

Global Solutions Summit 2020

Gender Economic Equity and the SDG 2030 Agenda: Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Call to Action – the Voices of Women

Toyin Abiodin; Barbara Orser, PhD; Merike Blofield, PhD; Mayra Buvinic, PhD; Kustisha Ebron; Margo Thomas PhD.

CONTEXT

“The year 2020 ... was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality. Instead, with the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems....”

United Nations Policy Brief: Impact of Covid-19 on Women, April 2020

Globally, with the myriad of gender-based issues plaguing regions and countries such as – child marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), migrant and domestic workers discrimination, skills gaps, pay gaps, financial exclusion - women are more vulnerable and expected to bear the heaviest brunt of the ravaging economic shocks and effects of COVID-19 - tumbling employment prospects prompting layoffs, cut wages due to lacking social safety nets.

The ability of countries and communities to bounce back from this crisis is dependent on response and recovery policies and initiatives that are inclusive and targeted. Responses to the pandemic should not be gender blind, otherwise, based on evidence and experience from past pandemics and economic shocks, women will end up bearing a disproportionate share of the social and economic costs and risks. If more women and disadvantaged groups are actively engaged in shaping the COVID-19 response and recovery, this representative and responsive approach will benefit all and more likely result in greater resiliency against future shocks

Policy making is crucial. Smart and effective policy making requires an inclusive and evidence-based approach that includes inputs from, active participation by, and consultation with key stakeholders.¹ It should be underpinned by cooperative and collective actions from civil society, private and public agents as well as regional, international and global communities. The time to work together in solidarity has never been more urgently needed. Larger economies should avoid strong-arming policies that leave smaller economies marginalised. Women and under-represented groups must be included in COVID-19 response and recovery policy making, implementation and accountability.

¹ Thomas, M. et al, 2018. Gender Mainstreaming: A strategic approach. Global Solutions Journal, pp. 155-174. https://www.global-solutions-initiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GlobalSolutionsJournal_2_E-Reader.pdf

The future belongs to governments, communities, stakeholders and policy actors who will not only adapt, re-imagine and restructure across priority sectors and tailor economic/fiscal stimulus to mitigate the socioeconomic ramifications of the COVID-19 impact on women and men hardest hit but will also act with urgency and drive the identified needed changes at scale. It will serve governments across the globe commitment to taking targeted actions to address the needs of women and girls given their critical social, economic and political roles. Drawing on the panel discussion and inputs of the audience, we have issued the following call to action summarized in the table below.

Call to Action emanating from the panel discussion and subsequent inputs from the audience

Near-term Actions	Mid-term Actions	Long-term Actions
<p>Emergency recovery initiatives, including funds and bailouts, should be tailored to provide targeted support to women-owned enterprises in the formal and informal sectors.</p> <p>Critical and urgent support measures include: access to cash transfers; low interest rate loans; incentives; and Economic SME Resilience Funds</p>	<p>Invest in well run financial systems and institutions that support and broaden access for women.</p> <p>Facilitate access to tax credits, financial markets, loan deferrals, and equity financing</p> <p>Facilitate access to government procurement, value and supply chains, and trade</p> <p>Create incentives for women to be plugged into the value and supply chains of multinationals across local, regional, continental and global spaces</p>	<p>Collect sex-disaggregated health, economic, social and financial data. For example: employment formal & informal workforce; worker rights & protections; segregation in the workplace; remuneration, GBV, mortality & health, access to care</p>
<p>Other emergency support measures in response to COVID-19 should go beyond workers who hold formal employment but should include informal, migrant part-time, domestic and seasonal workers, most of whom are women</p>	<p>Target discriminatory gender norms through progressive government policies and by: engaging community and cultural icons; clarifying the interpretation and implementation of legal requirements; enforcement of legal protections; advocating for practices that underscore new models of household shared responsibilities</p>	<p>Tracing and measuring the primary and secondary effects of the pandemic e.g., the effects of pandemics on maternal health, and domestic GBV, mortality & health, access to care</p>
<p>COVID-19 testing for women through increased access to affordable care systems particularly for women-headed households</p>	<p>Design social protection schemes to lift women care burden - more time for better paid jobs, access to flexible work arrangements should continue beyond the pandemic, insurance for temporary workers in petty trading, wage subsidies etc</p>	<p>Targeted recovery paths for new and existing women owned businesses in the formal and informal sectors For example: skills training; support for micro-enterprises; micro-credit and small business loans</p>

<p>Re-opening schools – consider optimising distance learning tools and making access to ICT enabling systems/tools affordable for children and mothers for home schooling</p>	<p>Through well-crafted policies, transparent and a simplification of public procurement processes prioritise women’s access to government opportunities.</p>	<p>Design tailored social solutions for women and girls to acquire assets, financial literacy skills to change the unbanked narrative</p>
<p>Close literacy gaps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design national innovative ICT programmes to facilitate women’s skills upgrade to shift from risky, temporary and informal jobs to more stable, better-protected employment 2. Drive PPPs investments into platforms to educate them about e-commerce/digital spaces that will increasingly become the new marketplaces for goods and services. 	<p>Through gender-responsive trade policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen cross border trade facilitation and customs clearance processes 2. Open new opportunities for women as employers and entrepreneurs to contribute to more provision of jobs with formal guarantees and safety nets 3. Prioritise improving the capacity of women owned businesses to export 	<p>Commission studies to glean insights on the overall effect of COVID-19 on women and girls to understand the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deepening pre-existing inequalities for women across social, economic and political strata 2. The true disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on women and girls
<p>Drive investments in technology, bandwidth and equipment for affordability/accessibility through PPPs that creates avenues for women in rural/semi-urban places</p>	<p>Institute public and private sector frameworks to trace, measure and attribute women’s contributions to economic growth</p>	<p>Commission studies to understand the impact of school closures on women run households, children’s nutrition, learning gaps and existing pedagogy frameworks</p>
<p>Drive equal representation of women participation across major echelons of political, economic and social spheres of society. Women in leadership roles will serve not only as role models but will help to advance legislations that promotes gender equality and rights.</p>	<p>The reallocation of public funds should avoid any possible increase in the burden of women as principal suppliers of underpaid work. Work through PPPs to provide vocational training centres to upskill and reskill women.</p>	<p>A gender-equal future should be the focus and care should be taken not to reverse the gender equality progress achieved in recent decades. Use policy to effect systemic changes that would protect women from bearing the heaviest brunt of shocks like the Covic-19 pandemic in the future</p>