

Another World is Possible

A Feminist Monitoring & Advocacy

Toolkit for Our Feminist Future



***“She is on her way. On a quiet day,
I can hear her breathing.”***

— Arundhati Roy



Table of Contents

Imagining Feminist Futures	5
<i>This Moment.....</i>	7
<i>Feminist Solidarity for a Collective Response to COVID-19.....</i>	8
<i>The Feminist Response to COVID-19</i>	10
<i>The Toolkit.....</i>	12
<i>Observe & Reflect.....</i>	13
<i>A Feminist Monitoring of Our Own World</i>	14
<i>Learning from Examples of Feminist Repsonse in Practice</i>	22
<i>Feminist recovery policies and plans</i>	26
<i>Plan & Action.....</i>	29
<i>A Feminist Advocacy Guide for Our Own Future.....</i>	30

About the Feminist Response to COVID-19 collective:

We are a collective of feminists organizations and activists, working across global movements centered on human rights, sustainable development, and economic and social justice. And we have come together in a moment of collective organizing to outline key principles for a just and resilient recovery from the ongoing global pandemic, as well as to track responses and uplift collective action of feminists around the world.

feministcovidresponse.com

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Imagining Feminist Futures





This moment...

The current COVID-19 pandemic has further laid bare the structural inequalities and injustices that are deeply embedded in our social, economic and political systems that were built from the exploitation of the world's poor and marginalized, especially women, girls and LGBTQIA+ peoples.

In many ways, the pandemic is unlike any crisis that has been experienced by the world before. It has so far upended economies, changing and disrupting social and mobility patterns and networks, breaking the dichotomy of formal and informal labor and redefining the concept of care work, essential work and who performs it. In many instances, the patriarchal and gendered norms at home, at work and in public spaces are being reinforced, evidenced by everything from the surge of domestic violence to the loss of income and livelihood of women who are often hired in casual, contractual and short-term employment and the increase in women's burden of unpaid care work. It is likely that the economic, health, environmental and social impact of this crisis will be felt for years to come.

Governments and multilateral institutions' responses have varied. While some have moved to strengthen social protection measures and call upon solidarity and cooperation between states, others have failed in delivering their state obligations while announcing more neoliberal policies, privatisation and austerity programs. Many governments have failed in even meeting peoples' basic needs or ensuring transparency, while almost all have increased surveillance, curfews and lockdowns and in many instances these have been accompanied by sweeping and disproportionate measures by the police or military forces. Some government responses are centered around corporate bailout packages instead of those needing it the most, perpetuating the false narrative that corporations will help the world overcome this crisis.

Women and marginalized communities – those that have been most adversely affected by the pandemic and the current crisis – must lead and be part of the decision-making processes in their community and at national, regional and global levels, for policies made to respond to the current crisis and the recovery to come after. This current crisis is a reminder that the feminist movement's decades of critiques and long-fought demands for systemic and structural changes have not been realized. It also reminds us why we cannot return to the same dominant rules — the very same that was considered the “normal” rules that shaped the world in the past and that have failed us in this time of crisis.

We must urgently seize this moment and galvanize our collective feminist power to demand for and shape a new world. Now more than ever, policies, strategies and responses rooted in systemic feminist analysis and feminist principles are needed.

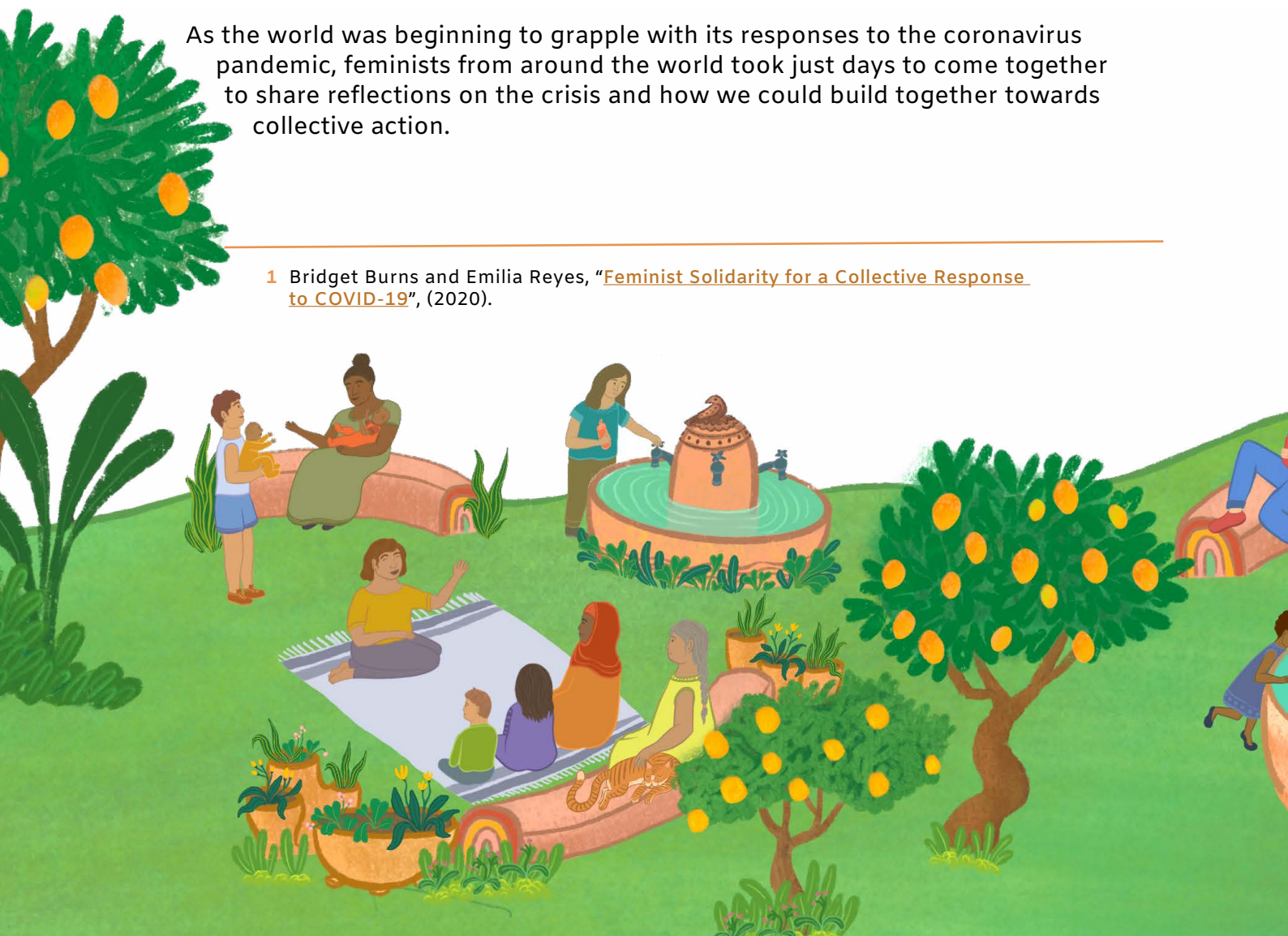
Feminist Solidarity for a Collective Response to COVID-19'

Feminist activists and advocates are well accustomed at working on the intersections of multiple forms of crisis. The core framing of our feminist agenda has always been the aim to tackle the intersecting inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination based on gender, age, class, caste, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics, disabilities, and other status. The feminist agenda calls for the social, political, economic and environmental transformation of our society, the respect for our planetary boundaries, for gender equality and full realization of women's human rights.

As the coronavirus pandemic exacerbates our existing crises and inequalities that disproportionately impacts women, girls and other marginalized persons, it further reveals the fault lines of the social, political and economic system on which our society is built and to which feminists have been drawing attention to. It underscores why the [Feminist Demands for System Change](#) – a vision and agenda for deep systemic and structural transformation that the feminist movement was already calling for before the pandemic — is as important as ever in this moment of global reckoning, as we continue to overcome, recover and construct a more just world after the pandemic.

As the world was beginning to grapple with its responses to the coronavirus pandemic, feminists from around the world took just days to come together to share reflections on the crisis and how we could build together towards collective action.

¹ Bridget Burns and Emilia Reyes, "[Feminist Solidarity for a Collective Response to COVID-19](#)", (2020).



For many of us feminist advocates and activists, one major turning point became the de facto cancellation of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) along with other global and regional meetings. The cancellation of these meetings presented a void in the multilateral efforts to address the crisis and posed a clear risk for the effectiveness and accountability of the responses that countries were undertaking to tackle the pandemic. Simultaneously, feminist advocates and communities were facing crisis to their livelihoods and pushed to the brink of poverty, the lack of access to even the most basic public services, the increasing violence both within the public and private domains, and restriction of many of our fundamental human rights and freedoms. And as feminists, it was important to keep grounding ourselves in the different realities that are being experienced by communities and the personal concerns that are being experienced by individuals. It became clear that a space for collective reflection, response and resilience was called for to deal with this new crisis, one that drew on the meaningful friendships, alliances and solidarity built through many years of joint activism.

The first call of the collective at the end of March 2020 brought all of this together. Both familiar and unfamiliar faces and voices came together to share our thoughts, feelings and experiences as well as our fears, our analysis and our hopes. The call made it clear that this is a deeply embodied crisis and one that is being faced by each and every person in their own intersecting way, and that its impact on sexual reproductive health and rights will be devastating. The call also made clear that the pandemic is a moment to recollect and revisit the decades of feminists' demands for re-evaluating what work is "essential", for re-valuing and centering care work and for solutions that are framed in the context of global justice. This call became the starting point for our collective action.



The Feminist Response to COVID-19

The Feminist Response to COVID-19 (feministcovidresponse.com) is a loose, non-hierarchical and non-structural collective of more than 400 feminist organizations and activists from 74 countries, working across global movements centred on human rights, sustainable development, environmental, economic and social justice. We have come together in a moment of collective organizing and solidarity to outline key principles for a just and resilient recovery from the ongoing global pandemic, as well as to track responses and uplift collective action of feminists around the world.

The collective's Principles were launched globally in May 2020 and it describes how a feminist response to COVID-19 must:

- Centre the well-being of all people in an intersectional manner
- Ensure the health and safety of all, including ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Promote a comprehensive paradigm shift, relying on adequate and equitable financing
- Be based on and strengthen democratic values
- Be a downpayment on a just and equitable transition towards an equal and healthy planet
- Be guided by cooperation, multilateralism and global justice.

Cross-cutting to all these principles is the promotion, protection and fulfillment of human rights and gender equality. Human rights and their fundamental principles, including the principles of universality, inalienability, interdependence, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, non-derogation and accountability, must guide all actions taken in response to COVID-19 and in recovery plans. This includes collective rights, such as the rights of Indigenous Peoples, migrant, displaced and refugee populations

as well as workers rights. While restrictions on some rights in the context of the current public health emergency may be warranted, any measures must follow the International Human Rights Law standards, be necessary and proportionate to the current risk, have a specific time and duration, and be applied in a non-discriminatory way. Further, the current crisis must not be used to promote stigmatization, discrimination and hate speech, nor silence dissent or protest, to attack human rights and environmental defenders, including women human rights defenders, or undermine the exercise of other rights, such as sexual and reproductive rights. The response to COVID-19 must be gender-responsive, advance gender equality and must ensure the fulfillment of human rights including women's human rights as recognized in international treaties and agreements.

Apart from outlining the principles, the collective has also mapped out the impact of COVID-19 response policies around the world, whether these are progressive or regressive in regard to women's rights and gender equality. Besides being a policy tracker, the collective's website also acts as a repository of resources, online dialogues, and personal stories from feminists everywhere on their experiences with and around COVID-19 response efforts.

This toolkit is part of those resources.



The Toolkit

The toolkit is the collective's effort to translate its Feminist Response to COVID-19 Principles into guidance and evidence-based recommendations for advocacy and policymaking, so that together, we can make our feminist future real.

The way to begin that process from an evidence based, informed and collective way is by applying the Feminist Response to COVID-19 Principles of the collective. We start from an understanding of the context and experiences of women, girls and gender non-conforming persons and communities in this time of pandemic and how their human rights have been affected. Based on this, we can come to an understanding of some of the necessary policy recommendations and advocacy spaces that can help shine a light on alternative ways of organizing our economic, social, political, and environmental systems and activities that will take us to our feminist future.

This toolkit consists of two parts and is complimented by two online tools available on the Feminist Response to COVID-19 website. The first part of the toolkit seeks to help us **Observe & Reflect** how the pandemic and the interconnected economic, social and political crises have impacted women, girls and gender non-conforming persons of all diversities and other marginalized communities, how it has deepened inequality and injustices, caused violations of human rights, undermined democracy and caused breakdown of multilateralism that is based on solidarity. It will also seek to learn from examples of the Principles and feminist leadership at all levels in practice and how they could be replicated.

The second part of the toolkit seeks to help us to carry out **Plan & Action** to translate the Feminist COVID-19 Response Principles into guidance and recommendations for policymaking and advocacy that can influence and change our current systems and influence policymaking and decision-making in this regard.

The first online tool is an **Advocacy Timeline** that identifies and outlines key moments and entry points where the Principles could be activated. This includes opportunities and processes that are taking place in different spaces and fora and at different levels where both COVID-19 response policy as well as future policymaking is being discussed and taking place.

The second online tool is a **Power Mapping** section, composed of a collection of quotes and of who said what, when and where which can be useful in carrying out advocacy with decision makers.

This toolkit is yours to use, in your context, where you work and where your advocacy takes place, in the way you see fit. It is for you, the users of the toolkit, to make your own, and that is how we can come to a future that we envision collectively.

Observe & Reflect



A Feminist Monitoring of Our World

The questions below were organized around and developed from the [Six Principles of the Feminist Response to COVID-19](#) as a starting point. They are in no particular order; some of the questions overlap, while some of the questions are applicable at national and local level, some are applicable at international level, as our issues and responses must always be systemic and structural, from local to global, and are therefore, always interlinked.

You can use the questions to help you reflect on some of the policies and responses that you have seen to the pandemic, how its implementation has been carried out and how it has impacted on the lives and human rights of women and other marginalized peoples'. It is okay if not all the questions are applicable to you. These are simply meant to guide you. Feel free to use and amend these questions as you see fit.





COVID-19 responses must centre the well-being of all people in an intersectional manner

- Were there any policies or practices that were introduced during the pandemic that were discriminatory in substance / in application / in impact?
- Was there any sexist, homophobic, transphobic, racist and xenophobic rhetoric being articulated by or from within the government or any other actors/section of the society and did it compel and promote stigmatization and hate speech?
- How was information around the pandemic as well as governmental policies and responses shared with the general public? Was the information accurate and timely? Was it done both online and offline, in different languages and taking into account the different literacy levels? Did it have a way of reaching people in homes and rural areas, especially women and girls who might not have free movement outside of home?
- Did the government policies and responses to the pandemic take into account the needs of differently-abled persons — whether in the access and distribution of information and in testing and treatment for COVID-19?
- Was there any data or information made available on how the pandemic and responses have impacted women, girls and gender non-conforming persons?
- Did you have access to basic services and needs such as food, water and shelter? Were these subsidized or provided for free during the pandemic?
- Was there any measure to suspend, subsidize or cancel rent, or actions to prevent eviction?
- Has your formal/informal labor/employment been impacted? Are you doing different types of work than you were before?
- Were any schemes introduced to support and prevent layoffs of workers as a result of the pandemic, to support workers in the informal sector or self-employed and small enterprises? Have they worked in the manner they were intended to? Did you have the skills and infrastructure to access new and different forms of work to replace or supplement the work you were engaged in?
- What was done to ensure that workers in sectors severely impacted by the pandemic such as tourism, export processing, migrant labour, were offered alternative employment or means of generating alternate incomes?
- Were any schemes introduced to support people's livelihood regardless of their gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, employment/ non-employment status? Were there any discussions or policies around introducing a universal basic income?



COVID-19 responses must ensure the health and safety of all, including ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights

- Has there been an increase of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, sexual and gender-based violence, including violence against women, girls and other marginalized identities such as gender non-conforming persons, sex workers, indigenous, migrants, refugees as well as other marginalized communities? If data is not available, is this because related support services were suspended during emergency or lockdown measures?
- Were there any existing policies, measures and services to support women, girls and gender non-conforming persons against violence, threats and intimidation? Were these services accessible, particularly during lockdowns and curfews? If these were already present prior to the pandemic, did it continue to exist and operate during the pandemic? If these did not yet exist prior to the pandemic were any efforts taken to introduce them during the pandemic?
- Do you currently do more care work at home or less care work at home? Were there any care giving services and support provided by the government during the pandemic?
- Are you able to access the hospital/ health centers/ healthcare services? Does universal health coverage already exist?
- Are you able to access healthcare for coronavirus related testing and treatments? Are coronavirus related testing, treatment and quarantine freely provided by the government? Is it freely provided for all regardless of their gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, and nationality status?
- Have access to other medical services, treatments and medicines (that are not coronavirus-related) been impaired or restricted during pandemic?
- Are you able to access sexual and reproductive health care services, including modern contraception/family planning; safe abortion care; cervical cancer screening; antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care; sexually transmitted diseases, HIV treatments?
- Has there been any disruption in SRH services? Have sexual and reproductive health care services remained essential services? Have the lockdown and emergency measures implemented contributed to lack of access to contraception/family planning services or further resulted in an increase in unplanned pregnancies?

- Is your access to healthcare, COVID-19 related or other health related services dependent on your employment status?
- Were any of the private sector health service providers being taken over by the government during the pandemic? Were there any discussions or policies around universal healthcare coverages and strengthening the public healthcare system?
- Who forms the bulk of the frontline workers — whether they are health workers, caregivers, cleaning workers and other essential workers — are they men or are they women? Are they nationals or migrants?
- Are frontline workers being provided adequate and necessary support from the government including quality personal protective equipment, menstrual hygiene products, psycho-social support, child-care, nutrition and other immediate needs?



COVID-19 responses must promote a comprehensive paradigm shift, relying on adequate and equitable financing

- Has your government introduced any economic recovery/stimulus package plan(s)? Who is the main beneficiary/recipient of the packages — are they individuals or are they companies? If they are companies, are they small local and medium enterprises or are they large corporations? If they are individuals, are there conditionalities in receiving any of the financial assistance or benefits (i.e. bank accounts, must be “head of household”, in formal employment, identity cards, etc.) and do these create discriminations? Are these packages available to all individuals in need including those who are often invisible in policy interventions such as LGBTQI persons, sex workers and migrant workers who may not have ‘formal’ documentation?
- Has there been encouragement or support from the government on the role of private sector actors and corporations on both pandemic response as well as recovery?
- Has the government introduced price control or market regulation over essential goods such as personal protective equipment and staple food?
- Has the government expressed concern or fear of threat of lawsuits from corporations over the actions it has taken during the pandemic?
- Have there been policies to introduce new forms of taxes on corporations, the wealthy, on financial flows, speculation and transactions as a way to generate resources needed for COVID-19 response and recovery? Conversely, have indirect forms of taxation such as Value Added Tax, Goods and Services Tax or other Service taxes been removed or put on hold during the pandemic?
- Has there been any reallocation of national, municipal or local budgets (i.e. cutting down military budget or non-essential infrastructure and redirecting it to health, other public services or climate-related strategies)? What sectors have been prioritized in fiscal adjustments, and have there been any inequitable outcomes in delivery within and between sectors?

- How much is the government's sovereign debt? Did it increase during the pandemic? Did the new borrowing come internally or externally? If it was externally, whom was it from (IMF, other Development Banks, private investors, etc.)?
- Has the government indicated how they intend to handle the rising debt (whether to consolidate and reduce budget deficits, by boosting taxes or cutting public spending, etc.)?
- If the government is a developing/least-developing country, has it used the possibility of suspension of debt offered by the IMF or requested such suspension?
- Is the government still negotiating bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral trade and investment agreements with other governments during the pandemic? Is the government reviewing any of the existing trade rules and negotiations in light of the health and economic responses it has taken and will need to take due to the pandemic?



COVID-19 responses must be based on and strengthen democratic values

- Did your parliament/congress/equivalent national legislative bodies convene or meet during the pandemic? Are the laws, policies and measures introduced during the pandemic (i.e. lockdown, curfew, economic packages, border closure etc.) debated and discussed in the parliament and in general public? Were these laws, policies and special measures, necessary, proportionate to the need, time bound and non discriminatory?
- Are peoples, communities or civil societies affected by any policies or measures introduced by the state able to participate in decision-making processes of these measures and policies? Are they also able to oppose it if it was in violation of human rights?
- Are peoples, communities or civil societies affected by any policies or measures that are either being introduced or being negotiated in trade, financing negotiation, at the World Bank, the IMF, the World Trade Organization as well as at the UN able to participate meaningfully in the decision-making processes? If yes, what are the mechanisms for participation?
- Has any electoral process that is supposed to take place been suspended and if so, has the government provided specific timelines for the suspension? Alternatively, were there elections that were pushed ahead of time? If voting has gone ahead, have COVID-safe measures been put in place, or has voting via post mail been allowed and have these elections been free and fair?
- Have there been increasing attacks or restrictions on freedom of association, expression, assembly and information? Do you think they were proportionate, reasonable, fair and balanced between the rights and freedom with the needs to tackle and respond to the pandemic?
- Have there been increasing attacks on environmentalists and women human rights defenders, activists and civil society during the pandemic?

- With the closing down of offline spaces, is there access to universal, open, affordable, secure, and stable Internet to enable people to exercise the right to expression, information as well as raising issues of human rights violations?
- Is the government using the pandemic as an excuse to abuse their power? Have there been any regressive and undemocratic laws and practices that were introduced or implemented during the pandemic that would not have been acceptable in the past?
- Is the private sector influencing the government to pass laws that benefit them or influencing the government to declare certain activities as essential so they can continue to operate?
- Have there been forms of corporate abuse, such as corporations disregarding the pandemic, forcing people to work, abusing labour rights, etc.?
- Is there any disproportionate use of force or sanctions or imprisonment by the government in enforcing the measures introduced to curb the spread of the coronavirus (measures such as lockdown, restriction of movements, closing of borders, etc.)? Were any of the lockdown or restriction in movements discriminatory to any specific marginalized groups such as migrant workers, refugees, stateless persons?



COVID-19 responses must be a downpayment on a just and equitable transition towards an equal and healthy planet

- Did the climate crisis/mitigation related policies and measures of your government continue during the pandemic or were they put on hold? Conversely, were any of the environmental harmful projects (i.e. mining, logging, burning, etc.) still continued or initiated during the pandemic?
- Have any measures introduced to curb the spread (lockdown, movement control, quarantines) affected local farmers and the farmer's market? Were many of them forced to close? Or were any unable to sell their harvest? How did this impact on women farmers?
- Were there discussions or proposals on strengthening the local food supply chain? If there were, did these target women smallholder farmers, small businesses owned by women, social and community cooperatives, who often face very different challenges and constraints than large agribusinesses?
- Is there an increase or decrease of greenhouse gas emission? Were any such data available?
- Was there any industrial pollution (whether of water, air or land) that occurred during the pandemic? What was the government's response to it? Did you feel the responses were timely and adequate or slow and insufficient and were these the result of the current pandemic circumstances?
- Were there any climate-induced disasters that occurred during the pandemic? What was the government's response to it? Did you feel the responses were timely and adequate or slow and insufficient and were these the result of the current pandemic circumstances?



COVID-19 responses must be guided by cooperation, multilateralism and global justice

- Did the government introduce measures that restricted cross-border movements? How has such restriction impacted individuals and families with different nationalities or living across different borders, stateless persons, migrant workers and especially women migrant workers and refugees?
- Has the government(s) taken unilateral measures i.e. withdrawing from intergovernmental processes, refusing to cooperate with other governments whether in sharing information or research or cutting aid to other governments?
- Have multilateral climate change negotiations continued, or have they been put on hold?
- Has the government directed more financial resources towards securing vaccines for its own nationals or has it also pledged the same amount of financial resources to the pooled development of vaccines via the World Health Organization (WHO)? Has it committed to making the COVID-19 vaccine and treatment a public good, or taken any measures to suspend patents and allow generic production of either?
- Are the government(s) cooperating and showing solidarity with each other i.e. engaging in intergovernmental processes, exchanging and sharing information around the virus or any research around it, maintaining their aid to other countries, sending medical goods (masks, PPEs) or medical personnel to other countries? Conversely, has there been national stockpiling of essential medical goods, or a national shortage that other countries have not supplemented?
- Have there been more discussions and emphasis on the principles of solidarity between states and peoples or has there been more emphasis on nationalistic and xenophobic narratives?
- Have states increased restrictions or control on areas in conflict or in occupied territories or increased any imperial claim to territories? Have colonial territories received adequate or lesser support from central governments for handling the pandemic?



Learning from Examples of Feminist Response in Practice

Heeding feminist leadership and governance

As feminists, we believe that the model of feminist leadership should be different from that of traditional model of leadership. While there is no definitive “feminist leadership”, feminist advocates and activists would agree that feminist leadership is collaborative, participatory, empathetic, inclusive, built on consensus, transformative and most importantly, is about “power with” rather than power over or power under.

There are a number of stories of notable women leaders, together with frontline workers whom have been touted for their effective response to COVID-19, relatively low mortality rates and demonstrating arguably some model of feminist leadership whether nationally or sub-nationally, during this pandemic.

Below are some of those examples.

Kerala, India²

In the State of Kerala, its Minister of Health, KK Shailaja had utilized the existing systemic and structural characteristics of the state that were already in place prior to the pandemic – notably it’s vibrant civil societies and social movements, and it’s democratic decentralization process that had devolved power, finances and public good to Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) called the “panchayats”. Through this, the Minister devised communication strategies to provide bottom-up responses and continuously update the public on the pandemic. In January 2020, before COVID-19 was even declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) or the state even had its first COVID-19 case, the Health Minister held the first meeting of her rapid response team. Within 24 hours, the team had set up a control room and instructed the medical officers in Kerala’s 14 districts to do the same at their level. And by the time the first case arrived, around three days later on January 27, via a plane from Wuhan, the state had already adopted the World Health Organization’s protocol of test, trace, isolate and support. Once the coronavirus hit, these systems and structures began running in full to provide free testing, treatments, quarantine facilities and relief packages which included food provisions – all routed and provided

² Taken from case study by Vanita Nayak Mukherjee, “[Decentralised Governance – Kerala state, India, Spotlight Report](#) (2020).

through the “panchayats”. The State had also sponsored Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs), led exclusively by women, called “Kudumbasree” and which worked closely with the “panchayats” to deepen democratic governance further. In addition, there are pension payments for the elderly, allocations for a rural job-guarantee scheme, interest-free consumer loans routed through women’s groups, mental health helplines, helplines for domestic violence victims, waiver of debt payments, utility payments for electricity and water and financial support for 5.5 million wage workers through labour welfare boards.

New Zealand³

In New Zealand, when Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced her “Go hard, go early” national strategy of lockdown and border closure, she did so through honesty, authority and empathy. She provided clear scientific and medical explanations and also acknowledged the sacrifice the government was asking of the country and its citizens under these measures. Ardern’s leadership has been characterised by her resolute and persistent focus on minimizing harm to lives and livelihoods. The NZ government’s response was persistent in its commitment to a science-led approach, by listening and being guided to scientific advice, facts, evidence and those with relevant expertise to help inform its decision making. It has a strong focus on mobilizing collective effort by informing, educating and uniting people to do what’s needed to minimize harm to lives and livelihoods. The government has also focused on actions that help to enable coping. This involves a range of initiatives — including creative ones — focus on building knowledge and skills relevant for surviving the pandemic, on kindness and addressing both practical and emotional needs. One example is the government’s Alert Level framework, which sets out the different rules and restrictions that apply depending on the current risk of community transmission, a wage subsidy scheme that basically requires only a brief declaration for employers to access it and a homeschooling package, which includes learning resources, including laptops and modems where needed, delivered directly to homes to support parents in helping children learn, along with the creation of two television channels to provide online learning opportunities. The government’s seeming willingness to try whatever it can to minimise harm to lives and livelihoods, even when so doing involves radical changes in government policies and practices, builds trust that leadership is committed to the shared purpose.

³ Taken from Suze Wilson, “Pandemic leadership: Lessons from New Zealand’s approach to COVID-19”, (2020).

Taiwan

In Taiwan, President Tsai Ing Wen spearheaded a swift and successful defence against the coronavirus, despite the country's close proximity to China, the country's lack of official diplomatic recognition by much of the world and without being a member of the WHO General Assembly. Just as the news of the coronavirus begins to emerge out of Wuhan, officials at Taiwan's National Health Command Center (NHCC) – set up in the wake of SARS outbreak in 2003 – moved quickly to respond to the potential threat. Between January to February 2020, Taiwan began to rapidly produce and implement 124 action items, which includes border control, banning travel from many parts of China, ramping up domestic face-mask production to ensure the local supply and distribution, rolled out nationwide testing for coronavirus, retesting people who had previously unexplained pneumonia and using technology to trace and investigate outbreaks and infections to name a few. The country's existing universal coverage healthcare system – created through a nationwide health insurance system, similar to a single payer system in other countries – was also instrumental in this. This system covers all necessary medical care, including outpatient, inpatient and of patients suffering from COVID-19 infection so that patients do not need to worry about medical expenses incurred during treatment. Because of this comprehensive medical coverage, people in the country do not hesitate to seek medical treatment. This nationwide health insurance system has been in place in Taiwan since 1995 ensuring that Taiwan has a robust health system that was well-equipped and well-prepared to handle the COVID-19 outbreak even before it became a pandemic. Today, Taiwan has one of the lowest number of cases and deaths with just 573 cases of infection and 7 deaths



(as of 7 November 2020). The country has also secured its domestic supply of masks that it has also donated 10 million masks to other countries around the world.

The common thread across many of the responses above is not only that these are examples from women leaders, but that these are women leaders elected by democracies and whom did form part of a political dynasty or ruling elite, whom have adopted principles and leadership models that feminist advocated and organizations have often promoted and argued for, while utilizing what are arguably more accountable, democratic and collaborative and a caring system of governance that exists in the country.

Feminist responses to pandemic is not just about “adding women and stir” but it is about leadership, solidarity and is about a structural approach and system of governance. Essential to it is also a democratic and accountable system of governance. We see from the example above that strong democracies with egalitarian values are likely to lead collaboratively, instead of using crises as an opportunity to wield tyranny. And while these examples and these leaders are not perfect and might not encompass everything we as feminist advocates would demand for when it comes to our demands for systemic and structural change — these examples presents the potential of feminist responses and leadership, and are good first steps towards a feminist future.



Feminist recovery policies and plans

Some parts of the world has seen the emergence of feminist recovery plans or policies led by feminist movements, sometimes together with policy-makers.

In April 2020, Hawai'i made herstory. It became the first place in the world where its government had explicitly committed to involving and prioritizing women and gender equality in its COVID-19 recovery plan, through its feminist recovery plan — entitled "[Building Bridges, Not Walking on Backs: A Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for COVID-19](#)". The proposal – the result of collaborations between the Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women and the island's feminist activists and movements – combines both a vision of the future and concrete policy points. The policy points ranges from a proposal for universal basic income, investing in social infrastructure — childcare, education and health – rather than more traditional infrastructure projects such as military, tourism and luxury development in order to boost the economy, universal free childcare and long-term elder care, with fair wages for those in the sector – relieving women of an often unpaid role that is still often taken by them, health coverage for migrants, a living wage for cleaning staff, and a nearly US\$ 25 an hour minimum wage for single mothers, among many other policies that focus not just on gender but racial and wealth inequalities.

In Canada, the [Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Canada](#) was developed jointly by Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Canada and the Institute for Gender and the Economy at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. The Plan outlines 8 points to provide a roadmap to address the devastating Depression-era economic lows of the pandemic and proposes ways to improve economic security for women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people.

As Canada transitions from emergency response to post-pandemic recovery, the Plan emphasizes the following pillars for a path towards an inclusive economy:

1. **Intersectionality: Understanding Power by gathering disaggregated, intersectional data, and emphasizing gender analysis and frameworks in policy development and evaluation.**
2. **Addressing root causes of systemic racism by implementing programs to support Indigenous peoples and especially women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as well as implementing recommendations to remediate anti-Black racism from various bodies.**
3. **Care Work is Essential Work that should be supported by funding and monitoring of early learning and childcare programs, supporting migrant worker caregivers in decision-making for pandemic recovery, and expanding data collection on the subject.**
4. **Investing in good jobs through legislating job protections and lower eligibility requirements of employment insurance, among other recommendations.**

5. **Fighting the shadow pandemic through establishing a National Action Plan on Gender-Based Violence with an emphasis on indigenous and LGBTQ women and addressing racism and hate crimes.**
6. **Bolstering small businesses through diverse funding schemes in consultation with Indigenous communities and emphasizing support for underrepresented groups.**
7. **Strengthening infrastructure for recovery through affordable housing and clean water infrastructure, as well as addressing the digital divide in rural communities.**
8. **Diverse voices in decisions through creating a specified body, ensure gender balance and intersectional representation in task forces, and investing in civil society organizations.**

In Austria, a Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Austria was developed by Femme Fiscale, a network of feminist movements and organizations working on feminist economic and budgetary policies in Austria. This is a concrete public investment plan, proposing three “investment packages” focused on the axis of childcare and education, health and elderly care, and solidarity and “saving lives.” This economic recovery plan includes feminist proposals for funding, including ways to ensure contributions from the rich. The Feminist Economic Recovery Plan for Austria is meant to provide an alternative to the Austrian government’s official policies, which have failed to support those most affected by COVID-19 or to aim for a shift towards a care-based economy.

As a main tool of advocacy, Femme Fiscale started a petition to call the government and Parliament to adopt the Feminist Recovery Plan.



In Northern Ireland, a COVID-19 Feminist Recovery Plan was put together by the Women's Policy Group Northern Ireland (WPG) — a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. The plan sets out recommendations for recovering from COVID-19, as elected representatives and decision-makers must take into consideration the institutionalised inequalities that exist, and co-develop recovery planning with the communities affected. These recommendations will cover economic justice, health, social justice, equality, the implications of Brexit and examples of international best practice. The Plan consists of 4 pillars; **1) the Economic Justice Pillar; 2) the Health Pillar; 3) Social Justice Pillar; and the 4) Cultural Pillar.**

There are many other feminist recovery plans and proposals that have emerged at the time of writing this toolkit — such as those by the [United Kingdom Women's Budget Groups](#), [Women in Development Europe \(WIDE\)](#) in Switzerland and by feminist groups in Argentina — and many more will likely continue to emerge as the feminist movement continues to advocate for a more feminist response and recovery to the pandemic.

All of the examples above are just a few that illustrate feminist leadership. Feminist leadership also exists in many different levels, not only in governance and in policy-making but also in communities, in homes, in the streets and in the factories. There are many more examples of feminist leadership that are driven by feminist advocates and organizations, from home-based workers constantly demanding accountability from large multinational corporations, to sex worker collectives that are advocating for support as well as providing relief material to other community members, to rural based women journalists and community radio covering stories of people in remote areas and locations and sharing it widely. For more of these stories, visit our Feminist Storytelling Page on the Feminist Response to COVID-19 website.

What the examples above intend to illustrate is that both feminist leadership and feminist responses are possible, that governments heeding the leadership of the feminist movement can enact and display feminist responses and leaderships, and that these provide a much more human rights-based, just and equal responses as we build back a better and more feminist future after this pandemic.

Plan & Action



A Feminist Advocacy Guide for Our Feminist Future

This part of the toolkit aims to translate the [Six Principles of the Feminist Response to COVID-19](#) into guidance and recommendations for policymaking and advocacy that can influence and change our current systems and influence policymaking and decision-making in this regard. It is translating the Collective's vision for the feminist future into concrete policy points and actions. Many of these proposals are not new, many have also been advocated by various members of the collective, and its allies and other social and peoples' movements in different contexts and at different levels. These proposals are also not exhaustive. There are many more proposals and recommendations out there and many more will emerge as feminist movements and allies continue to embark on more thinking, more ideas and recommendations on how we can build a feminist future.

Our current system is broken. The patriarchal, top-down, neoliberal economic growth-centered model is what has led us to the current intersecting and multiple crises that we are experiencing right now. The current system was never an option, and returning back to it is unsurvivable. It is time to move to something new.

What do feminists want? System change!



Principle: COVID-19 responses must centre the well-being of all people in an intersectional manner



Feminists Demand: An end to austerity and a commitment to universal social protection system

Universal social protection refers to a nationally defined system of policies and programs that provide equitable access to all people and protect them throughout their lives against poverty and risks to their livelihoods and well-being. There are a range of specific policies, mechanisms and practices that fall under universal social protection services. The key aspect in all of them and of universal social protection is that it provides universal coverage in terms of the persons protected – regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religions or race, comprehensive protection in terms of the risk covered – whether of loss of income, illness, accidents and so, and the adequacy of the protection provided. Due to increasing migrations and the interconnectedness of much of the world, universal social protections need to also take into account such mobility and migrations, be equitable, and also account for past harms and repairs.

Universal social protection is a human right. It is also a policy objective found in many international human rights standards and global commitments such as Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs) 1.3



and International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. As such, realizing universal social protection are the duties and obligations of all governments around the world and is key in achieving sustainable development, reducing poverty and all forms of inequalities, ending discrimination and building a more just and equitable society.

Despite this, many countries have failed to provide social protection to its peoples'. Which is why prior to the coronavirus pandemic, just 45 percent of the global population is effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit, while the remaining 55 percent — 4 billion people — are left unprotected and have no forms of social protection whatsoever⁴. As women are largely found in the informal labor sector and in unpaid care work, the absence of universal social protection or presence of measures tied to formal employment conditions inevitably disadvantages women and other marginalized groups such as migrants and refugees.

The coronavirus pandemic has both exacerbated the marginalization and inequalities that already existed while also making clear the necessity and importance of universal social protection. With the exception of a few countries with robust and comprehensive social protection systems, many are struggling to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of all those being affected by the pandemic, from meeting the needs for access to healthcare, impacts of quarantine, lockdown, loss of jobs, incomes or livelihood on people.

The pandemic, however, has also made the idea of universal social protection, deemed impossible in the past by many, suddenly possible. Between February to October 2020, 209 countries and territories have introduced at least 1,496 measures⁵ in response to the coronavirus pandemic with a notable number of countries expanding their existing programs, including to workers in the informal economy, and removing various obligations and conditions to facilitate access.

This shows both the possibility and feasibility of universal social protection. It is often argued by detractors of universal social protection that it is neither politically feasible nor financially realistic – leading to the lack of funding for universal social protections or a turn to private sector financing or Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). However, many alternatives for public financing are available, even for the poorest countries. There is even more evidence that shows that the biggest challenge confronting social protection spending is not so much the lack of resources but rather public policy choice⁶, including those inspired by the conditionalities of international finance institutions, and tacit support for profit over people by states under the neoliberal economic framework both nationally and globally. It is important therefore to ensure that many of these measures that have been introduced will not be temporary stop-gap measures, and will be sustained into the national protection systems and not be replaced by a return to austerity measures after the pandemic. The arguments that universal social protection is not financially realistic or politically feasible is no longer acceptable.

⁴ ILO World Social Protection Report 2017–19. Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

⁵ [ILO Social Protection Responses to COVID-19 Crisis Around the World database](#).

⁶ Ortiz, I., Cummins, M. and Karunanethy, K., 2015. Fiscal space for social protection and the SDGs: Options to expand social investments in 187 countries., ESS Working Paper 48, International Labour Office, Geneva.

What do feminists want?

- Achieving universal social protection through not just one, but a range of mechanisms and policies such as universal basic income, safeguarding and extending the coverage of social health protection mechanisms during and beyond the crisis to everyone including those in informal sectors, enhancing income security and non-contributory schemes, universal child benefits, universal maternity coverage, universal social pensions, and many more.
- An end to austerity measures which many governments and international financial institutions continue to prescribe and implement, despite the evidences that confirms how austerity policies has undermine economic and social progress, including the fulfilment of women's human rights — which will only be exacerbated if it continually gets implemented during and after the pandemic.
- Utilizing alternative public funding for universal social protection such as the reallocation of public expenditures, the increase in tax revenues especially on the wealthy and through direct taxations, expansion of social security coverage and contributory revenues, elimination of illicit financial flows, using fiscal and foreign exchange reserves, managing debt i.e. borrowing or restructuring existing debt, and adopting a more accommodative macroeconomic framework. Resist and desist the turn to private sector and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) as a predominant means to finance and deliver universal social protection.



Principle: COVID-19 responses must ensure the health and safety of all, including ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights



Feminists Demand: Universal health care coverage

A public health system that provides universal health coverage in which all persons can obtain the health services, medicines and vaccines they need – regardless of their status of employment, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, geographical location and status of migration – without suffering financial hardship when paying for them.

Such a public health system would require the intervention and role of state as the duty bearer in the delivery of healthcare. So, while there can be presence of private providers within the health sector, delivery of healthcare should and must remain a public function and state duty regardless of the nature of the providers. The claim that the privatization and commercialization will stimulate competition and enhance quality and efficiency of healthcare has also been contradicted by the fact that private health care systems are usually more expensive and less accessible than the public ones.

The coronavirus pandemic has triggered a global surge in demand for health services and for countries to be able to urgently increase their capacity to test, trace and treat COVID-19 patients while also maintaining their essential health services, including sexual and reproductive health services. This has put a tremendous amount of strain on public healthcare systems around the world – many have been made worse off through years of underfunding and budget cuts, leading to shortages of healthcare workers – majority of whom are women, and increase in unpaid care workers – also majority of whom are women⁷. Even prior to the pandemic the WHO had projected a shortfall of 18 million health workers by 2030 to meet universal health coverage and SDGs. A survey among health unions by Public Services International (PSI) indicated that 56.5% of respondents have not been given adequate personal protective equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Another survey by UNFPA earlier in the year found that 47 million women in 114 low- and middle-income countries are projected to be unable to use modern contraceptives due to the lockdown. Countries with universal health coverage or those where the public healthcare authorities carry the dominant role — such as South Korea, Taiwan, Australia – can be arguably said to have performed better during the pandemic.

In light of that, a number of countries and local governments have taken steps towards either nationalizing their private healthcare providers or taking over private sector resources and facilities often at the cost price and no profit to the private sector. Both Ireland and Spain nationalized their private sector health services, the Irish Minister

⁷ See report by Women in Global Health, “[COVID-19 Global Health Security Depends on Women: Rebalancing the unequal social contract for women](#)”, (2020).

of Health citing⁸ that the country must “have equality of treatment, patients with this virus will be treated for free, and they’ll be treated as part of a single, national hospital service”.

It is clear then that the private sector health providers cannot and should not be the predominant provider of responses to the coronavirus pandemic or any future pandemic which are crises that inevitably require a whole-of-government and whole-of-society responses and approaches. It is also clear that many public healthcare systems are either unequipped or underfunded to tackle it.

Many of our current health systems would not have been so unprepared for the pandemic if they had been adequately funded and resourced, if governments had legislated for adequate medical professionals and beds to patient ratios and if countries had ensured they had the technological capacity and infrastructure to produce lifesaving PPE, medical equipment, carry out medical research and the production of vaccines and treatments. The pandemic has therefore demonstrated how vital the public health care system together with its workers are to our survival, and how important it is for us to continue building a healthcare system that can care for all.

What do feminists want?

- A public health system providing universal health coverage that ensures access to medicines, vaccines and services without risk of financial ruin; and functioning within a human rights framework providing services that are available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality, which further means; 1) there is an adequate number of functioning health care facilities and services with trained medical and professional personnel and skilled providers who are trained and available to perform the full range health care and services, including sexual and reproductive health services; 2) all health services including those related to sexual and reproductive health care, is accessible and affordable to all individuals without discrimination and free from procedural, geographical, financial and social barriers and lack of information which can interfere with access to such services; 3) all health facilities and services are acceptable, respectful and sensitive towards the culture of individuals, minorities, peoples and communities, sensitive to gender, age, disability, sexual diversity and life-cycle requirements, without any bias, judgment, stigma or discrimination; and finally 4) the health care and services are evidence-based and scientifically and medically appropriate, that drugs and equipment are scientifically approved and unexpired, and that health care personnel are trained so as to ensure the quality of the services provided.
- An end to the rampant privatisation, Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and outsourcing of healthcare to the private sector which has had a devastating impact on universal access to quality health care for patients, on working conditions for health workers and on the financial sustainability of the health systems.
- Suspension of current intellectual property rights rules through the TRIPS and TRIPS plus agreements and promoting the sharing of existing intellectual property or waiver of intellectual property rights in order to combat the acute shortage of medical equipment, drugs, medicines and in order to develop treatments to the coronavirus.

⁸ See article on TheJournal.ie “[Private hospitals will be made public for duration of coronavirus pandemic](#)”, (2020).

- Increasing resources and funding for universal health coverage, expanding testing and treatments for COVID-19 — including by putting testing for COVID-19 into the hands of women, ensuring that provisions for essential health services to be continued, especially for sexual and reproductive health care. For many countries, this can be done by redirecting budgets which had been previously channelled towards military or defence or to high-end infrastructure development.
- Governments need to treat health care as a human right, a state obligation and put an end to both the commodification and marketisation of health care by eliminating user fees and regulating private sector health providers and producers, strengthening public healthcare authorities and bodies, adequately funding, protecting and ensuring that frontline workers have a safe and decent working conditions and paying explicit attention to the role and leadership of women as frontline health workers.



Feminists Demand: End sexual and gender-based violence

The coronavirus pandemic is having a devastating effect on all peoples', particularly women and girls and other marginalized communities and identities such as migrants, indigenous, disabled and LGBTIQ+ persons. It is also threatening to unravel decades of progress toward gender equality and women's human rights. While the gender-specific data to understand exactly where, how, and

who the crisis is affecting are still and will continue to be collected, there are enough preliminary statistics and stories from the ground that reveal how women and girls are enduring the worst of the pandemic's impact. Experiences and stories from the ground are revealing the higher and increasing prevalence of violence against women and gender-based violence that the pandemic has worsened by quarantine, limited mobility, loss of income and livelihood which isolate women with their abusers or deny women access to services and support which help reduce gender based violence.

In April 2020, the UNFPA had projected that if lockdowns were to continue for 6 months, 31 million additional gender-based violence cases can be expected, and for every 3 months the lockdown continues, an additional 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence are to be expected⁹.

Outside of the private domain, numerous calls for a global ceasefire to "create corridors for life-saving aid, to open precious windows for diplomacy¹⁰", and thus facilitate stopping the spread of COVID-19 among vulnerable populations in war-torn countries and conflict areas have not been heeded. The impact of the pandemic on women in conflict-affected contexts is of particular concern.

⁹ [Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage](#), UNFPA, (2020).

What do feminists want?

- Governments must continue uphold, deliver and fully fund services to prevent, reduce and respond to gender-based violence. Governments need to continue providing or in many cases, scale up the resources that are being allocated to provide support, counselling and post-GBV care during and after the pandemic.
- Governments' national responses to the coronavirus pandemic must incorporate prevention strategies for gender-based violence — both online and offline, include specific communications to the public that respect for justice and the rule of law is not suspended during periods of confinement or lockdown, developing policies and laws for online safety for women and putting an end to any militarization, conflicts and war that is taking place.
- Governments must oblige to the call for a global ceasefire as outlined by Security Council Resolution 2532 that was unanimously adopted on 1 July 2020. The resolution demanded a general and immediate cessation of hostilities in all situations on its agenda and supports the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives and Special Envoys in that respect. Implementation of the ceasefire should be based on commitments in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the other resolutions that are part of the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

10 [Transcript of the Secretary-General's virtual press encounter on the appeal for global ceasefire](#), (2020)



Principle: COVID-19 responses must promote a comprehensive paradigm shift, relying on adequate and equitable financing



Feminists Demand: Just and equitable financing for development

Achieving just and equitable development, a universal public healthcare system, universal social protection, public goods and commons naturally requires money. The last several decades have seen a turn to private sector and private financing as the main source of financing development. This shift towards the private sector in development finance is based on firstly, the undermining of state's own domestic resource mobilization, and secondly the uncontested assumption that greater private financial flows to developing countries are an effective way to support development, regardless of the terms and conditions under which they take place.

Indeed, there is no question that the private sector – particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who account for the largest share of employment, including two thirds of all formal jobs in developing countries, especially for women – are crucial for development, as it creates jobs, provides essential goods and services, and is a source of tax revenue. However, the current financing for development model is clearly intended to privilege large multinational corporations which have a much more questionable positive impact on development, let alone sustainable development and human rights.

There is an enormous amount of money that leaves developing countries each year as a result of tax evasion and tax avoidance by corporations. Tax havens collectively cost governments between USD 500 billion and USD 600 billion a year, depending on the estimates – through both legal and not-so-legal means. Of that potential revenue, approximately USD 200 billion were lost to developing countries – contrast this to developing countries' GDP and the USD 150 billion or so that developing countries receive in foreign development assistance. A recent study by Action Aid found that 20 countries in Asia, Africa and South America are missing USD 2.8 billion worth of taxes from the 3 big global tech companies – Microsoft, Alphabet Inc (parent company of Google) and Facebook – through unfair global tax rules. Those numbers are likely to be just the tip of the iceberg given very little transparency is available on the taxes that these companies actually pay and the increased profits that these companies along with many other tech companies have made during this coronavirus pandemic. This USD 2.8 billion could have paid for the much needed 729,010 nurses or 770,649 midwives each year in these countries¹¹.

Many countries also miss a huge amount of resources in the elimination of tariff barriers as required by trade liberalization and debt repayments amidst the increasing number of vulture and private funds as debt moves from banks to capital markets. Developing countries are expected to be repaying a substantial amount to their public external

¹¹ See article by Action Aid, "[\\$2.8bn 'tax gap' exposed by ActionAid research reveals tip of the iceberg of 'Big Tech's big tax bill' in the global south](#)", (2020).

debt in 2020-2021 — amounting to between \$2 trillion and \$2.3 trillion for high-income developing countries and to between \$600 billion and \$1 trillion for middle and low-income developing countries. In the meantime, billionaire stockholders that own the vast bulk of corporate stocks profiting from the COVID-19 shock rather than faltering under it, have seen their personal wealth grow by over \$500 billion in the US alone in the first months of the pandemic. The IMF meanwhile, refuses to even consider selling a portion of its gold reserves — just 7% of it would generate a USD 12 billion profit, which would be enough to cancel the debts owed by the 73 poorest countries until the end of 2021 and still leave the Washington-based organisation with USD 26 billion more gold than it held at the start of the year¹².

There are arguably more equitable sources of financing for development than the private sector, such as progressive and just tax and fiscal policies and strengthened domestic resource mobilization.

Amidst the coronavirus pandemic, governments around the world will need to mobilize a huge amount of resources to tackle the health and economic crisis, to provide universal social protection and health care to everyone. The world is not short of those resources; it simply needs to redistribute what it already has.

What do feminists want?

- **Nationally, governments can legislate and strengthen their domestic resource mobilization by taking steps to tax corporations and the countries' wealthiest individuals. These taxes should be progressive, targeting the enormous profits of multinational companies, the wealthy 1% and ensuring the taxes are not passed to ordinary people instead.**
- **Economic recovery and stimulus packages should be focused on putting funds and resources into small, medium enterprises and the hands of women and community directly, and not large multinational corporations or fossil fuel industries.**
- **Globally, governments need to work together in developing tax international framework that can compel all corporations to publicly report their financials in each country, pay their taxes, not shop for countries with the weakest/lowest taxes and putting an end to tax havens and creating a universal, intergovernmental tax body housed within the UN. A UN-led process – as opposed to an OECD-led process, which has failed so far – would be more democratic and would be a critical step towards a coherent global system of tax rules that is in the interests of all countries, including the poorest countries who stand to lose the most from the loss of tax revenue, and towards putting an end to the dangerous 'race to the bottom' in tax incentives.**

¹² See article on The Guardian, "[Campaigners urge IMF to sell gold to provide debt relief](#)", (2020).

- **Unconditional cancellation of public external debt payments by all lenders – bilateral, multilateral and private lenders – for all countries in need, for at least the next four years. And a fair, transparent, binding and multilateral framework for debt crisis resolution that addresses unsustainable and illegitimate debt under the auspices of the UN, and not in a lender dominated process or institution.**
- **For the IMF to sell some of its stockpile of gold to cover the debt payments owed by the world's poorest countries for the next 15 months. Such gold sales would help the most vulnerable countries cope with the COVID-19 shock and pave the way for a broader debt deal.**



Feminists Demand: Transformation of the current economic system and paradigm

The current economic policy has failed most of the world's populations, and most acutely, women and girls, even prior to the pandemic. In addition to women subsidizing the entire economy by means of their unpaid domestic and care work, women were disproportionately more vulnerable to the human rights impacts of food insecurity, land and natural resource degradation, and climate crisis. Moreover, the prevailing economic model perpetuates, and often relies on, the systematic discrimination and disadvantages experienced by women in order to generate growth. Corporations that participate in the global value chains rely on the devaluation of women's work as a source of competitive advantage. The rationalisation of social safety nets and essential public services is made possible by the availability of women's unpaid labour to fill the gaps in care, while the very way in which economic activity is defined requires the complete devaluation, or gross undervaluation, of women's unpaid work, whether in the home or in family businesses.

When the outbreak began, many of the global value chains were amongst the first to collapse, and as factories and shops closed down, women were mostly the first to be cut or experiencing layoffs. Women's unpaid care work has also increased, with children out-of-school, heightened care needs of older persons and overwhelmed health services. Compounded economic impacts of the pandemic are inevitably felt more by women who generally earn less, save less, are in insecure and informal work and who are mostly living in poverty.

As the pandemic takes the world towards an economic recession unlike anything that has been experienced in the past, it is clear that not only does the current economic model has failed women, girls and the majority of peoples' around the world across both developing and developed worlds alike, it is also simultaneously lining the pockets of the billionaire elite who wealth have only skyrocketed during this pandemic amidst losses and inequalities¹³.

¹³ See article by Business Insider "[How billionaires saw their net worth increase by half a trillion dollars during the pandemic](#)", (2020).

Challenging gender inequality, achieving women's human rights and rebuilding a more equitable and sustainable world after the pandemic therefore requires directly challenging economic policies, institutions and accounting that have entrenched social inequalities and caused the current climate crisis and transforming the current economic system.

What do feminists want?

- Growth measured by gross domestic product (GDP) should not be the principle goal of economic and development strategy that governments – both developed and developing alike – puts a primacy on. By rejecting the primacy of economic growth and developing alternatives to the current prevailing economic model and paradigm, governments' have the opportunity to drive a transformative change of our current economic system to a more just and sustainable model of economy and development – which puts human rights as its core and care and well-being as its backbone.
- Ensure women's and communities' democratic participation, representation, leadership and decision-making in all COVID-19 emergency responses, economic recovery and stimulus packages. This requires governments and international institutions to move on from the outdated notion of women's empowerment as women who are economically empowered and have the agency to compete in markets (as proposed by the World Bank), and instead adopt the notion of women's economic empowerment as women have the capacity to exercise real power and control over their own lives and the terms on which they engage with social and economic structures.



Principle: COVID-19 responses must be based on and strengthen democratic values



Feminists Demand: Policy space for national and local government, democratic participation for peoples' and communities

Policy space refers to “the freedom and ability of governments to identify and pursue the most appropriate mix of economic and social policies to achieve equitable and sustainable development in their own national contexts¹⁴”. In this era of deregulation,

liberalization, privatization, austerity and debt – under the regimes of the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and IMF that has continue to strengthen their power and influence – the space for national and local governments to implement relevant social, economic, health and fiscal policies have been severely reduced and constrained. This is especially the case for developing countries who often have not yet matured and developed much of their policies and who are often unable to effectively negotiate relevant policy spaces from these agreements either. As no one country is the same, many development policies require trial and error processes in order for governments to be able to come to the right sets of policies.

Numerous steps that governments have taken since the outbreak of COVID-19 begun, i.e. regulating the market and foreign capital flight, movement control, regulating or taking over private sector providers – are in fact in violation of many provisions of trade and investment agreements and investor-state dispute settlement clauses. These steps are likely to remain even after the pandemic has ended, as governments will continue to tackle the ensuing economic crisis for years to come. Domestic policy space therefore, is vital in both tackling the pandemic and developing recovery plans for it.

Expanded domestic policy space for governments must also be accompanied by the participation and voices of communities and civil societies – women, youth, racial, religious minorities, Indigenous communities and LGBTIQ+ people – in shaping these development policies and in these policy spaces.

What do feminists want?

- Restoring domestic policy space for governments, not only at national level but also local level which have been severely constrained by the dominant model of trade and investment liberalization. This includes suspending agreements and provisions that clearly undermines the state domestic policy-making and regulatory capacity, such as investor-state dispute settlement provisions,
- Ensuring the democratic participation of women, communities and civil societies in the shaping and decision-making of the policies both in tackling the pandemic and also the recovery plans to come after in order to ensure an inclusive response and recovery.

¹⁴ See UNCTAD's [Trade and Development Report: Global Governance and Policy Space for Development](#) (2014).



Feminists Demand: Respect for Democratic Space and Principles

One of the largest challenges facing many governments during this pandemic is governments' abilities to respond to this crisis effectively, whilst ensuring that the measures taken do not and will not undermine the fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This challenge is without a doubt enormous, especially given that some of the measures that will need to be undertaken – such as lockdowns, movement control, quarantines, requirements for testing, isolation, surveillance and wearing of masks – will inevitably encroach on many individual rights and freedoms which are an integral and necessary part of a democracy.

It is important therefore to ensure that measures being taken during the crisis and in a time of emergency are still in line and in respect for the rule of law and democratic principles, that heightened restrictions should not be accompanied by harsh criminal sanctions, and that both media and the public have freedom to expression and information, including free, timely, accurate and science-based flow of information. The principle of non-discrimination is also particularly important under the current context, as not taking into account the specific needs of those most marginalized in introducing many of these measures may also result in discriminations.

What do feminists want?

- Governments must respect the rule of law and democratic principles even as they embark on emergency measures and heightened restrictions in tackling the coronavirus. This means that even in times of emergency, government's actions must still be in accordance with the law, and that the measures taken should have a clear and reasonable timeframe and that all powers and actions taken by government's executives should be checked and balanced by the country's legislative and judicial arm.
- While monitoring, tracking and anticipating are crucial steps of an epidemic surveillance and has led to the proliferation of digital and technological tools for tracking and surveillance, such pandemic surveillance should not be used unchecked and unaccountably to intrude on the right to privacy and for increasing government monitoring and intrusion of individuals and their privacy. Individual data collected during these times and for pandemic surveillance should only be kept by governments and not by the private sector or multinational corporations, should be kept securely and should also not be kept by governments for an unreasonable time frame.

Principle: COVID-19 responses must be a down payment on a just and equitable transition towards an equal and healthy planet



Feminist Demand: Divestment from harmful, extractive institutions and investment in care-centered economy

Prior to the pandemic, the world was supposed to be on a trajectory to shift investment from polluting fossil fuels toward renewable energy and care centred economy. However, the numbers that are being pumped by governments, banks and international financial institutions do not seem in line with such a trajectory.

It was estimated that prior to the pandemic, the fossil fuel industry was still receiving USD 5.2 trillion in annual subsidies, tax breaks and uncharged external impacts — such as on air pollution and climate — of fossil fuel production and use¹⁵. Global banks' lending to the fossil-fuel industry has also continued to increase every year since the 2015 Paris Agreement, pumping \$1.9 trillion of new money into the development of fossil fuels, even to the dirtiest kind of energy extraction¹⁶.

While rhetoric about the need for a green recovery post pandemic has grown louder in policy spaces, existing data shows that, in reality, fossil fuel producers and high-carbon sectors, such as airlines, are currently receiving 70% more recovery aid than the clean energy. The G20+ countries, for example, have pledged more than USD 200 billion in COVID-19 recovery funds to fossil fuels, while only USD 89 billion has been committed to clean energy but 81% of this support is unspecific on the appropriate environmental safeguards¹⁷. Researchers have found that if just 12% of the COVID-19 stimulus funding that is currently pledged¹⁸, are spent every year until 2024 on low-carbon energy investments and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels, we would be on track to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees celsius – the Paris Agreement's most ambitious climate target¹⁹.

The current pandemic has not pushed the climate crisis into the background, as many expected, especially given the intersection of climate, economic and health crises that many countries and people around the world are experiencing simultaneously. The old rhetoric against climate action has generally been that there is not enough money to fund it. Yet governments are preparing — or are already — pumping trillions of dollars into the global economy to counteract the health, social and economic meltdown that

¹⁵ See IMF Working Paper, Global Fossil Fuel Subsidies Remain Large: An Update Based on Country-Level Estimates (2019)

¹⁶ See article by Myriam Vander Stichele, "[The Financialised Firm: How finance fuels and transforms today's corporation](#)", (2020).

¹⁷ A new online tool available on energypolicytracker.org tracks and updates on a weekly basis, latest information about COVID-19 government policy responses from a climate and energy perspective by governments around the world. While presently heavily focused on policy responses of the G20 governments, the tool is set to expand and include more countries around the world in order to provide a global context.

¹⁸ USD 12 trillion at the time of writing.

¹⁹ See report by Marina Andrijevic, Carl-Friedrich Schleussner, Matthew J. Gidden, David L. McCollum, Joeri Rogelj. Science (2019). "COVID-19 recovery funds dwarf clean energy investment needs."

has been caused by the pandemic. The recovery from this pandemic needs to result in an acceleration of our just and equitable transition from our current fossil fuel and extractive based economic system into a low-carbon and just economic system that recognizes and redistributes women's care work and prioritises energy for communities, giving communities decisions-making power over how they want to utilize the resources in their community for energy. This large-scale stimulus spending will shape the global economy — whether the world continues down the same path it already was prior to the pandemic or whether it embarks on a new one — for decades to come and could either worsen our current unsurvivable climate crisis or create a resilient and sustainable economy that is powered by clean and renewable energy and the valuation of care work.

What do feminists want?

- **Governments need to stop pumping recovery funds into fossil fuel industries immediately and redirect these funds towards low-carbon, care economy and international climate mechanisms and funds — whether by creating more jobs in the health and care sector, channelling the resources to communities to develop their own source of energy and manage other public commons and directing funds towards climate financing and mechanism.**
- **The G20+ countries need to redirect their pledge of more than USD 200 billion in COVID-19 recovery funds from fossil fuels to a low-carbon and care economy.**



Principle: COVID-19 responses must be guided by cooperation, multilateralism and global justice



Feminists Demand: Multilateralism that puts the primacy of human rights over economic growth

The current system of multilateralism privileges profit and economic growth often at the expense of human rights and the environment. Despite widespread evidence of the negative impact that austerity measures and structural adjustment policies have on human rights²⁰, many of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF continue to prescribe the same measures and policies, effectively ignoring the human rights implication of its policies and conditionalities. Trade and investment policies are also known to limit domestic policies spaces – the use of tariffs and subsidies as well as other industrial, labour and agriculture policies – the same policies that arguably have been employed and used by today's developed countries to reach their level of development²¹. Investor-state dispute provisions available in many free trade and investment agreements have been utilized to undermine many government's actions and measures that were carried out even in the interests of affirmative action policies, environmental protection or labor rights – clearly undermining the respect and achievements of human rights. While numerous human rights abuses have been found from land-grabbing, evictions, involuntary resettlement, forced labour, physical or sexual abuse, reprisals against human rights defenders, destruction of the environment, to name a few — in the so-called development projects funded by the World Bank and other international financial institutions²².

Some of these institutions – the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization for example – effectively have a separate and dominant jurisdiction over economic policymaking above and outside much and the rest of the UN system. They carry enforceable commitments, with economic and trade related sanctions as implication if states fail in their obligation under these agreements, unlike that of the human rights treaties and processes. In addition, they have undermined democratic multilateralism for many decades and send out the message where economic growth outranks the primacy of human rights and the search for economic, social, gender and environmental justice.

²⁰ See several reports of the Independent Expert on foreign debt on the responsibility for complicity of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in human rights violations in the context of retrogressive economic reforms (A/74/178), the impact of the SAPs and austerity measures on labour rights (A/HRC/34/57) and women's human rights (A/73/179).

²¹ See Ha-Joon Chang, "Kicking Away the Ladder, Development Strategy in Historical Perspective", (2002).

²² See numerous resources documenting this from the [Bretton Woods Project](#), Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law & Development (APWLD) briefer on [7 Reasons Why Feminist Say No to World Bank-IMF Neoliberalism](#) (2018), and the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) report on [What are the Gender Dimensions of IFFs?](#) (2017)

Soon after the pandemic started, many governments began taking unilateral actions which ended up undermining multilateralism – which was already in crisis prior to the pandemic. The reason such a turn of events has occurred is because our current multilateralism was not built on the principles of solidarity, cooperation and human rights – but were instead predominantly built upon the search for economic growth and profit. And after a relatively short-lived win-win hype about globalization, there is now widespread concern among countries and even peoples that their ability to control their economic and social development is increasingly being circumscribed by multilateralism.

The current pandemic, however, has also shown that when government's act unilaterally or individually, we cannot tackle crises such as these effectively. Both the coronavirus pandemic, the climate crisis, the crisis of inequality and poverty can only be tackled effectively if governments around the world work collectively. These can also only be tackled when economic justice, environmental justice, social and gender justice, redistributive justice are viewed as interconnected, inalienable and an indivisible part of achieving human rights. This also means that any provisions of trade and investment agreements or debt conditionalities that are found to be inconsistent with the human rights obligations of governments should be revised or terminated. Restoring the primacy of human rights over inconsistent international obligations is therefore vital.

What do feminists want?

- Dismantling the steadfast and dominant jurisdiction of the World Bank, IMF and WTO over global economic policymaking as these institutions have shown that not only is it incapable of putting the primacy of human rights over economic growth, but also that it has been governed undemocratically by wealthier countries. This could be achieved by restoring some of those jurisdictions under the UN through an International Economic Reconstruction and Systemic Reform Summit where there is the possibility for developing countries to have an equal voice and vote.
- Ex-ante and periodic human rights impact assessment of trade and investment agreements and economic reform policies. Such a provision would have been in line with the Guiding Principles on Human Rights Impact Assessments of Trade and Investment Agreements as drafted by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food and the Guiding Principles on human rights impact assessment of economic reforms as drafted by the UN Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt on human rights. Such guidelines and framework should be applied by governments as they design and develop the economic recovery and stimulus package during and after the pandemic.
- Government's should undertake to develop a feminist foreign policy which would promote the overarching goals of gender equality, human rights, peace and environmental justice. Such a foreign policy should also ensure and reiterate that a government's engagement and participation in multilateral processes are not driven solely by national and domestic interests and benefits, but by the spirit of mutual cooperation, solidarity, human rights as well as common but differentiated responsibilities.

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