noted its impact on women and girls throughout their life cycle."²¹ In this sense, human rights law provides a sound and clear basis to "hold States accountable for actions or inactions that exacerbate or perpetuate the unequal distribution and lack of support and recognition of unpaid care work."²²

While there has been notable progress in the development of alternative paradigms that more centrally position care within macroeconomic policy frameworks and clear calls for the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of women's unpaid care work, there has not been enough focus on how these frameworks might (i) contribute to a reduction in the burden of illness and harm associated with women's reproductive and care roles and (ii) promote women's reproductive autonomy. For instance, based on human rights standards pertaining to the right to health, such measures would require provisions in these frameworks that address gaps in the availability, accessibility, affordability, acceptability, and quality of reproductive health services and include safeguards to ensure reproductive decision-making that is free from discrimination, violence, and coercion. There is a direct correlation between the number, timing, and spacing of a woman's children, which fall within the scope of her right to control her fertility under CEDAW, and the level of their unpaid care and domestic responsibilities. Yet, dominant macroeconomic policy frameworks and policies typically fail to explicitly recognize these links and do not prioritize the removal of structural barriers that undermine women's ability to control their fertility and impede their access to reproductive health services. Creating policies that consider the latter barriers mentioned could considerably help reduce the unequal burden produced by unpaid and under-valued care and domestic work and address women's time poverty.

There is a long history of feminist illuminations of the male bias in macroeconomic policy-making that has led to a series of interventions at the international, regional, and national level. In what follows we provide a few examples of this work being used to confront the COVID crisis.

Caring Economy

The Women's Budget Group (WBG) from the United Kingdom is one such intervention. The WBG goes beyond asking for care work to be included in macroeconomic policy making to consider what it would take to have a caring economy. A caring economy emphasizes the state's obligation to center care work as fundamental for substantive equality and human rights and thus building an economy from this ethics of wellbeing and caring. A caring economy ensures that everyone has time to care, as well as time free from care. It respects people's multiple roles as caretakers, community members, partners, parents, and so on, alongside their roles as paid workers. A caring economy takes a fuller understanding of the different parts of the human experience into account. Good-quality care services, such as adult social care, healthcare, and childcare are critical for a good economy. Yet, a caring economy extends beyond care services: it involves caring about the pay and conditions of workers, acting together to end discrimination, deprivation, and poverty, to eliminate violence and abuse, and to care about the planet on which we live together.

A caring economy means acting together to improve wellbeing rather than primarily to maximize economic growth, it is a dynamic and innovative economy in which humans and our shared planet thrive.²³ In a caring economy, everyone gives and receives care on the basis of their capacities and needs, so it requires the rethinking of what we mean by the economy, looking beyond just the monetized market economy. It aims to support social and as well as physical infrastructure that can transform the world of paid and unpaid work. It asks to examine and transform the tax system to provide the resources for the state to provide resources to better build a caring economy. It requires rethinking fiscal and monetary policies and trade policies necessary to building a caring economy and envisioning what kind of systems are needed that are socially and environmentally sustainable globally and will transform the global economic system. This framework sets different priorities for macroeconomic policy-making by centering the well-being of people and the planet above growth and profits.²⁴

Purple Economy

An approach that works very much in conjunction with the idea of a caring economy is that of the purple economy.²⁵ The four pillars of the purple economy are: access to universal social care services, building a universal social care infrastructure; labor market regulation for work-life balance not only for women but also for men on equal terms; ecologically sound physical infrastructure for rural communities, particularly for underdeveloped rural communities where a lot of the unpaid work lies; and, finally an enabling macroeconomic environment with fiscal and monetary policies that promote decent employment generation as a primary goal, rather than simple cosmetic growth, as well as inclusive and sustainable growth. The importance of a purple economic order is to justify care as a global priority economic issue for analysis and policy. The purple economy specifically links certain feminist concerns to the movement to build a "Green Economy." The concept of green economy evolved from a need to respond to the climate crisis but also argues that it can be an answer to economic crisis through the creation of more sustainable economies, and also through generation of green jobs, similar to how the purple economy is not only a response to the crisis of care but also promises to provide some solutions to economic crisis, through more sustainable and productive labor supply and through the generation of purple jobs.

The purple economy envisions an economic order organized around sustainability of caring labor through a redistributive internalization of the costs of care into the workings of an economic system, just as the green economy is organized around sustainability of provisioning by nature through internalization of environmental costs into production and consumption patterns.²⁶ This framework argues that environmental degradation increases the burden put on the care economy therefore the framework of purple economy brings together healthy ecosystems and quality care. In line with the caring economy

is the aspect of going beyond looking at economic growth to consider macro policy including both care and the environment. The caring economy and the purple economy look to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.

Investing in a caring or purple economy simultaneously achieves multiple economic and policy goals, not only in terms of building a gender equitable economy, but also for an economy that has a sufficient number of jobs to address the problem of unemployment. As care work is one of the most labor-intensive sectors, as many studies have shown that investing in care services have the potential to generate three to five times more employment than investing in physical infrastructure.²⁷ The purple economy builds on the work of care and the caring economy to place issues of the environment in relation to care and economic growth. Combining the work on care, the purple economy and putting human rights at the center of economic policy making is critical for achieving substantive equality.

Each of these approaches focus on the public provisioning of services and the central role of the state. Mainstream economic policy-making often focuses on efficiency and relies on the private sector for the provision of services, which is often difficult to hold accountable and non-equitable. One caution is that public provisioning is frequently performed by the private sector, leading to extended privatization which has significant long-term repercussions in terms of equality and access to social and economic rights. Thus, changing the narrative about the public sector has the potential to transform the state as a space of accountability, debate, and fulfillments of rights towards building public policy that centers care, equality, and human rights.

The centering of care in macroeconomic policy frameworks must include specific measures to ensure universal access to reproductive health care, promote reproductive autonomy, and eliminate GBV in the world of work and at home. The caring economy, the purple economy, and a feminist human rights approach require a focus on substantive equality, not just equality of opportunity, and a transformation of economic policy-making in general to achieve specific goals these areas.

1.1 Policy Recommendations

-Analyze the UN General Assembly's International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit to ensure that is reflective of a feminist analysis of global transformation, in light of the crises triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

-Work to transform the international economic system, including fiscal policy by international financial institutions to allocate budgets towards the care economy that it is supportive of the creation of caring economies across the world.

-Develop a post-pandemic gender results framework dashboard and report annually on how governments are advancing gender equity.²⁸

-Improve gender data collection and expand research on the gendered impacts of COVID-19, including through formal assessments, particularly of those most marginalized. More disaggregated data on cases, deaths, hospitalization, and testing are vital to understanding the pandemic's impact on different groups of women. Data on socioeconomic effects and related policies are also crucial.²⁹

-Ensure truly intersectional gender analysis (GBA+), including race, citizenship, sexuality, and gender identity categories, for all forthcoming pandemic policies not only for understanding differential impacts but also for designing policies.³⁰

-Compose governmental advisory boards for Covid-19 recovery not only with health professionals, but also feminist social science and human rights experts.

-Focus on gender-responsive employment policies for medium- to long-term recovery, including macro-economic policies, sectoral policies, active labor market policies, and creating decent employment.

-Focus economic recovery stimulus packages on investment in purple jobs and the care economy. This will create jobs for those doing care work and have a multiplier effect for those who can access those services in order to join the paid labor force.

-Introduce economic support packages for vulnerable women and measures to confront women's increasing time and income poverty. "This includes efforts to recognize, reduce and redistribute the increased burden of unpaid care and domestic work."³¹

-In the context of the extra stresses of the pandemic, institute the regulation of work-life balance, mainly through increased paid leave and the flexibilization of work systems, as well as the reduction of full-time hours.³²

-Prioritize building support for more progressive taxation to fund public services. "Recognize the importance of tax revenue as a sustainable source of funding for public services. Building broader understanding that public services are essential in tackling inequalities can, in turn, increase support for more progressive tax measures to fund them."³³

-Facilitate democratic and grassroots participation in impact assessments in relation to human rights with a focus on assessing whether the proposed measures help advance gender equality and, if they do not, identifying alternative measures that are less harmful. This must be accompanied by investments in institutional capacity to develop indicators and collect pertinent data for the impact assessments. Decisions about the data to be collected must be decided through a participatory process involving those most likely to be affected.

-Broadly disseminate information about the impact of economic policy on gender equality.

-Protect women's health and well-being in times of crisis, including by ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services.

- Prioritize addressing the risks borne by essential health workers, the majority of whom are women, as well as women from poor and marginalized communities.³⁴

-Prioritize prevention and redress of violence against women and girls in COVID-19 responses and ensure that services for survivors are deemed essential and remain accessible and adequately funded.³⁵

2. Global Dynamics of Macroeconomic Policy: Addressing the Double Standard and Pressures towards Austerity

The impacts of globalized neoliberal measures dictated by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank exacerbate global structural inequalities that ultimately give Global South countries less autonomy when it comes to decisions about macroeconomic policy-making, budgets, debt management, and tax policy. Although institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have issued recommendations and guidelines declaring support for countries that face vulnerable socioeconomic contexts heightened by the pandemic, in actuality Global South governments have considerably less autonomy in their processes of decision making. The IMF's Article 14 country reports³⁶ and the World Bank's "Do Business Better" reports advise and influence governments but are generally skewed toward the interests of rich countries and transnational corporations.

This double standard means unequal ability for governments to make decisions about borrowing and budgeting. Ultimately this affects the capacity that governments have to: create employment, social protection, and healthcare; value and center paid and unpaid care work; and address inequality. The IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva promotes the idea that countries will be supported to conduct gender equitable social policies to reduce inequality, protect vulnerable people, and promote access to opportunities for all. However, in practice at the country level the austerity and neoliberal policies that have been around for decades continue to be implemented³⁷ despite clear evidence that shows how they have damaged many economies.³⁸ It has been demonstrated that these "orthodox economic policies, such as austerity, fiscal consolidation, privatization and deregulation of labor and financial markets, have been promoted and even pushed by IFIs (mainly the IMF and the World Bank) for more than a decade in both developing and developed countries,"³⁹ bringing structural inequality and producing long lasting negative impacts for women's human rights.⁴⁰

In terms of fiscal policy, the focus needs to be on expenditure as well as revenue. Resources need to be provided for a caring economy but too often the focus is only on how and on what governments spend and not enough on how they generate resources. Many countries, especially in the Global North, have been focused on the spending side and have introduced economic relief and recovery packages worth billions to guarantee people's incomes and support collapsing businesses. Where those resources come from are not being addressed. Governments generate resources in two main ways: they raise money through taxation and other forms of revenue such as e.g., oil, or they borrow money. Taxation is often the most sustainable, effective, and accountable way for governments to raise money. But over the last 40 years most governments have rolled back progressive tax policies that oblige powerful corporations and wealthy individuals to pay their fair share. The way governments finance COVID-19 responses further affect inequalities. In this sense, "government borrowing has an important role to play, but it can come with a risk of burdening poorer people when loans have to be repaid—in the short or long term. Progressive taxation would be an alternative that would narrow gaps between the advantaged and the disadvantaged more directly"⁴¹

The economic landmarks that configure debt managements in the context of Global North countries versus the Global South are deeply unequal and are at risk of further negatively impacting developing economies. For instance, "The EU announced 'limitless' financial programs to protect European economies by purchasing sovereign and corporate debt, while the US Congress has passed a stimulus package of USD 2 trillion. These fiscal and financial options are not available for low- and middle-income economies, in Latin America, Asia and Africa. Capital flight, the drop in exports, commodity and tourism prices, the economic slowdown, the economic depreciation, and the burden of external debt are driving developing countries to a perfect storm, thus reducing their fiscal and financial maneuvering margin to face the pandemic"⁴² This kind of borrowing also leaves countries vulnerable to the policies of

credit rating agencies that can downgrade a country's status often for conducting progressive taxation or expanding spending during a crisis.

As already noted, while many countries such as the United States, Canada, and much of Europe have the ability to make macroeconomic decisions independently and can borrow money or increase money supply when needed, these are not available to most countries of the Global South. Ability to borrow and implement policies are critical to gender equality. To assess whether a state is satisfying its human rights obligation of conduct with regards to the principle of equality and non-discrimination, we need to see if a state's willingness or unwillingness to borrow is disproportionately helping or harming particular income or identity groups especially when multiple identity groups intersect. One can draw on past experience to see if the government previously borrowed money to assist in a recovery from similar events and examine, for example: which social group, if any, benefited from it; had the decision made about the budget deficit unduly increased the amount of unpaid care work that needs to be done, thus infringing the right to leisure; had health care services been cut due to a decision to cut public expenditure in an attempt to reduce the budget deficit, thereby increasing the amount of unpaid care work done mostly by women.⁴³

There is some recognition of the fact that it is not just gender issues that may affect achieving macroeconomic goals, but there is not enough emphasis on the fact that how macroeconomic goals are achieved will have an effect on gender equality. The relation goes both ways. Very often there is focus on achieving macroeconomic targets based on neoliberal economic policies, where gender is only considered if it helps achieve growth targets. In order to argue that a particular macro policy might have an unequal impact on gender requires, gender disaggregated data as well as evidence-based research that establishes the link between macroeconomic policy and gender equality. There needs to be research, not just in academic journals, but where the findings will reach policy makers and the general public and make clear link between macro policies and gender. There also needs to be capacity building at the country level in order to implement equality policy measures to monitor and to evaluate macro policy through a gender equality lens.

Human rights and gender impact assessments

One approach to deal with the policy choices that are being imposed is to insist on a human rights-right based impact assessment to guarantee just economic policies and to avoid potential negative consequences of economic policies, especially on disadvantaged individuals and groups.⁴⁴ : "Human rights impact assessments of the conditionalities attached to IFIs' loans should be conducted and women's equal participation in these assessments is crucial. The Guiding principles on foreign debt and human rights, proposed by the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt, at the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2019, provides a useful framework for such assessments.⁴⁵

In order to conduct these kind of impact assessments certain kind of qualitative and quantitative data is necessary. However, from the work of the UK equality and human rights commissions, we do know that these evaluations are technically feasible. For example, the inclusion in Scotland of a duty to have due regard for the desirability of decreasing socio-economic inequality is an important precedent.⁴⁶ There is also a need for impact assessments of economic reforms of new loans with a gender perspective that are mandatory at international, regional, and national levels. This will provide debates with more information about how certain financial decisions will impact gender inequality and encourage the development of alternative reforms. An impact assessment of these financial decisions can be made by looking at relevant indicators disaggregated by gender, race, and ethnicity. Such assessments can examine whether women's unpaid care work increase because of budget cuts to education and health and whether particular groups were impacted more than others due to decisions about borrowing.

Human rights standards can be used to hold the makers of these policies to account for violating principles of non-discrimination or non-retrogression.⁴⁷

Austerity and its impact on women

During the COVID-19 crisis, the IMF has increasingly begun to talk about pursuing anti-austerity policy. Recently the IMF fiscal monitor explained that public spending has a greater multiplier effect on promoting economic recovery.⁴⁸ Though this is being said at the international level, country level agreements continue to use the same neoliberal policies as in the past. For example, the new agreement with the Ecuadorian government insists on a reduction in the government's primary budget deficit by 5.5% of GDP until 2025 with similar approaches being used in Ukraine, Pakistan, Costa Rica, and Argentina.⁴⁹ This adjustment can be done either by reducing expenditure or increasing taxes with the latter being much more difficult to do. At a time when governments should be increasing expenditure, what is being imposed is a reduction in spending by countries that have to borrow from the IMF. The rules that are being imposed are the same as if what is being faced is a balance of payments crisis rather than a domestic resource crisis, and the latter will not be resolved through a reduction in domestic expenditure.⁵⁰

International legal experts have advised against resorting to austerity in response to the current economic crisis triggered by COVID-19. Warning that women tend to be hit particularly hard by austerity measures, which are likely to do more harm than good by solidifying existing inequalities without contributing significantly to an economic recovery, the International Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States noted in 2020 that, learning from the 2008 economic crisis, "austerity cannot be an option."⁵¹ The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has already issued warnings about the implications of debt servicing especially for countries with total debt that far exceeds their GDP.⁵² Enormous challenges to addressing peoples' needs in relation to healthcare, water and sanitation, social protection, jobs, and housing are foreseen as major human rights concerns especially in the absence of strong public safety nets.⁵³

For women these risks play out starkly in relation to their reproductive health and safety. In April 2020, UNFPA issued several sobering projections: first, that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to cause a one-third reduction in progress towards ending gender-based violence by 2030; second, if the lockdown continues for six months, 31 million additional gender-based violence cases can be expected; and third, for every three months that the lockdown continues, an additional 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence are expected. At the time of writing this report, countries around the world have been under lockdown or some form of restriction on and off for nearly 12 months. Further, in relation to women's reproductive health, UNFPA projected that around 147 million women in 114 low- and middle-income countries will not be able to use modern contraception if lockdowns and related disruptions continue beyond six months and an additional two million women could be negatively impacted for every additional three months of lockdowns and disruptions.⁵⁴ Several million unintended pregnancies are expected to result from half a year of lockdowns and service disruptions and the number will only increase as the pandemic continues.⁵⁵ Behind these numbers are women for whom the real life implications of unintended pregnancies on their health, level of unpaid care work, and economic security will be immense and difficult to manage in the absence of specific policy measures and interventions to help them cope. Cuts to health and other related public services will only deepen the impact.

While the links between economic growth and women's and girls' negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes such as unplanned pregnancy, unsafe abortion, and maternal deaths among many others have not been adequately researched, studies have been undertaken to examine the implications of intimate partner violence (IPV) on economic growth. Recommendations have been formulated for

international financial institutions to consider the implications of violence against women for economic growth, which could enable them to encourage and support countries in efforts to tackle them. Relying on studies focusing on the negative impact of IPV on productivity, experts have recommended to the World Bank: “integrating consideration of IPV and violence against women and girls into national and sectoral development plans and funding streams; strengthening national statistics offices to collect, manage, and analyze data on violence systematically and regularly; prioritizing multi-sectoral and inter-ministerial responses; and, most importantly, establishing a dedicated budget or funding streams for tackling IPV and VAWG.”⁵⁶

Further, there is useful research estimating the cost of providing essential sexual and reproductive health services for women in low- to middle-income countries to be 10.40 USD per capita which is 4.80 USD above the current level of spending.⁵⁷ This will cover the cost of modern contraceptives, maternal and newborn care, safe abortion, and treatment for sexually transmissible infections.⁵⁸ For every extra dollar spent on contraceptive access, there is an estimated saving of 3 USD on maternal, newborn, and abortion care since contraception reduces that number of unintended pregnancies.⁵⁹ The benefits of investing in women and girls’ sexual and reproductive health for their survival and well-being is evident. Further, based on the commitment of governments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important for policymakers to prioritize this kind of investment.

Considering the surge in GBV and adverse reproductive health outcomes that have been fueled by COVID-19 lockdowns and additional measures to curb contagion, supporting governments in their efforts to reduce the harm to women and girls’ reproductive health and to eliminate all forms of GBV must be an urgent priority.

2.1 Policy Recommendations

-Promote a paradigm shift towards more equitable financing by supporting the establishment of an intergovernmental UN tax body, with equal participation of all countries, to break the deadlock in efforts to eliminate global tax evasion and avoidance.

-Promote multilateralism and the principle of international cooperation to mobilize resources to ensure the progressive realization of economic and social rights, as encouraged under international law.⁶⁰

-Address the debt crisis in developing countries by supporting the basic principles for a sovereign debt restructuring process, agreed upon in 2015.⁶¹

-Suspend IMF surcharges on loans to countries hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic that will slow their economic recovery and squeeze them for payments when they need to build domestic capital.⁶²

-Suspend debt payments to Least Developed Countries (LDC) so that they can draw immediately on revenue that is already in their treasuries to offer a comprehensive response to the pandemic.⁶³ Encourage the IMF to consider human rights in its debt sustainability analysis; forgive unsustainable loans; and actively support efforts to establish a debt workout mechanism.⁶⁴

-Assess the levels of unprecedented profit many international corporations have made in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and design pathways to channel these resources, through taxes and other means such as an international financial tax, towards the care economy and populations with systemic disadvantage.

-The IMF must mandatorily undertake human rights impact assessments to systematically identify the likely human rights impacts of its loan conditions or policy advice. This is particularly important for policy areas like social protection, public services, wage and labor reforms, and taxation.

-Promote social protection programs by the IMF that are compatible with the realization of human rights and full implementation of social protection floors.⁶⁵

-Eliminate loan conditions related to “fiscal consolidation” or austerity and conditionalities requiring privatization of core public goods such as education and health. The IMF should ensure all current and future loans negotiated do not impose restrictive fiscal targets.⁶⁶

-Promote policies that equitably expand fiscal space. The IMF should support countries in making their tax systems more progressive and equitable, including by combating tax evasion and avoidance and boosting direct taxes, rather than promoting over-reliance on regressive consumption taxes.⁶⁷

- Reform IMF quotas and abolish the “gentleman’s agreement” on IMF leadership in line with SDG target 10.6 aimed at ensuring enhanced representation and voice of developing countries in decision making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.⁶⁸

- Push back against, and where possible reject, IMF advice and conditions that have led to austerity and lift constraints on public sector wage bills so that more doctors, nurses, and care workers can be quickly recruited.⁶⁹

- Demand reform in relation to governance and decision-making structures in the IMF to ensure a fairer balance of power which will help facilitate the recommendations for action made above.

-Expand domestic tax bases in a progressive way, including through emergency taxes on wealth, suspending tax incentives, and raising corporate taxes (especially where there are excess profits),⁷⁰ but not through continuing increases on consumer taxes such as VAT.⁷¹

-Carry out human rights impact assessments of economic reforms and new loans. These should be based on existing international legal standards and a participatory and transparent process involving members of civil society, especially feminist and women’s rights organizations, among others. This should be complemented with a gender impact assessment that operationalizes gender equality in relation to national economic goals.

-Scale up financial support. A large-scale issuance of Special Drawing Rights would effectively create new financial assets to tackle the crisis.

-Stop the ability of vulture funds to be able to litigate against governments to recover money during this crisis.

-Research and advocate for care workers, analyzing the ways that private profit has been made at the expense of care workers.

3. Social Protection: Towards a More Gendered Framework

One of the key pathways to achieving caring economies and guaranteeing the fulfillment of social and economic rights, in particular in the context of COVID-19 recovery, is to bring back attention to social protection programs and policies. The process of shifting to an economy that centers care and women's dignity in order to achieve substantive equality requires national programs and policies that care for society as a collective. To achieve this, the macroeconomic shifts that are necessary at every level rely on these social protections systems that, if implemented correctly, are an ideal model to care for all via mechanisms of risk-pooling and redistribution between different social groups. Social protection involves two types of interventions: social insurance and social assistance, both of which include the management of social wellbeing and improvement of living standards. In general "it encompasses policies that protect people from the adverse consequences of illness, disability, maternity and old age; market-risks such as unemployment and price volatilities; and economic crises and natural disasters."⁷² In addition, social protection measures need to account for structural disadvantages, particularly in developing countries where the need for strategies that alleviate situations of precarity in the form of social assistance is as pivotal as social security.

Social protection as an institutional government pathway to care for all is pivotal in the context of the COVID-19 crisis where women's livelihood and wellbeing are experiencing unprecedented forms of vulnerability and risk due to the absence of social protection. Women's participation in unpaid care work, the informal economy, and the increasing amount of paid working hour losses the pandemic has cost them are amongst many gendered impacts that further the social and economic vulnerabilities that require responsible government intervention for the fulfillment of basic rights. In addition, the majority of the so-called frontline workers are marginalized women in their countries. The heightened risk to their wellbeing as workers in the healthcare sector and other sectors of paid care work has not been adequately addressed by social protection measures.

The COVID-19 crisis has struck a world where systems of social protection are scarce, inaccessible and/or insufficient, and based on stigma and stereotypical assumptions linked to gender and poverty. In an ideal picture, social protection measures are supposed to be a mechanism of solidarity, risk-sharing, and redistribution, but the reality is very different. Today around 55% of the world's population has no social protection at all and only 31% has comprehensive social protection.⁷³ Furthermore, if we look at the gender gaps in regard to social protection, the differences are even more pronounced in particular regions of the Global South.⁷⁴ It is clear we need to start understanding social protection systems as a mechanism for solidarity and interdependence that work towards leveling structures of disadvantage.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis many people have lost their formal sector jobs and others in the informal sector have no recourse to any kind of social protection. Women are often pushed into informal jobs with precarious employment status with little to no social insurance benefits such as paid maternity leave or pensions. One other factor in terms of social protection and women's role in unpaid care work is that they are likely to have lower social security contributions than men, due to lower wages and "interrupted" work histories as a result of child-rearing or other unpaid care work which interferes with the right to social security as recognized in international law.^{75/6} Further, unpaid care work can be arduous, stressful, emotionally difficult, and even dangerous and many women with heavy unpaid care workloads are not be able to access health care due to lack of time or money.⁷⁷

Macroeconomic and social policies are crucial instruments guiding the achievement of women's empowerment and gender equality. Macroeconomic policies affect men and women differently and not all women are impacted in the same way. Male biased policies can perpetuate limits on women's ability to gain decent employment. Social protection policies play an important role in opening women's

access to labor markets, addressing economic risks faced by working families, and helping poor households meet basic needs.⁷⁸ A caring economy is based on access to available wages and on protection mechanisms that will complement labor market policies and aim to address all workers' living standards and protection.⁷⁹ Further, a social protection model relies heavily on the responsibilities that the state owes to its citizens as well as on the efforts made by civil society, grassroots activist organizations, and labor unions working together to demand accessible and equitable social protection mechanisms. Thus, it is often that social protection policies are achieved thanks to “bottom up” efforts that demand changes based on human rights, social justice, and gender equality. In the context of COVID-19 recovery, the need for a strong social protection system that centers the value of care work, the wellbeing of all, and that works against women's systemic disadvantage, must be brought to the table to demand that states expand their social protection systems. This is necessary even more so in Global South countries, where processes of privatization and Public Private Partnerships have left governments with very few social protection responsibilities.

The rules that determine access to the social commons, defined as for society by society, which concern social resources such as, for example, health, education, labor, etc. and focus on their collective dimension, have been highly gendered from their very inception.⁸⁰ It is known that within contributory systems formal sector jobs have been privileged over informal or so-called “non-standard work.” Paid work has been completely privileged over unpaid, particularly unpaid care work. In the current COVID-19 crisis, in terms of job losses, all predictions point to women's participation in the labor force suffering severely, particularly the participation of young and older women.⁸¹ There have been extreme losses in jobs that were already poor-quality jobs, mostly in global supply chains, where the workforce in informal jobs is largely female. Many of the women who held these jobs had nothing to fall back on in terms of social protection. It is important to expand and extend safety nets to informal economy workers and, more importantly, go beyond only providing a safety net to providing a universal social protection program. At this critical moment it is important to bring the attention of policy leaders and international trade union movements to the gendered nature of social protection. What is needed to ensure that those systems are designed in a way that is equitable, that is fair, that meets the needs of all workers, particularly the ones that are placed, in the most vulnerable situations.

The absence of decent conditions of work in the informal sector combined with the denial of social and legal protection contributes to the increased vulnerability of informal women workers to GBV by private and state actors. For example, some of the most vulnerable workers include domestic workers who are employed in private homes, street vendors who use public spaces as their place of work, waste-pickers who are heavily stigmatized for their association with discarded items, and sex workers who are targeted for violence through the application of criminal laws.⁸² Many of these workers face specific risks to their sexual and reproductive health as a consequence of their exposure to violence, hazardous conditions of work, and their lack of timely and affordable access to reproductive health care services as well as clean water and sanitation facilities. Agricultural workers and waste-pickers face routine exposure to hazardous substances that are harmful to women during pregnancy while the physical requirements of the jobs of street vendors and transportation workers can induce harmful reproductive health outcomes including miscarriage and stillbirth.⁸³ These types of outcomes, which are very specific to women workers, are yet to be extensively documented and examined with an eye to shaping policy and the allocation of resources.

3.1 Policy Recommendations

- Re-center the importance of public social services as a guarantor of social and economic rights for all.
- Close the existing glaring gaps in social protection which should be protected as a basic right and not regarded as charity or a handout. It is key to have long-term investments in social protection systems that reach all women and girls which in turn are essential to economic recovery and future resilience.⁸⁴ Remove the stigma and stereotypical assumptions linked to those who avail themselves of these protections.
- Expand the social protection floor beyond maternity protection to make it more gender-responsive and inclusive and specifically include access to a full range of sexual and reproductive health goods, information and services for women workers.
- Guarantee access to quality health care by mobilizing additional public funds to boost budgets as part of the emergency response while safeguarding and extending the coverage of social health protection mechanisms during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.⁸⁵
- Concentrate government's investments in social protection both on labor supply and employment generation.
- Increase public investment in good quality universal free public services, including decent conditions of employment in the care sector.
- End precarity and recognize the true value of care work as social protection. Guarantee proper resources for care workers, including decent wages and dignified terms and conditions of work, including for teachers and other public workers.
- Ensure the provision of unemployment insurance that cares for people's well-being while out of the labor market and combine with efforts to put policies and measures in place to get individuals back into the labor market.
- Make public funding and the resources available for civil society organizations, especially feminist and women's rights organizations, working in local communities in order to enhance their leadership and participation in policy discussions and to sustain "bottom-up" movements geared toward human rights, social justice and gender-equality.

4. Paid Labor: A Gender-Responsive Employment Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered an unprecedented economic crisis shocking both the supply and demand side in different paid employment arenas. The need for paid jobs generation is pivotal now more than in any previous crisis. A demand shock is the sudden unexpected event that dramatically decreases demand for a product or service and, in this instance, it is accompanied by a supply shock which is a sudden change in the supply of a product or service that causes an observable economic effect.⁸⁶ The combination of both is very unique, making it very difficult to attempt to replicate economic policy alternatives from the past where both demand and supply side shock were not simultaneous.

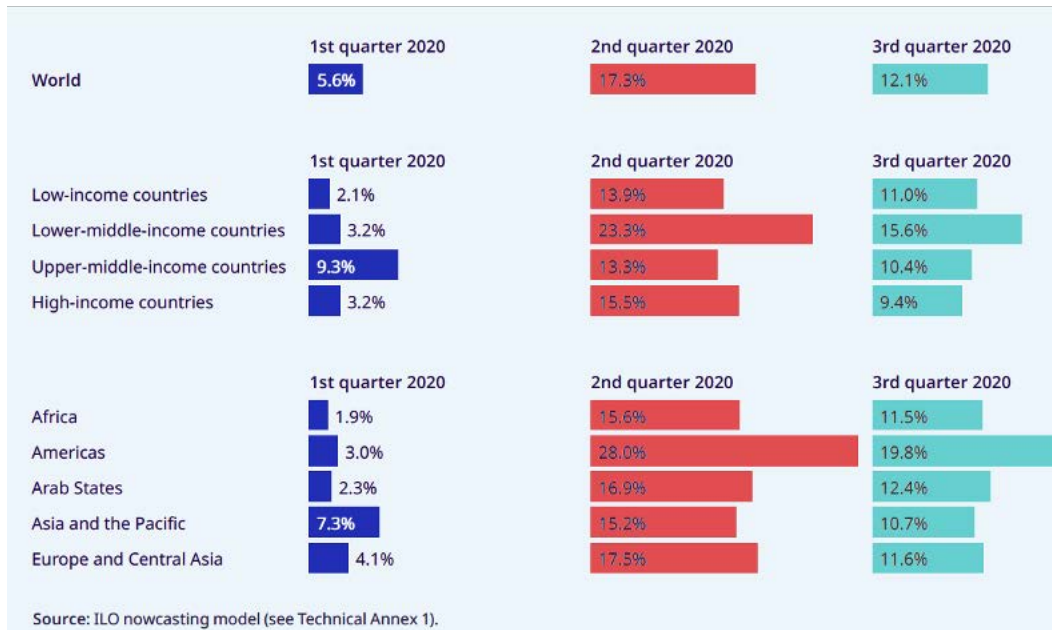
As reported by UN Women, the ILO estimates that the COVID-19 pandemic could cost between five to 25 million in paid employment,⁸⁷ with the risk of a disproportionate impact on women who work in hard-hit service industries such as childcare, retail, hospitality, and tourism. Many women who have paid employment are being pushed out because of the lockdown and increased child and elder care responsibilities. Occupations and industries with higher shares of paid women workers have lost more jobs. In the US in 2020, more than 3 million women left the paid labor force. This means that they will not be counted as unemployed. Essentially, the pandemic has shrunk the labor force and might permanently reduce the share of employment for women in the long run.⁸⁸

It is clear that this crisis has disproportionately impacted women and it is exacerbating existing gender inequality. Before the onset of the crisis, a large number of women were left out from the paid labor market and their participation was lower than men, with one of the main reasons for this still being women's larger care responsibilities and unpaid care work in comparison to men. There are also gender inequalities among those who are employed, with a strong pattern of sectoral sexual segregation. In addition, female segregated sectors are typically those with worse working conditions associated with structural transformation processes that do not support the improvement of women's position in the paid labor market. The informal economy accounts for a large share of women's labor and jobs which is generally lacking labor rights and social protection, including health care, sick leave, and unemployment benefits. The ILO has calculated that three quarters of all unpaid care work was provided by women before the crisis.⁸⁹ Feminist economists in countries like India, where the majority of informal workers are women, are already predicting that as a consequence of the current economic shocks, women will be "pushed out of the paid workforce for good and will not get a second chance."⁹⁰ In contrast, while men will also face a push many are expected to be able to reinvent their careers by pursuing other opportunities.

Data from 2020 confirm that paid working-hour losses are reflected in higher levels of unemployment and labor market inactivity, with inactivity increasing to a greater extent than unemployment.⁹¹ Rising labor market inactivity in the paid labor force is a notable feature of the current job crisis and calls for strong policy attention. The decline in paid employment numbers has generally been greater for women than for men. These high paid working-hour losses have translated into substantial losses in labor income. Estimates of labor income losses suggest a global decline of 10.7% during the first three quarters of 2020 (compared with the corresponding period in 2019) which amounts to 3.5 trillion USD, or 5.5% of global GDP for the first three quarters of 2019. Labor income losses are highest in middle-income countries, reaching 15.1% in lower-middle-income countries and 11.4% in upper-middle-income countries.⁹² By contrast, workers in high-income countries experienced a labor income loss of 9.0%. Moreover, drops in income in these countries are more frequently offset by income replacement schemes. Across geographical regions, income losses are highest in the Americas, followed by Africa.⁹³

Workers in developing and emerging economies, especially those in informal employment, have been affected to a much greater extent than in past crises. In a number of these countries the losses of paid working hours are substantially higher than in the most severely affected advanced economies. In developing economies, there are more limited opportunities for teleworking and the impact of the crisis on informal workers is greater, as there is a more limited role played by public sector.⁹⁴

Figure 1. Paid Working Hour losses, world and by region and income group, first, second and third quarters of 2020 (percentage)



Source: ILO, 6th ILO Monitor

The crisis has strongly impacted paid working hours, especially in middle income countries, but also in regions of the Americas. There has been a reduction in labor income in the second quarter, with a massive decline around the world in the tune of around 10.7% or 3.5 trillions US dollars. There has been a decline in paid working hours and employment in all countries, but the vast majority of the decline is for women. Some of these declines are astronomical: over 20% in a number of countries in the Americas in a one year period. These declines are far worse than during other crises including the global financial crisis. ⁹⁵

“Women are not only hit by the loss of jobs but also by expenditure cuts that contract public service provision, in particular care services, reproductive health care, and services that provide shelters for people dealing with domestic violence. In this context, employment policies, including macroeconomic, sectoral, and labor market policies, must put gender equality at the core of the emergency and recovery efforts to avoid long-term damages to women’s job prospects and to build back better and fairer. The main four policy priorities for a gender-responsive recovery identified by the ILO are: prevent women from losing their jobs; avoid premature fiscal consolidation; invest in care; and focus on gender-responsive employment policies.”⁹⁶

⁹⁷Women are the vast majority of frontline workers and this puts them at higher risk of contagion. The ILO has calculated that women are about 70% of health and social workers and they are the ones that have continued to work in dire circumstances, including in education and retail. Gender inequality in unpaid care work has been further exacerbated because the crisis has increased the care demands within households due to lockdowns, even if in some households men undertook more unpaid care work than their previous workload. As the few time-use surveys have shown, a disproportionate amount of care is still being done by women. ⁹⁸

According to the ILO, “It is well established that gender inequality is more prevalent in the informal economy, where women are concentrated in the lower end and earn significantly less than men.”⁹⁹ Decades of neoliberal macro-economic policies have “funneled and segregated women into low wage

and low status job markets.”¹⁰⁰ Trade policy has been a major driver of precarious work, combined with the failure of governments and international institutions to adequately regulate the private sector.¹⁰¹ Migration and displacement caused by conflict, natural disasters, climate-related events, and economic factors has landed many women in precarious paid work. The vast majority (92%) of women who are employed in developing countries work in the informal economy.¹⁰² Informality exists globally and there are pockets of informality within the formal sector too which are predictably feminized.

There are a large number of ILO conventions and recommendations which call for better terms of work and labor rights for women which only if ratified and implemented through national laws and policies could be transformative. ILO C189 on domestic workers¹⁰³ and ILO C177 concerning home-based workers¹⁰⁴ should be drawn to the attention of policy makers as workplace realities have shifted under COVID-19 with many more women now using their private space for work. ILO R204 calls specifically for and provides guidance on a transition to the formal economy which should be prioritized as a way to expand social and legal protection for women workers. ILO C156 on Workers and Family Responsibilities Convention recognizes that the issues faced by workers with family responsibilities are “aspects of wider issues regarding the family and society which should be taken into account in national policies,”¹⁰⁵ and was most recently ratified by Costa Rica in 2019 based on which other states may be encouraged to adopt a similar approach and open up new opportunities for policy dialogue.

History was made in 2019 with the adoption of the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) which is the first international instrument dedicated to ending GBV and harassment in the world of work. It establishes the right of every worker to freedom from violence and harassment in the world of work, recognizing both as a human rights violation. Some of the outstanding features of C190 are the definition of workers which is highly inclusive and the definition of world of work which goes far beyond the traditional and narrow definition of a workplace to encompass private spaces used for work and includes public spaces such as, for example, public transportation and channels used for work-related communication. These provisions can be used to develop new laws and policies that address the widely neglected needs of millions of informal women workers including pervasive violence in public spaces used for work and online violence.¹⁰⁶ As noted in the preamble of C190, this convention must be read along with core international human rights treaties which contain extensive provisions defining the right of workers and obligations of states, including over private actors, to prevent and address GBV, ensure better reproductive health outcomes, and formally recognize women’s disproportionate burden of care responsibilities. Further, C190 is accompanied by Recommendation 206 (R206) which provides guidance for its implementation and prescribes actions that can be taken employers to prevent and address GBV in the world of work such as: ensuring that all workers and employees enjoy freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining; ensure that workers and their representatives take part in the design, implementation and monitoring of the policies related to violence and discrimination prevention; consider factors that can increase the likelihood of experiencing violence and harassment in the construction of risk assessment tools; include and consider migrant workers protection independent of migration status, and extend these protection to informal worker and other marginalized and more vulnerable groups.

The International Financial Corporation (IFC) issued a report on GBV to prevent violence at work in the context of COVID-19, arguing that gender-based violence generally increases during public health crisis due to a number of social and infrastructural factors that increase the risk of experiencing violence. In addition, experiencing gender-based violence in the context of an already difficult public health emergency, social constraint, and economic austerity can have aggravating consequences for the people affected by violence, their families, and communities, as well as for their safety, economic security, housing, psychological wellbeing, and physical health.¹⁰⁷ A crisis situation can have multiple negative

effects on employees' productivity, absenteeism, and engagement, amongst others. All in all, the risks of gender-based violence in the workplace increase in the form of client-customer aggression, workplace bullying, workplace sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and abuse connected to the workplace and domestic violence. In general, the IFC recommends that employers strengthen existing guidelines on workplace harassment that consider the particular vulnerabilities of certain groups, implement communication and organizational strategies with employees to address the generalized increased levels of stress and crisis and promote wellbeing in the workplace.¹⁰⁸

4.1 Policy Recommendations

- Governments must ratify ILO C190 as well as other important conventions including those in relation to domestic workers, home-based workers and workers and family responsibilities, and take guidance from ILO recommendations including R206 concerning violence and harassment in the world of work and R204 which offers guidance on a transition to the formal economy.

- Create flexible working regimes to accommodate paid and unpaid work

- Address gender inequality in the labor market such as occupational segregation, gender pay gaps, inadequate parental leave policies, greater precarity, and inadequate access to affordable childcare.¹⁰⁹

- Prevent women from losing their jobs by maintaining women's attachment to the labor force and establish mechanisms for women to re-enter employment as early as possible through fiscal stimulus packages, employment retention benefits, and public employment services.

- In the context of the extra stresses of the pandemic, institute the regulation of work-life balance, mainly through increased paid leave and the flexibilization of work systems, as well as the reduction of full-time hours.

- Address issues of occupational segregation in regard to investment in the green economy, new energy technologies, transport, and energy efficient housing, reinforcing the need for women's involvement in these professional areas. Promote specific policies that offer training for women to enter male-dominated sectors.

- Use employment insurance to pay for retraining and professional development across sectors for those who have experienced job loss.¹¹⁰

- For people who are not eligible for employment insurance, create other pathways to financially support re-skilling and re-training, with greater incentives for workers in care-economy based sectors such as childcare and elder care.

- Create minimum set-asides in public procurement spending for businesses led by women, racialized people, and other equity-seeking groups.

- Provide direct funding to businesses in women-majority sectors as women-led businesses tend to be in hard-hit sectors such as caregiving and social enterprises.¹¹¹

- Transform the world of paid and unpaid work to provide not just more jobs, but better jobs.¹¹² These jobs would enable women and men to share paid and unpaid work equally. They would provide a secure and living income; be environmentally sustainable; and be free from gender stereotypes and discrimination.¹¹³

Annex

Experts consulted

Diane Elson *Feminist Economist*

Diane is Emeritus Professor in sociology at the University of Essex, UK, and is a member of the Essex Human Rights Centre. She has served as adviser to UNIFEM, UNDP, Oxfam and other development agencies and is a past vice-president of the International Association for Feminist Economics. She is the chair of the UK women's organization, the Women's Budget Group, which analyses government economic policy and advocates for budgets that support gender equality and low-income women. She publishes widely on gender and development. Her recent publications include: 'Economic Policy and Human Rights: Holding Governments to Account', co-edited with Radhika Balakrishnan, Zed Books, 2011; 'Financial regulation, capabilities and human rights in the US financial crisis: the case of housing', co-authored with Radhika Balakrishnan and James Heintz.



Sandra Fredman *Professor of the Laws of the British Commonwealth and the USA at Oxford University.*

Sandra Fredman is Professor of the Laws of the British Commonwealth and the USA at Oxford University, and a professorial fellow at Pembroke College, Oxford. She was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2005 and became a QC (honoris causa) in 2012. She has written and published widely on anti-discrimination law, human rights law and labour law, including numerous peer-reviewed articles. She has authored four monographs: *Comparative Human Rights* (OUP, 2018); *Human Rights Transformed* (OUP 2008); *Discrimination Law* (2nd ed, OUP 2011); and *Women and the Law* (OUP 1997), amongst others.

Paul Hunt *Chief Commissioner, NZ Human Rights Commission.*

Paul Hunt has vast human rights experience encompassing civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. He has worked with organizations such as the United Nations, including the World Health Organization, addressing issues such as health and improving economic, social, and cultural rights. Mr. Hunt has served on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1999-2002) and as a Special Rapporteur to the UN Human Rights Council (2002-2008). Paul Hunt began his role as Chief Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission in January 2019.



Ipek Ilkcaracan *Professor of economics at Istanbul Technical University (ITU), Faculty of Management, and associate director of the ITU Women's Studies Center.*

Ipek Ilkcaracan is professor of economics at Istanbul Technical University and a Faculty of Management, and associate director of the ITU Women's Studies Center. Her research areas include the macroeconomics of unemployment and wages, labor market inequalities, work-life balance policies, time use, the care economy, and sustainable growth. Ilkcaracan serves as an associate editor of *Feminist Economics*, an SSCI journal, and is an elected board member of the Middle Eastern Economics Association and the International Association for Feminist Economics. She acts as the country expert on Turkey in the European Network of Experts on Gender Equality, reporting to the European Commission on a

quarterly basis; and serves on a five-member advisory board for the UNDP Human Development Report on Turkey on Inclusive Growth.

Chidi King *Director of the Equality Department at the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).*

Chidi is the Director of the Equality Department at the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the umbrella organization for trade union national centers worldwide. Chidi has also worked on equality, employment rights and civil liberties issues with the UK Trade Union Congress, as the equality and rights officer with the Global Union Federation Public Services International, and as the senior lawyer with the UK public interest disclosure charity Public Concern at Work.



Sepali Kottegoda *Director Programmes, Women's Economic Rights and Media at Women and Media Collective.*

She is the Executive Director of the Women and Media Collective and Chair of Asia Pacific Women's Watch. She was a Senior Visiting Lecturer in Women's Studies Colombo University. She has worked as an expert on the Sri Lanka National Committee on Women; National Plan of Action on Human Rights; National Plan of Action for Women, National Plan for Overseas Labour Migration.



Yamini Mishra *Director of the Gender, Sexuality and Identity Programme at Amnesty International.*

Yamini Mishra works with Amnesty International, International Secretariat, as the Director of the Global Issues Programme, providing leadership and vision to the world's largest human rights movement in four areas of work: (1) Gender, Sexuality and Identity; (2) Economic and Social Justice; (3) Business, Security and Human Rights; and (4) Refugees and Migrant Rights. Prior to this she was the Regional Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Specialist for the Regional Office for Asia Pacific for UN Women. In her role, she served as a Policy Specialist, providing technical support on GRB to various stakeholders in Asia Pacific.

Abena D. *Director of the Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) and Associate Professor in the Department of Economics, University of Ghana.*

Abena D. Oduro is the Director of the Centre for Social Policy Studies and Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Ghana, Legon. She holds an MLitt in Economics from the University of Glasgow in Scotland. Her main areas of research are poverty analysis, gender and assets, international trade policy, WTO issues and economics of education. She is currently the principal investigator on a research project funded by the Swiss Programme for Research on Global Issues for Development (r4d programme) that is investigating the employment effects of different development policy instruments and a research project funded by World Vision Ghana on child marriage in Ghana. She is one of the guest editors of the Feminist Economics special issue (2014) on Engendering Economic Policy in Africa.





Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky *Human Rights Expert, former Independent Expert on Foreign Debt, UN.*

Mr. Juan Pablo Bohoslavsky was appointed as Independent Expert on Foreign Debt and Human Rights by the Human Rights Council on 8 May 2014 and assumed his functions on 2 June 2014. He held this position until 30th April 2020. He obtained a law degree (National University of Comahue, Patagonia, Argentina), an LL.M. in Corporate Law (Austral University, Buenos Aires, Argentina) and a European Doctorate in Law (University of Salamanca, Spain). He was Hauser Global Fellow (New York University, USA) and postdoctoral researcher at the Max Planck for Comparative Public Law and International Law (Heidelberg, Germany).

Shahra Razavi *Director of the Social Protection Department, ILO.*

Shahra Razavi is the director of the Social protection Department at the ILO. Shahra specializes in the gender dimensions of social development, with a particular focus on livelihoods and social policies. She began her collaboration with UNRISD when she joined the Institute to work on a new research initiative to explore the gender dimensions of economic policy, leading the

Institute’s subsequent research projects on gender, including Gender, Poverty and Well-Being; Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights; Globalization, Export-Oriented Employment for Women and Social Policy; and work on Gender Justice, Development and Rights. Her most recent research projects have been on The Political and Social Economy of Care, and Religion, Politics and Gender Equality.



Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona *Executive Director, The Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights.*

Magdalena Sepúlveda is a human rights lawyer with vast experience on economic, social and cultural rights. In her 20-year career, Magdalena has focused on the intersection of poverty, development and human rights and has bridged research and policy formulation. She has worked as a researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, as a staff attorney at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, as the Co-Director of the Department of International Law and Human Rights of the United Nations-mandated University for Peace in Costa Rica and as a Research Director at the International Council on Human Rights Policy. From 2008 to 2014 she was the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme

Poverty and Human Rights.

Annex contd.

CWGL Team

Radhika Balakrishnan *PhD. Faculty Director, CWGL.*

Professor Radhika Balakrishnan's work focuses on gender and development, gender and the global economy, human rights and economic and social rights. Her research and advocacy work has sought to change the lens through which macro-economic policy is interpreted and critiqued by applying international human rights norms to assess macro-economic policy.

Radhika is the faculty director at the Center for Women's Global Leadership and professor in Women's and Gender and Sexuality Studies at Rutgers University. She has a Ph.D. in Economics from Rutgers University. She is a Commissioner for the Commission for Gender Equity for the City of New York, on the Global Advisory Council for the United Nations Population Fund and the current president of the International Association for Feminist Economics. Radhika is the co-author of *Rethinking Economic Policy for Social Justice: The radical potential of human rights* with James Heintz and Diane Elson (Routledge, 2016). She is the co-editor with Diane Elson of *Economic Policy and Human Rights: Holding Governments to Account* (Zed Books, 2011).



Krishanti Dharmaraj *Executive Director, CWGL.*

Krishanti Dharmaraj is a feminist and human rights activist with over 25 years of experience working to advance the rights of women and girls. She is the founder of the Dignity Index, a human rights measurement tool utilized to ensure equity and inclusion to reduce identity-based discrimination. Previously, Ms. Dharmaraj was the Western Regional Spokesperson for Amnesty International USA. She is also the co-founder of WILD for Human Rights (Women's Institute for Leadership Development) and the Sri Lanka Children's Fund.

Ms. Dharmaraj serves on the Steering Committee for the Feminist Alliance for Rights and the Board of Directors of IDEX; is a member of the Spotlight Civil Society Global Reference Group; a Trustee of THIRST (The International Roundtable for Sustainable Tea) and the North East Women's Network in Sri Lanka; and is on the Advisory Boards of Amnesty International, the Human Rights Project of the Urban Justice Center, South Asia Democracy Watch, and Machik (an organization enhancing the wellbeing of those living in Tibet). She has also served on the Board of Directors of Amnesty International; Women, Law and Development; Horizons Foundation; and the Center for Asian Pacific Women.

Melissa Upreti *Senior Director, Program and Global Advocacy, CWGL.*

Melissa Upreti is a human rights lawyer and women's rights advocate who has spent nearly two decades advocating for the recognition and fulfillment of women's rights through the use of national, regional, and international law and mechanisms. She has led fact-finding missions, undertaken strategic litigation, built the capacity of civil society organizations and provided technical support for law reform to governments in Asia.



Ms. Upreti started her career working for a feminist legal advocacy organization and The Asia Foundation in Nepal. Upon receiving her LL.M. from Columbia Law School in the United States, she actively facilitated and participated in the first CEDAW Special Inquiry in Asia in 2012 and was co-petitioner in the landmark case, *Lakshmi Dhikta v. Nepal*, which recognized access to abortion as a constitutionally protected right. Ms. Upreti has written and lectured extensively about women's reproductive rights and the importance of legal accountability. Her articles and other publications on women's reproductive rights and discriminatory practices such as child marriage have been used by activists to develop legal strategies and in courses on human rights. She serves as a Vice-Chair of the United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.



Camila Belliard *WGSS PhD Candidate and Instructor, Research Assistant CWGL.*

Camila is a Social Anthropologist, feminist and antiracist activist and social researcher. Her professional experience has been focused in gender, race, and migration studies in Chile and the Dominican Republic. Her anthropology thesis researched the intersections of gender, sexuality and race in the experience of black Caribbean migrants in Chile, this work substantively contributed to the study of processes of sexism and racialization within the black migrant community. In the Dominican Republic, her work focused on development, teaching and research, around gender-based violence, gender education and training in consultancy with

universities like INTEC and UNIBE, and international cooperation agencies. Moreover, she directed two different research projects that focused on migration, sexual trafficking at OBMICA and Dominican-Haitian marginalized community, one in relation to cultural heritage recovery with MUDHA-AECID and experience of gendered based violence with IDAC. She has continued her work with gendered and racial violence and precarity experienced by Dominican-Haitian and black women and femmes in the DR and pathways to coping with them through a human rights perspective of resilience, wellbeing and mental health.

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About CWGL

Contact us!

With feminist values, CWGL strengthens and bridges voices for human rights towards social justice and self-determination. Working at the intersection of gender, human rights and economic policy, CWGL utilizes an intersectional approach in the design and implementation of its strategies. For nearly 30 years, CWGL has been at the forefront of global feminist organizing and movement-building with signature programs focusing on organizing and partnering with grassroots and grass-top leaders, facilitating movement-building capacity and activities, and framing and conducting strategic research and advocacy to gain greater attention to women's human rights, broadly understood, in the international realm. It has cultivated strong partnerships with women's rights and social justice organizations and unions, including domestic worker alliances, worldwide, with work ranging from hosting conversations and planning meetings for strategic initiatives focused on UN processes, to shaping new concepts and strategies related to GBV and developing analyses on issues related to macroeconomics and human rights. CWGL prioritizes working with locally-grounded organizations to challenge the status-quo and to this end operates under a strategy that includes: convening those closest to the struggle to explore and exchange ideas and solutions; conducting research with an action-oriented lens and guided by partners and constituencies around the world; and advocating with and for those traditionally excluded from decision-making at the local, national and international levels.

In 1991 CWGL founded, and continues to coordinate, the Global 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence Campaign that has been used by more than 6000 organizations in over 185 countries. In 2018 the 16 Days Campaign launched a new digital platform to serve as an unparalleled year-round resource for women's human rights advocates to share information and strategies across national boundaries and sectors. In 2015, the CWGL helped found the Feminist Alliance for Rights (FAR), which it coordinates with the programmatic oversight of an international steering committee comprised of feminist experts from different regions. FAR's mission is to promote feminist values; strengthen feminist movement building; challenge systems of oppression; eliminate discrimination; and advance women's human rights and gender equality. The Journalism Initiative on Gender-Based Violence (JiG), was launched by CWGL in 2018, to strengthen the engagement and capacity of journalists and news media practitioners in reporting on GBV globally.

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