

# Building back better

## Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

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The Women's Major Group released the 2022 High Level Political Forum Position Paper titled 'Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' with inputs from over 70 Women's Major group members. Including intersectional analysis by feminists and gender equality activists worldwide, the position paper reviews the available data, highlights systemic barriers and presents recommendations for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and building a just recovery and feminist response to the pandemic.

The end of Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals is used as a moment to reflect on the process of rebuilding from COVID-19 by abandoning austerity, competition, and extractivist, exploitative, and patriarchal systems, and replacing them with feminist decolonial ethics of care, equality and abundance. The report includes recommendations for each of the Sustainable

Development Goals as well as cross-cutting recommendations based on a vision of a just and equitable world.

The report recommends a human rights-based and gender transformative approach to the implementation of all aspects of the 2030 Agenda and the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its related crises. Some SDGs relevant to fisheries are summarised below.

*Sustainable Development Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere*

An additional 75 - 95 million people will be living in poverty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and additional crises caused by inflation and the conflict in Ukraine. In all, 388 million women and girls will live in poverty in 2022, but the number could be as high as 446 million in a 'high damage' scenario. Only 13 percent of the social protection and labor market measures enacted by governments during COVID crisis targeted women's economic security and only 11 percent provided support for rising unpaid care demands.

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Recommendations include adequate finance to create comprehensive, gender-transformative social protection systems targeted to the most vulnerable, especially for services needed by women, girls, and gender-diverse people. Remove discrimination against gender-diverse, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people in the design and accessibility of social protection programs.

*Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture*

Women are responsible for half of the world's food production but own less than 20 percent of land worldwide. Women are more likely to report food insecurity than men. COVID-19 has exacerbated the global gender gap in food insecurity from 6 percent in 2019 to 10 percent in 2020.

Though access to nutritious food is a basic human right with significant age, gender, race, caste, and class dimensions, the corporate capture of the food systems and global trade agreements strengthen structural factors such as climate change, inequality, land degradation and land grabbing, and militarism and conflict, to weaken food sovereignty, access to cultural and traditional crops and farming practices, land rights, and, ultimately, increase hunger and malnutrition.

Recommendations on nutrition, agricultural and food systems and land rights have been documented. Establishing and funding gender and age-responsive policies for agroecology, as well as fishery in the coastal regions, including ensuring biodiversity of seeds and plants, and control and ownership of land, water, and other resources.

*Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*

Women's land rights do not have protection through legal frameworks in 46 percent of the countries reporting on the issue. Women make up the majority of workers in the informal sector, where they face exploitation in terms of wages and job security, workplace safety, social protection, gender-based harassment and violence. Globally, women do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work as men while adolescent girls perform significantly more domestic work than boys.

Structural barriers to progress in SDG 5 and gendered dimensions include gender-based violence, harmful cultural practices, lack of sexual and reproductive rights and lack of access to resources. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities that women and girls face due to increased sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), lack of mobility, disruption of social and protective measures, and reduced access to services.

Recommendations include measures to eliminate GBV and harmful practices at the national and sub-national level, including support services for women facing GBV and training for medical, law enforcement and judicial officials. Further, recommendations were also included for sexual and reproductive rights, financing for gender equality, countering anti-gender backlash and access to services and resources which could ensure economic justice for women, including their right to control, own, pass on, and inherit property.

Recommendations also look at remedying women's increased unpaid work load due to the COVID crisis and suggests that governments recognize the critical role of unpaid care and domestic work in sustaining families, communities, and the economy, and highlights the need to make carework a collective responsibility supported by adequate social protection for all unpaid caregivers, in particular parents. The paper also demands that unpaid care and domestic work be reduced through the development of accessible and affordable public infrastructure and services (like water and sanitation, energy, healthcare, transportation, care, etc.). The paper recommends the promotion of redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work between women and men, between families, and the rest of society. Finally, the paper recommends that governments create working conditions in the formal and informal economy that guarantee equal pay and social security, workplace safety, and job security. Ratify and implement ILO Fundamental Conventions, as well as ILO Conventions C177, C189, and C190.

*Sustainable Development Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*

It was noted that partnered women living with children were the most likely to lose their jobs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and saw the largest drop in paid working hours. This reveals the structural barriers are reinforced and strengthened during the COVID crisis and highlighted the need for a more sustainable economy that works for both people and the planet. Trade policies, dispute settlement provisions, unfair tax agreements, as well as tax flight restrict governments' fiscal capacities and reduce the possibility of pro-poor policies that could benefit their populations, especially women and girls. Further, women's unpaid care and domestic work limits their time to pursue education, economic, or leisure opportunities, and impacts on their physical and mental health and well-being. Though domestic workers' reproductive care enables economies to function smoothly, they mostly work without benefits or access to social protection programs. ILO

Convention 189 guarantees domestic workers' rights to minimum wage, rest, and to choose their own residence. However, the Convention is insufficiently ratified and incorporated into domestic law to protect domestic workers.

Recommendations for this SDG include ratification and implementation of ILO Conventions C177, 189 and 190 on Home Work, Domestic Work, and Violence and Harassment in the World of Work at national and sub-national levels. They also recommend that governments incorporate care work as formal work, and expand social protection coverage to care workers.

*Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*

The document has noted that fisheries and aquaculture work is largely informal and workers, especially women, lack access to social protection programs. A 100-150 percent rise in acidity by the end of this century has been projected which will affect half of all marine life. Structural barriers such as high degrees of informal work and high dependence on natural resources enhanced the vulnerability of people engaged in fisheries and aquaculture at all levels (in both pre- and post-harvest fish supply chain) to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Lockdowns of all kinds, travel restrictions and the resultant isolation severely impacted migrant workers, who were therefore unable to work and/or unable to return home, and were hence at high risk of falling into debt, and seeking unsafe means of travel. Though small farmers and artisanal fishers, many of whom are women, employ more sustainable practices, it is the large corporates which follow unsustainable practices that receive favor from government policies in the form of subsidies, tax breaks and so on. Women in fisheries also lack recognition for the paid and unpaid labor they are involved in towards sustaining the fisheries and fishing communities, and hence, they have to demand the right to participate in decision making and access to resources. Women fishers in the Pacific have demanded increased access to financing, capacity building, and technical assistance for women in Small-scale fishing communities, including participation and leadership in the management of Small-scale and artisanal fisheries based on recognition and protection of access rights to marine resources. Finally, within the context of sustainable fisheries management, they have demanded increased access to sustainable and fair-trade markets to improve the socio-economic situation of fishers and fish workers.

The recommendations are aimed at governments at the national and sub-national levels and may be divided into two categories: climate change and participation and leadership.

#### Recommendations on Climate change

- ❖ Address and reduce all maritime sources of Green House Gases (GHG), end fossil fuel subsidies in maritime transport and fisheries that contribute to overfishing, destructive fishing and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, end bottom trawling and other activities disturbing carbon and methane stored in the seafloor, no energy and traffic turn in the north at the expense of marine biodiversity and food security in the south. Stop seabed mining!
- ❖ Exhaust all means available to help fragile marine systems and vulnerable coastal communities to adapt to irreversible climate change.
- ❖ Recognize and compensate for loss of coral reefs and marine biodiversity and the foregone goods and services to associated coastal communities.
- ❖ Raise ambition to keep the global temperature rise this century well below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, slow down the rate of change, and become carbon negative well before 2050 in order to save coral reefs, promote biodiversity integrity and protect and enhance marine sinks and reservoirs.
- ❖ Urgently develop and support actions oriented toward adaptation actions and strategies specifically directed to fisher women and the girls and women whose livelihoods are impacted by climate change and the health of the oceans.
- ❖ Highlight the importance of ecosystem adaptation especially focusing on marine and coastal ecosystems and their importance for livelihoods.

#### Recommendations on Participation and leadership

- ❖ Promote sustainable management of coastal and marine resources and women and girls' participation in the blue economy, climate adaptation, and mitigation strategies.
- ❖ Promote the recognition of local community inputs in all ocean conservation actions and ensure the full and meaningful participation of women and girls in all their diversity.
- ❖ Recognize the specific risks, knowledge, commitment and rights of women, Indigenous Peoples, Small-scale fishers and associated poor communities from coastal areas, especially in tropical and Arctic regions at the frontline of the ocean-climate-biodiversity emergency.

Visit the following link to read and download the full position paper:

<https://womensmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/WMG-HLPF-2021-Sectoral-Position-Paper-Full-1.pdf> 