



Making gender equality a reality

Recommendations to the G7

APRIL 2021

Executive summary

The W7 is a coalition of civil society organisations and feminist activists, from the G7 countries and around the world, who are committed to bringing about tangible, lasting and transformative change in women's and girls' lives everywhere – in 2021 and beyond. On 21–22 April 2021, the W7 Summit brought together feminist representatives to collaborate on concrete and meaningful proposals for the G7 leaders and ministers in pursuit of gender justice.

From the Covid-19 pandemic to poverty, conflict and the climate crisis, women in all their diversity continue to be frontline responders, at the forefront of innovative and transformative responses to today's challenges. Yet, across the board, women, girls and gender-diverse people face inequality and discrimination, while being shut out of decision-making spaces.

Recommendations to the G7

Over the course of the W7 Summit, feminist experts, activists and practitioners have clearly demonstrated the wealth and richness of proven solutions to common global challenges that are at our collective disposal, offering the G7 specific and impactful paths forward. The W7 welcomes growing attention to gender justice, but real commitment means pledging both tangible results and funding to match the rhetoric. What is needed now is bold, transformative action.

The W7 proposes detailed policy recommendations to the G7, underpinned by three core principles: equality and justice, accountability and meaningful participation in democratic decision-making, and just, equitable and green economies that centre wellbeing in post-pandemic recovery. Our recommendations are grouped into eight thematic areas:

- **Women's economic justice**
- **Climate**
- **Women, Peace and Security**
- **Violence against women and girls / gender-based violence**
- **Health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights**
- **Education**
- **Democracy, accountability and meaningful political participation**
- **Racial justice and decolonisation**

Looking to the future

We also offer a vision for the world we want in years to come. This is a world characterised by true democracy, accountability and participation for all, and especially by meaningful consultation with the most systematically marginalised – women and girls with disabilities; indigenous, refugee, migrant and impoverished women and girls; women and girls of colour; LGBTQIA+ women, girls and gender-diverse people. We support a transition to green economies that centre people and planet by decolonising the relationship between Global North and South, valuing wellbeing over accumulation, and investing in sustainable and green social infrastructure. Finally, we envision fairer societies – both within and beyond the G7 countries – built on feminist principles of inclusion, gender and social justice, anti-racism, and structural transformation. A truly feminist approach goes beyond inclusion in existing decision-making spaces; rather, it seeks to transform those very spaces.

We call on the G7 to rise to this challenge, now and in the years to come.

I. Introduction

The W7 is a coalition of civil society organisations and feminist activists from the G7 countries and around the world who are committed to women and girls' rights. Our shared objective is to promote proposals for gender equality and the rights of women, girls and gender-diverse people within the G7 process, ensuring that G7 leaders adopt concrete political and financial commitments with the potential to bring about tangible, lasting and transformative change in women's and girls' lives everywhere – in 2021 and beyond. Building on feminist principles of intersectionality and inclusion, we have engaged feminists from every continent, opening the door to voices not normally heard in these spaces.

About the W7 Summit and recommendations

On 21–22 April 2021, the W7 Summit brought together feminist experts, activists and practitioners to amplify the voices, perspectives and leadership of those not commonly included in the G7 forum. Over these two days, participants collaborated on proposals for the G7 and agreed on concrete and meaningful actions in pursuit of gender justice. Underpinning discussions were the W7's core principles. The first of these is equality and justice, with an intersectional lens, prioritising initiatives that put marginalised women, girls and gender-diverse people first and committing to anti-racism. We base this commitment in feminist principles of inclusion, gender and social justice, anti-racism and structural transformation – both within and beyond the G7 countries. Second is our shift in aspirations towards just, equitable and green economies that centre sustainability, wellbeing and care as part of the pandemic recovery and beyond. Finally, we are committed to accountability and the meaningful participation of all as a central part of democratic decision-making.

Through drafting these policy recommendations, the W7 is helping to ensure that feminist perspectives, the expertise of women's rights organisations, and the lived realities of marginalised people of all genders are front and centre in the G7 process – *and that G7 leaders hear them and take action*. As the G7 Summit approaches in June 2021, representatives of the W7 will meet with key decision-makers to put forth our proposals for the G7.

Why urgent action is needed on gender equality and women's rights

From the Covid-19 pandemic to poverty, conflict and the climate crisis, women and girls in all their diversity have been and continue to be at the forefront of innovative and transformative responses to today's challenges. Across the board, women and girls see poorer outcomes in health and educational attainment, lesser coverage of social protections like pensions, and greater impacts of the climate crisis.¹ Even before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, one in

three women globally experienced gender-based violence (GBV), a figure that has escalated during the pandemic.² Globally, women continue to do the overwhelming majority of unpaid care work and household labour (76.4 per cent), leaving them with less time for paid employment and precious little for education and leisure.³ On average, women earn less at work, face greater precarity in the workplace and have fewer labour rights.⁴ The global pandemic has delivered a severe economic blow to women, with women's jobs nearly twice as vulnerable to loss as men's worldwide.⁵ In conflict-affected settings, it is clear that Covid-19 is exacerbating existing gendered inequalities as well as conflict and insecurity themselves.⁶ However, while women have been on the frontlines of global Covid-19 responses as carers and health workers, they only represent an average of 24 per cent of national-level decision-making bodies on Covid-19.⁷ Coupled with increasing political polarisation and backlash against progressive values – including women's and LGBTQIA+ rights – the pandemic and its fallout are set to roll back crucial gains across multiple indicators.

“There is a yearning across much of the world for us to build back fairer, more inclusively and more resiliently,” argued Naila Kabeer, W7 keynote speaker. “A concern with gender justice has to be central to this vision because it challenges the basic tenets of the old paradigm and holds the key to a new one.” The G7 can – as it has done in the past – help to change the conversation, granting political legitimacy to new ideas and financial resources to make change a reality. The W7 is therefore committed to harnessing the leadership and influence of the G7 to create a better post-pandemic world for women, girls and gender-diverse people.

II. Recommendations to the 2021 G7 Summit

The UK government, during its presidency of this year's G7 Summit, has announced a focus on gender equality throughout the Leaders' and ministerial tracks. While the W7 supports this focus on gender equality, we also want to issue three challenges to G7 leaders and ministers as they embark on their negotiations.

First, that gender equality must be genuinely mainstreamed across all G7 priorities including climate change, open democracy, finance, trade and foreign policy. The W7 Summit revealed the rich array of work already being done to promote gender equality, and evidence of the many approaches that have been shown to work but need much more support. It is not enough for the G7 to focus on a few small-scale initiatives under the different tracks, rather than addressing the real solutions to systemic challenges around which there is already much consensus.

Secondly, that rhetoric must match the reality. While increased discussion of gender equality is indeed warmly received, we want to see tangible results – and this requires funding to match the rhetoric, not just for girls' education but for ending violence, fulfilling reproductive rights and implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda. G7 governments should be increasing financial support for gender equality through development aid and assistance, not reducing it.

Thirdly, that bold action must be taken by G7 leaders, if they are to deserve their titles. Covid-19 has highlighted the need for real, transformative change in the way we think about economic policy domestically and internationally. Leaders will need to listen to the mounting evidence and be prepared to consider innovative and transformative solutions that focus on the creation of just, equitable and sustainable economies.

The W7's more detailed recommendations are grouped into eight thematic areas, which cut across and connect the different ministerial tracks of the G7's work. These thematic areas are:

- **Women's economic justice**
- **Climate**
- **Women, Peace and Security**

- **Violence against women and girls / gender-based violence**
- **Health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights**
- **Education**
- **Democratic accountability and participation**
- **Racial justice and decolonisation**

The W7 welcomes growing attention to gender justice, but real commitment means pledging tangible results and funding across every aspect of G7 discussions and commitments. We have seen lofty rhetoric before – what is needed now is bold, transformative action.

Women’s economic justice

Why this issue is important

The pandemic has amplified existing gender, racialised, social and economic inequalities across societies, while poverty and inequality between countries is set to rise.⁸ Women and girls in all their diversity are more likely to work in the sectors most impacted by Covid-19, particularly in the informal sector with limited access to social protection.⁹ The pandemic has also brought to the fore the centrality of publicly funded health and care services to human wellbeing, alongside the historically undervalued role of women’s unpaid and often unseen care work. Traditional approaches of financial inclusion for women have proven insufficient, particularly for the most marginalised, amounting only to small changes seeking to incorporate women into an unequal system that continues to deny them access to vital public services. For an inclusive and transformative recovery, rapid and long-term measures are urgently required to give governments the fiscal and policy space to invest in universal social protection, the care economy and decent work, especially in the informal sector.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

Post-pandemic economic recovery is a priority for the G7, particularly for the Leaders’ track work on building “prosperity for all”, and it also requires a reshaping of economic policymaking to account for structural inequalities. Thus far, there has been some interest in the Leaders’, Finance and Trade tracks in recognising the importance of job creation and the care economy for women’s economic justice. That said, there has been no explicit language agreed, so concern remains that this opportunity for genuine progress may be lost in a return to business as usual after the pandemic. In the Foreign and Development track, we are particularly concerned about a reliance on private investment for economic recovery, rather than recognising the need for publicly funded services to reach the most marginalised.

Recommendations to the G7

To create a more equitable, sustainable and just economic recovery after the pandemic, and in line with the emerging framework of the Generation Equality Forum’s Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, co-led by Germany, we call on G7 ministers to take action in the following areas:

Ensure equitable economic recovery internationally

- Avert a major global debt crisis and increase fiscal space for equitable economic recovery in countries in the Global South through **mandatory inclusion of private creditors in all debt relief initiatives** and **the cancellation of all outstanding sovereign debt** across private, bilateral and multilateral creditors.
- Agree to a **global corporate minimum tax rate** and curb illicit financial flows, in order to increase fiscal space for countries in the Global South.

- Promote **democratic and inclusive global economic decision-making** on sustainable and equitable recovery using G7 countries' influence within the international financial institutions.
- Ensure that international financial institutions (IFIs) do not promote **harmful fiscal consolidation conditions** such as regressive taxation and cuts in public services, which disproportionately hit women and undermine equitable recovery.

Recognise and invest in the care economy

- **Recognise the importance of the care economy in securing prosperity for all** by investing an additional 2 per cent of GDP into social infrastructure to create gender-responsive public health and care services that improve service provision for the most marginalised, reduce women's unpaid care burdens and create decent work for women.¹⁰
- **Promote the labour rights of underpaid care workers**, including migrant workers.
- **Finance a global social protection fund** to kickstart universal, publicly funded national protection schemes for low-income countries.¹¹
- **Fund the care economy through public investment**, recognising the evidence that private investment, and particularly public-private partnerships (PPPs), fail to meet the needs of marginalised women.¹²
- Influence the IFIs to stop **fiscal consolidation and austerity conditions** that directly undermine investment in the care economy.

Create quality jobs

- **Create decent work** with labour protections, including through public investment in social infrastructure and other sectors where women workers predominate.
- **Promote decent work by ratifying, funding and enforcing International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions** on collective bargaining and freedom of association, as well as Convention 189 on domestic workers and Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. Ensure these conventions are enforced throughout supply chains.

Agree to fair trade and investment rules

- Ensure **equitable access to the Covid-19 vaccine** through the waiver of specific provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS Agreement) in the interest of prevention, containment and treatment of Covid-19.¹³
- **Commit to fair, sustainable trade and investment policies and practices**, subject to international human rights standards and in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including a review of the investor state dispute settlement mechanism.
- **Support the establishment of a United Nations binding treaty on business and human rights** with a focus on women's human rights.

Climate

Why this issue is important

The world's richest nations bear the most responsibility for the climate crisis, which impacts on the rights of people of all genders, undermines efforts to combat poverty and inequality, and fuels food insecurity, fragility and conflict. Even before Covid-19, the climate crisis had increased inequality between rich and poor countries by 25 per cent.¹⁴ Marginalised women and girls are more likely to experience climate impacts, which then have knock-on effects across many other areas, yet their experiences and leadership are undervalued in responses. Women, girls and gender-diverse people are critical agents of change, and their leadership is essential to understanding climate impacts and developing effective mitigation and adaptation responses that leave no one behind.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

As some of the largest carbon emitters, G7 countries must show leadership in implementing the Paris Agreement and mobilising climate finance that supports gender justice and human rights. In 2019, several G7 countries announced contributions of US\$5.5 billion to the Green Climate Fund and committed to supporting women's contribution to environmental policies through the GREAT (Gender Responsive Environment Action and Training) Initiative. Such platforms, while a welcome recognition of women's pivotal roles, must sit alongside strong public policies to fight climate change and support women's rights.

Recommendations to the G7

We call on G7 ministers to mitigate the impacts of the climate crisis and, simultaneously, to elevate women and marginalised groups in the process of transitioning to low-carbon, technology-enabled societies by taking the following actions:

- **Ensure all climate finance is gender-just, takes an intersectional approach and is accessible to national women's rights organisations and local communities**, inclusive of LGBTQIA+ people, indigenous communities and racially diverse groups. Ensure transparency, equity and meaningful participation in climate finance design and delivery, including conducting *ex ante* and *ex post* impact assessments based on gender and intersecting inequalities.
- **Increase overall levels of climate finance and commit to ensuring 50 per cent is targeted for adaptation, delivered as grants rather than loans.** Increase finance for loss and damage, and address increasing debt levels, which prevent governments from investing in climate change solutions, social protection and the care economy.
- **Commit to a just and equitable green transition in the Covid-19 recovery.** End reliance on fossil fuels, end fossil fuel subsidies and ensure that solutions to phase out carbon prioritise human rights. Substantially expand public investment in the care economy to create green jobs and reduce gendered and economic inequalities. Support women and marginalised groups to access decent, green jobs and address occupational segregation in green jobs. Assure equal rights to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance and natural and economic resources. Transform trade, investment and global tax policies to prioritise human rights and gender justice.
- **Commit to climate policies at local, national, and international levels, including (but not limited to) nationally determined contributions** that are gender-just, intersectional and inclusive of indigenous peoples and local communities, their knowledge, and practices. Endorse, finance and fully implement the UN Framework

Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) five-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan.

- **Commit to increase the proportion of women, girls and marginalised groups in decision-making and leadership positions throughout climate and environmental governance and sectors.** Address legal, structural and cultural barriers to their leadership and meaningful participation in decision-making and policymaking.
- **Develop and implement accountability mechanisms to hold corporations hosted in G7 states responsible for environmental degradation and attacks on women human rights and environmental defenders.**

Women, Peace and Security

Why this issue is important

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing conflict, insecurity and fragility, with profound impacts on those already affected by multiple existing crises, including the sustained underfunding of gender-responsive public services and social protection. Long-term responses to the pandemic should take into account how Covid-19, along with future pandemics and crises, impact conflict dynamics that are themselves gendered.¹⁵ Women, Peace and Security (WPS) is a comprehensive agenda that sits across the G7's priorities, and thus the G7 should ensure that WPS feeds into not just foreign policy and humanitarian action but domestic policy too. A transformational approach means accounting for the impact and the causes of conflict; committing to disarmament; and ensuring and funding participation – of women, girls and gender-diverse people, and of their organisations – at peace tables and in all areas of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and post-conflict.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

At the 2018 G7 in Canada, leaders committed to the [G7 WPS Partnership Initiative](#), which established bilateral relationships between each G7 member state and one of seven fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). The terms of these partnerships were not agreed, and the partnerships and relationships have varied. In 2018, G7 states also committed to the [Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action](#). This was reaffirmed at the France-hosted G7 in 2019.

Recommendations to the G7

In line with the emerging Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact, part of the Generation Equality Forum, we call on the G7 WPS Partnership Initiative and G7 ministers to take the following actions:

Reverse the lack of funding for gender equality in FCAS and increase investment in achieving WPS objectives

- **Commit at least 15 per cent of development aid and assistance in FCAS to the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Marker 2 and ensure that 10 per cent directly reaches women's rights organisations in FCAS**, including those working on peacebuilding. This should be done through funding mechanisms that are long-term, core, flexible and for their self-defined priorities. Such funding should respect and respond to the challenges women's rights organisations face in accessing funds in FCAS.¹⁶ Efforts to reach these targets should be monitored, evaluated and made publicly available for transparency, accountability and learning.

Make participation of women, girls and gender-diverse people in WPS a reality

- **Enable the full, meaningful and permanent participation, leadership and influence of women in all their diversity in conflict prevention, post-conflict and disaster preparedness**, as well as Covid-19 response decision-making and recovery spaces. This should be intentionally intersectional, including (but not limited to) grassroots organisations, LGBTQIA+ communities and people with disabilities. G7 funding for all peace talks and security processes, including ceasefire monitoring mechanisms, security sector reform (SSR), and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) should include at least 50 per cent women and girls, including those from diverse communities.

Ensure policy coherence across existing WPS, Grand Bargain, Generation Equality Forum and G7 agreements

- **Make collective and individual commitments on the comprehensive nature of the WPS agenda**, ensuring policy coherence and implementation of all existing commitments related to gender, security and humanitarian action. Develop WPS National Action Plans that are fully costed, comprehensively address women and girls' rights, apply both domestically and internationally, are funded and have impact-oriented monitoring and evaluation.
- Where G7 states have a feminist foreign policy or have publicly committed to women and girls' rights, **ensure implementation, monitoring and public review of these commitments and policies**.

Ensure protection from and prevention of violence and conflict

- **Acknowledge and prioritise protection of women, girls and gender-diverse people and the prevention of GBV, conflict and violence**. This includes understanding and acknowledging risks to women peacebuilders, women's rights organisations, women human rights defenders, LGBTQIA+ defenders and environmental defenders.
- **Commit to funding emergency and long-term protection mechanisms**, as well as providing political and diplomatic support to address associated risks, attacks and ongoing impunity. Protection should focus on prevention and responding to attacks and threats, rather than using protection to further exclude peacebuilders, organisations and defenders.
- **Implement the Arms Trade Treaty and ensure a marked reduction in arms production and sales globally**.

Violence against women and girls / gender-based violence

Why this issue is important

Across the world, including in G7 countries, GBV and violence against women and girls (VAWG) – intimate partner violence, sexual violence and abuse, online violence, and harmful practices such as FGM and early and forced marriage, amongst other forms – have intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic, as in all humanitarian crises. The pandemic has highlighted the reality of gendered inequalities, limited social protection and safe spaces, and underfunded, understaffed and poorly coordinated essential services to prevent and respond to GBV/VAWG. Those living in displacement, in conflict-affected settings or in occupied territories are at particular risk. At the same time, however, the pandemic must not overshadow other forms of GBV/VAWG that affect marginalised women and girls, such as human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

The UK government has acknowledged the intensification of GBV/VAWG as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and committed to eliminating it, building on the success of its What Works to Prevent Violence programme. Plans include a new initiative (What Works II) to scale up proven approaches to preventing GBV/VAWG worldwide, potentially reaching one million women and girls over the next five years. While the UK wants G7 partners to commit to this approach, there is no clarity on what this might mean in practice or financial commitments. At the same time, the UK is co-leading various processes including the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on GBV and the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies. It was also a key funder of the GBV Accountability Framework. The UK government is considering calling on G7 states to become active members of the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on GBV.

Recommendations to the G7

In line with the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalition on GBV, co-led by the UK, we call on G7 ministers to take the following actions:

- **Prioritise and increase spending on GBV/VAWG, both nationally and as part of development and humanitarian assistance.** This must include funds dedicated to GBV/VAWG prevention, mitigation and response. A minimum of 25 per cent of GBV/VAWG funding should be dedicated to women's rights organisations, girl-led groups, and feminist movements and activists working to address GBV/VAWG. Funding must be accessible, core, long-term, flexible and for their self-defined priorities.
- **Ensure that GBV/VAWG and domestic violence programmes are informed and led by specialist women's rights organisations and girl-led groups.** Support women and girl-led community-based approaches that maintain ongoing dialogue with communities rather than one-off consultations. In crises, include women and girls in all decision-making spaces at all levels, including at UN cluster and government level.
- **Invest in the creation and implementation of national action plans to end GBV/VAWG, as well as ongoing research and investment into evidence-based programming,** such as the UK-funded What Works programme. At the same time, recognise the importance of practice-based evidence and research generated in the Global South.
- **Prioritise long-term, sustainable GBV/VAWG (including online violence) prevention, mitigation and response interventions and recognise that these are essential and life-saving services, especially in but not limited to pandemic responses.** This includes access to shelters, safe abortion, and comprehensive and inclusive support services for women and girls in all their diversity, including LGTBQIA+ people and other marginalised groups facing violence, abuse and exploitation. Acknowledge that increasing rates of GBV/VAWG are a cross-cutting risk to non-delivery in other priority areas, including education.
- **Legislate nationally and implement existing laws and international agreements to address GBV/VAWG and criminalise those who perpetrate this violence.** This should include legislating against online violence and holding transnational corporations to account. Ratify ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment at work; promote and support the ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and ratify without reservation, promote and support the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic

Violence (Istanbul convention). Invest in training those who will implement legislation including law enforcement, judicial systems and healthcare workers.

Health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights

Why this issue is important

Alongside equitable access to vaccines globally, recognising the role of women health workers will be central to equitable Covid-19 recovery. Women make up 70 per cent of the global health workforce and can face violence in performing their roles, a risk that may rise with contested access to finite vaccine supplies.¹⁷ Women and girls also do the majority of paid and unpaid care work.¹⁸ Even before the pandemic, at least half the world's population was not receiving essential health services, a state of affairs that has significantly worsened as countries' health systems strain during the crisis.¹⁹ Covid-19 has also caused disruptions to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), which are often the first to be deprioritised in the face of crisis.²⁰ The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that 12 million women have lost access to contraception during this pandemic, resulting in 1.4 million pregnancies.²¹ Clinic closures, travel restrictions and other containment measures have also constrained access to SRHR and given rise to harmful medical practices like excess caesarean sections and not allowing women to be accompanied in childbirth. Globally, many countries are now regressing in accessibility of and legal barriers to abortion, and limitations on services and self-managed care are obstacles even in G7 countries, especially for marginalised groups.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

In 2013, the G8 issued the [Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict](#), citing the need to provide “appropriate and accessible services, including health” to all survivors of sexual violence in armed conflict. The 2018 [Whistler Declaration on Unlocking the Power of Adolescent Girls for Sustainable Development](#) highlighted harmful practices like child, early and forced marriage, and recognised the need to promote and protect adolescent health. While several G7 countries have individually identified SRHR as a priority, the G7's efforts as a collective continually fall short of adequately recognising and advancing this issue. As the Covid-19 pandemic has deteriorated access to SRHR, it is ever more pressing for G7 countries to together promote, protect and invest in SRHR.

Recommendations to the G7

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

Expand access to and support for SRHR

- **Commit appropriate funding to support accessible and inclusive SRHR.**²² This includes updating and recommitting to the [Muskoka Initiative on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health](#), agreed by the G8 in 2010; establishing a G7 trust fund for improving access to SRHR and ensuring sustained financial support in the face of any future restrictive policies; and providing more and better funding to women's rights and feminist organisations fighting for bodily autonomy and comprehensive and accessible SRHR. Funding should include programme integration, such as providing SRHR info on GBV/VAWG hotlines.
- **Ensure that every woman and adolescent girl has access to free, timely, non-judgemental and accessible SRHR services and supplies in a nearby location**, regardless of their financial situation, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, race or ethnicity, age, ability, migratory status, religion, status as a

parent or sex worker, or any other form of discrimination. Ensure that this commitment endures throughout and beyond the current Covid-19 crisis.

- **Support the strongest possible language on bodily autonomy in the G7's political declaration**, aligned with the Generation Equality Forum's framing and obligating G7 states to make strong commitments at the Forum. This should include explicitly advocating for access to safe abortion, including emergency contraception, telemedicine and self-managed abortion care, and ensuring access to comprehensive sexuality education in and outside of schools.
- **Directly support countries that have seen backsliding in access to both services and rights**. Declare full support for a comprehensive and inclusive definition of SRHR, including service provision and accessibility, working to support decriminalisation and repeal of discriminatory laws, and ending stigma around issues like menstruation.
- **Pledge to implement World Health Organization guidance designating SRHR as essential services and core to universal health coverage**, both at home – especially for marginalised women – as well as in foreign assistance.²³
- **Agree that future reinstatement of restrictive policies, like the Mexico City Policy, will result in consequences**, such as isolation from the G7.

Build more resilient, equitable and decent health systems for Covid-19 and beyond

- **Ensure equitable global access to Covid-19 diagnostics, vaccines and medication**, including through COVAX, and support the roll-out of effective mass vaccination programmes that use a gender and diversity lens to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised. Ensure that excluded groups, including refugees, internally displaced people, migrants, ethnic minorities and stateless populations are included in national vaccination programmes.
- **Ensure health and care workers**, who are overwhelmingly women, are paid a living wage and have access to safe and decent working conditions.

Education

Why this issue is important

Covid-19 has created an unprecedented education emergency. In addition to school closures, the poorest and most marginalised girls face increased unpaid care responsibilities caused by the pandemic as well as a growing risk of early and forced marriage, unintended pregnancy and consequently extreme poverty, all of which impede their access to education. An estimated 20 million secondary school-aged girls may never return to their classrooms.²⁴ Enabling girls to return to school requires an inclusive, intersectional approach that tackles the range of barriers that are preventing their attendance. This requires a holistic, systems-based approach that works to promote gender equality across sectors, including child protection, to reach every girl. Ultimately, however, the goal is not just to get girls into school but to make school a place for promoting gender-just values and a transformative approach.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

Girls' education is a priority in both the Leaders' track and the Foreign and Development ministerial track. Thus far, it appears to be the only area where specific funding will be provided towards gender equality. During its G7 presidency, the UK government in particular has highlighted girls' education as a priority. This entails a stated aim to work with fellow G7 countries, multilateral institutions and girl-led organisations to address all barriers to

education, including costs, distance, unpaid care burdens, GBV in and out of schools, access to sanitary supplies and facilities, and comprehensive SRHR and sexuality education.

Recommendations to the G7

We call on G7 ministers to recognise the importance of girls' education in the following ways, in each case underpinned by principles of inclusion and intersectionality:

- **Provide full financial support to education, inclusively and equitably, which will require a renewed commitment of 0.7 per cent of GNI** for development assistance, as well as support for comprehensive debt relief, gender-responsive budgeting and a progressive commitment of 15 per cent of development funds for education, including in crisis and displacement contexts, with 10 per cent of humanitarian aid to education by 2025.
- **Eliminate structural gender barriers that prevent girls from accessing and completing education**, including negative attitudes towards girls' education or disability; adolescent pregnancy; harmful practices like FGM or early and forced marriage; high rates of violence against girls in schools and communities; menstruation stigma and lack of access to menstrual supplies; lack of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, including single-sex toilets in schools and WASH facilities closer to home; and well-documented increases in unpaid care and domestic work. Recognise the role of legal and policy protections, as well as wider society, in creating attitudinal and behavioural change. Support a feminist child protection system.
- **Create and sustain inclusive and gender-transformative education systems.** Ensure that education, in its framing and content, imparts the skills and competencies that young people of all genders need to bring about gender justice, climate justice and social justice. Increase access to, and quality of, comprehensive sexuality education that is non-discriminatory, rights-based and feminist as a key vehicle for ending unintended pregnancy and HIV infection, empowering young people to recognise and challenge harmful gender norms and practices and to advance gender equality and a feminist future.
- **Commit to the meaningful participation of girl-led groups and girl activists in key global decision-making processes on all aspects of their lives, including education**, through collaborative partnership models, ensuring accessible information and providing adequate funding to support participation.

Democracy, accountability and meaningful political participation

Why this issue is important

Open democratic societies require the meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all their diversity. This is especially critical given the historical legacies of structural racism and colonisation, which have restricted democratic participation, shrunk space for civil society globally and sustained attacks on women's rights activists and women human rights defenders. Elected representatives must reflect the full spectrum of society, as diversity drives more effective and inclusive policymaking, allowing governments to better represent the populations they serve.²⁵ Moreover, parliaments are more likely to substantively tackle key issues such as childcare, GBV/VAWG and maternal mortality when an increased number of women legislators are elected.²⁶ As the Covid-19 recovery unfolds, it is more important than ever to ensure that women, girls, gender-diverse people and all marginalised communities have a meaningful voice in all decision-making, putting equality at the centre of recovery ambitions.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

Open democracies are a stated priority for G7 leaders; however, to date this focus has been fairly narrow, failing to recognise the structural barriers and discrimination that exclude many people from meaningful participation. Moreover, the choice of “like-minded democracies” in the D10/11 – including India’s current administration – has raised questions as to the G7’s understanding of the principles of democratic societies.

Recommendations to the G7

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

- **Guarantee space at the G7 and all national decision-making spaces for meaningful participation by women’s and girls’ rights organisations** in all their diversity, and other civil society groups that are not traditionally allowed a seat at the table.
- **Increase flows of funding to women’s rights and girls’ rights organisations and movements**, recognising the barriers that marginalised women – including those from LGBTQIA+ communities – face.²⁷
- **Act to remove the structural barriers to diverse women’s equal participation in decision-making**, including by tackling online abuse, harassment and threats of violence, financial barriers to representation, and the inaccessibility of elected positions for people with disabilities and those with caring responsibilities.
- **Protect the right to protest to home and abroad** and promote the safety of women human rights defenders wherever they are under threat.

Racial justice and decolonisation

Why this issue is important

The murder of George Floyd last year shone a global spotlight on the prevalence of structural, anti-Black racism in the United States and beyond, including across all G7 member states. The harmful and far-reaching consequences of structural racism have persisted for centuries and led to the creation of unequal and undemocratic societies that have prevented Black people and people of colour from being able to fulfil their economic, social, political and cultural rights. Black Lives Matter demonstrations around the world have kept this focus alive with an unprecedented wave of popular protest, demanding action from governments and institutions to redress structural racism and its ramifications on every aspect of life, including in the provision of quality health and education services, fairness in criminal justice systems, access to decent work and housing, and full voting rights. For the G7 not to respond with a strong political commitment to ending racism would suggest a lack of political will to confront the inequalities and injustices that racism creates.

Alongside domestic anti-racism work, there is a pressing need to acknowledge and atone for the lasting legacies of colonialism and empire. Decolonisation, in part, means recognising that European imperial ambitions have created many of the global challenges we now face, from climate change to conflict, migration, food and water security, inequality, and poverty. It also means honestly reflecting on and naming new forms of colonialism – that is, efforts by countries of the Global North to entrench unequal power relations between the North and South, and to allow unregulated market forces to ravage Southern economies and public services. This is perhaps most clearly seen in unfair trade and investment rules, including resistance to waiving intellectual property regulations that would allow countries in the Global

South to develop their own vaccines, or through conditionalities applied to development assistance and debt relief. Reparations are one way of responding to these historic challenges caused by centuries of colonisation. In addition to demands for monetary compensation for past and ongoing injustices, reparations movements seek to reshape our global structures to better meet the needs of people in the Global South.

Our analysis of what the G7 is doing so far

While officials have been broadly supportive on the need to take a firm stance against racism, there is not yet any clear language being proposed in any of the tracks.

Recommendations to the G7

We call on the G7 leaders and ministers across the tracks to take the following actions:

- **Produce a clear statement of commitment** by G7 leaders to addressing structural racism domestically and agreeing to review progress at the next G7 Summit in 2022.
- **Acknowledge the role that structural racism plays in undermining democratic freedoms** and agree a plan to decolonise development aid and assistance as a means of correcting historic legacies. This must include a commitment to decolonise relations between the G7 and the Global South across all tracks, particularly Finance, Trade, and Foreign and Development, recognising and redressing embedded and ongoing historical power imbalances.
- **Respond to growing global calls for reparations** to account for and reshape the structures that have oppressed and continue to disadvantage billions of Black people and people of colour both domestically and internationally.

III. Looking to the future: building the G7's long-term commitment to change

Our recommendations in 2021 are built on what we know to be the G7's agenda and priorities this year, but the current global crisis is also a moment to reflect, reconsider priorities and move forward with purpose. Here, we want to outline a longer-term vision in pursuit of the kind of transformational change that is truly needed. At the W7 Summit, keynote speaker Theo Sowa underlined that the Covid-19 pandemic has "simply highlighted the absolutely destructive role of inequality. It threw in our faces the fact that inequality kills." Moving forward, then, will mean more than just responding to the current crisis – rather, it will mean creating more inclusive, resilient and egalitarian societies for future generations. As one participant urged, "We cannot have business as usual because we will be reproducing the inequalities that we seek to reduce." Achieving gender justice and human rights, within the G7 countries and beyond, will require tenacity and investment of time, political will and resources. By setting out our ambitions for the world we want, we hope to shape the G7's priorities for years to come.

Promoting equality, justice and feminist visions for fairer societies

A feminist approach means working with women and girls in all their diversity to remove the barriers they face, but it also means re-examining systems and structures at every level to promote equality and justice. Gender equality cannot just be about integrating women and girls into a broken system. Many of the discriminatory laws, policies and programmes in place, both within and beyond the G7 countries, have their roots in patriarchal ideas and the social construction of gender intertwined with white supremacy and colonialism. Across the W7's thematic areas, delegates called for fundamental paradigm-shifts when it comes to protecting women's bodily autonomy and fully decriminalising abortion, to recognising the role of

universal health coverage in building resilient and egalitarian societies after the pandemic, to working together to resist backslide on women and girls' rights and the entrenchment of inequalities of all kinds, and to valuing wellbeing and social justice over profit, arms and power.

A truly feminist lens must look beyond bringing women, girls and gender-diverse people into decision-making spaces as they stand now – rather, it must transform those very spaces by rejecting inequalities, deprivation and militarism at home and abroad.

Transitioning to alternative economies that centre people and the planet

For far too long, the design of the global economy has put decision-making power in the hands of a handful of elites and left billions of people living on the margins. The resulting economic model is the consequence of choices made to put accumulation before care, wellbeing and social reproduction. “The basic key to fairer and more resilient economies is to invest in what we all share in common – our human capabilities,” noted Kabeer. This means decent jobs, social protection, and properly funded care and health sectors, all of which help to shift the goals of our economies away from wealth creation and towards shared prosperity, centred on people as both means and ends. “We need a population that is cared for, healthy, educated and protected in times of crisis – a universalism that will help build solidarity within societies, and give each person the status of a citizen in their society, a stake in its prosperity and the power to hold states accountable.”

Representing seven of the world's strongest economies, and with considerable say in global financial governance and institutions, the G7 has the potential to bring about meaningful shifts in the economic relationship between Global North and South, and between those with and without power in their own countries. This must entail promoting equitable economic recovery in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, but it also means more than that: we call on the G7 to centre care, wellbeing and sustainability in a new, green economic policy. “The fight against climate change is not only a struggle to keep our planet liveable,” noted one participant. “It requires a feminist solution, because it impacts economically, socially, and politically marginalised people and communities most severely.” A more just and feminist economic system means nothing short of transforming what we believe our economies are for – that is, wellbeing for all – and re-making the economic relationship between North and South, people and planet.

Realising true democracy, accountability and participation

A truly democratic process is about expanding participation and ensuring that the commitments made really matter. Our goal is to change the way that international decision-making takes place, so that the lived experiences of women and girls, and especially those who are the most systematically marginalised – women and girls with disabilities; indigenous, refugee, migrant and impoverished women and girls; women and girls of colour; LGBTQIA+ women, girls and gender-diverse people – take centre stage as the foundation for policy and action. Democratic and accountable decision-making requires recognising the exclusions that are created by existing policies, institutions and structures. It is then about responding with inclusive, feminist, anti-racist and decolonial commitments to broadening and deepening meaningful participation in debate, policy and action.

We call on the G7 to rise to this challenge by building consultation with women's rights organisations and movements into the G7 Summit process, now and in the years to come. Around the world, women- and girl-led organisations are active and embedded in their communities, with high degrees of longstanding trust and local knowledge – just the kind of expertise required to effect change on a wide range of issues – but they are still so often underfunded and overlooked in favour of international actors. “A key and overarching issue,” argued one participant, “is the need to move from rhetoric to action, and for that, we need resources.” For the political commitments made at this or any future G7 Summit to be

meaningful, they must therefore be backed up with consultation and the necessary resources to make them happen. Leaders must maintain open democracies by protecting the right to protest at home and abroad, and work to protect women human rights defenders, in recognition that violence against them is a silencing tool used to shut women out of public life and decision-making spaces.

IV. Conclusion

Women activists have proven themselves ready to respond rapidly and effectively, because they have been confronted with such emergencies – inequalities, violence, exclusions – throughout their lives. Over the course of the W7 Summit, feminist experts, activists and practitioners have also clearly demonstrated the wealth and richness of proven solutions at our collective disposal, offering specific and impactful proposals to the G7 for paths forward. In our discussions, one delegate put it most succinctly: “It’s time to shift the language from what the G7 *should* do to what the G7 *must* do.”

Now, it is time for G7 leaders to act. Is their commitment to gender equality genuine, or merely gratuitous rhetoric? Do leaders have the courage to be bold? Will there be meaningful mainstreaming of gender justice and human rights into the G7’s priorities, from climate change to macroeconomics to foreign policy? And are the leaders of the richest countries in the world ready to turn rhetoric into reality by coming up with the cash? As the ministerial meetings unfold over the coming weeks and months, culminating in the G7 Summit in June, the W7 will watch closely for the answers.

Acknowledgments

This communique is based on the discussions and recommendations of the W7 Summit, which took place on 21–22 April 2021, and does not represent the views or policies of any one organisation. Thanks are due to Theo Sowa and Naila Kabeer for their keynote presentations, and to the civil society participants from G7 countries and across the world for their participation. Their contributions, where they are quoted here, are not attributed as these discussions were not public. We would also like to thank the G7 Global Taskforce’s gender working group for their comments on the recommendations. The communique was edited by Megan Daigle with Chandreyi Guharay.

The 2021 W7 is co-chaired by the Gender and Development Network (GADN) and Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS UK), and the W7 Summit was co-hosted by Care International UK and ActionAid UK.

More information about the W7 is available here: gadnetwork.org/w7-summit

¹ See, for example, Kennedy, E., G. Binder, K. Humphries-Waa, T. Tidhar, K. Cini, L. Comrie-Thomson, C. Vaughan, K. Francis, N. Scott, N. Wulan, G. Patton, and P. Azzopardi. 2020. ‘Gender inequalities in health and wellbeing across the first two decades of life: an analysis of 40 low-income and middle-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region’, *The Lancet Global Health* 8.12, pp. e1473–e1488.

<https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2214-109X%2820%2930354-5>; UN Women. 2015. *Progress of the World’s Women 2015–16: transforming economies, realizing rights*. New York: UN Women, pp. 147–149.

² See, for example, the statement by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women: “We see a shadow pandemic growing, of violence against women”. UN Women. 2020. ‘Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic’, 6 April. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>. See also WHO. 2021. ‘Fact sheet: violence against women’, 8 March. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women>.

³ Around the world, women do an average of 4 hours and 32 of unpaid care per day compared to men’s 1 hour and 24 minutes. Charmes, J. 2019. *The unpaid care work and the labour market: an analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-use Surveys*. Geneva: ILO, p. 47

⁴ For example, the gendered wage gap across the OECD was 12.8 per cent, with individual countries as high as 32.5 per cent. See OECD. 2020. ‘Gender wage gap’. <https://data.oecd.org/earnwage/gender-wage-gap.htm>

⁵ Women made up 39 per cent of global employment but accounted for 54 per cent of overall job losses as of May 2020. See Madgavkar, A., O. White, M. Krishnan, D. Mahajan, and X. Azcue. 2020. 'COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects', *Mckinsey*, 15 July.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/Covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects>. See also ILO. 2020. *The COVID-19 response: getting gender equality right for a better future for women at work*. Geneva: ILO, pp. 1–2. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_744685.pdf

⁶ GAPS UK. 2020. *Now and the future – pandemics and crisis: gender equality, peace and security in a Covid-19 world and beyond*. London: GAPS UK. <https://gaps-uk.org/now-and-the-future-pandemics-and-crisis-gender-equality-peace-and-security-in-a-covid-19-world-and-beyond/>

⁷ UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. 2020. 'COVID-19 recovery "unattainable" without women-led organizations and movements', 5 November. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Womens-movements-and-freedoms-of-assembly-and-association.aspx>

⁸ Hill, R. and A. Narayan. 2021. 'What COVID-19 can mean for long-term inequality in developing countries', *World Bank Blogs*, 7 January. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/what-Covid-19-can-mean-long-term-inequality-developing-countries>

⁹ An estimated 42 per cent of women globally are employed in high-risk sectors compared to 32 per cent of men, and 28 per cent in low income countries compared to 17 per cent of men. For further information, please see ILO. 2020. *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work*, 7th edition.

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/impacts-and-responses/WCMS_767028/lang--en/index.htm

¹⁰ As recommended in ITUC. 2016. *Investing in the care economy: a pathway to growth*. Brussels: ITUC. <https://www.ituc-csi.org/investing-in-the-care-economy>

¹¹ ITUC. 2020. *A global social protection fund is possible*. Brussels: ITUC. <https://www.ituc-csi.org/global-social-protection-fund>

¹² GADN. 2020. *The impact of PPPs on gender equality and women's rights*. London: GADN.

<https://gadnetwork.org/gadn-resources/the-impact-of-ppps-on-gender-equality-and-womens-rights>

¹³ World Trade Organisation. 2020. Waiver from certain provisions of the TRIPS Agreement for the prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19, IP/C/W/669, 2 October.

<https://docs.wto.org/dol2fe/Pages/SS/directdoc.aspx?filename=q/IP/C/W669.pdf&Open=True>

¹⁴ Diffenbaugh, N.S. and M. Burke. 2019. 'Global warming has increased global economic inequality', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116.20, 9808–9813.

<https://www.pnas.org/content/116/20/9808>

¹⁵ GAPS UK 2020.

¹⁶ Women's rights organisations in FCAS face specific challenges money transfers/banking access, basic security, digital security, state restrictions on banking, restrictions imposed by anti-terrorism clauses, and sanctions. Funding mechanisms need to ensure that these challenges do not inhibit WROs ability to access funding.

¹⁷ George, A.S., F.E. McConville, S. de Vries, G. Nigenda, S. Sarfraz, and M. Mclsaac. 2020. 'Violence against female health workers is tip of iceberg of gender power imbalances', *BMJ* 371: m3546.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m3546>; Harman, S., A. Crabb-Herten, R. Morgan, J. Smith, and C. Wenham. 2020. 'COVID-19 vaccines and women's security', *The Lancet* 397:10272. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)32727-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)32727-6)

¹⁸ WHO. 2019. *Delivered by women, led by men: a gender and equity analysis of the global health and social force*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/health-observer24/en/>

¹⁹ WHO and World Bank. 2017. *Tracking universal health coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report*. Geneva and Washington: WHO and World Bank. https://www.who.int/healthinfo/universal_health_coverage/report/2017/en/

²⁰ A 10 per cent drop in the provision of essential reproductive health services due to Covid-19 could translate to an additional 15 million unintended pregnancies, 28,000 maternal deaths, and 3.3 million unsafe abortions a year across 132 low- and middle-income countries. See Riley, T., E. Sully, Z. Ahmed, and A. Biddlecom. 2020.

'Estimates of the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on sexual and reproductive health in low- and middle-income countries', *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 46, 73–76.

https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/article_files/4607320.pdf

²¹ UNFPA. 2021. *Impact of COVID-19 on family planning: what we know one year into the pandemic*. New York: UNFPA. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID_Impact_FP_V5.pdf

²² The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission estimates that a minimum global investment of US\$54 billion is needed to address unmet need for contraceptive, abortion, maternal, and newborn health services in low- and middle-income countries. M. Schäferhoff, S. van Hoog, S. Martinez, S. Fewer, and G. Yamey. 2019. *Funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights in low- and middle-income countries: threats, outlook and opportunities*. Geneva: Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, p. 6.

https://www.who.int/pmnch/media/news/2019/srhr_forecast_web.pdf

²³ WHO. 2020. *Maintaining essential health services: operational guidance for the COVID-19 context interim guidance*. Geneva: WHO. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-essential-health-services-2020.1>

²⁴ Malala Fund. 2020. *Girls' education and COVID-19: what past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impacts of pandemics*. Washington: Malala Fund. <https://malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-fund-releases-report-girls-education-Covid-19>

²⁵ Centenary Action Group. 2020. *Data drives diversity: a simple step to more transparent politics*. London: Centenary Action Group. <https://www.centenaryaction.org.uk/publications/data-drives-diversity>

²⁶ Westminster Foundation for Democracy. 2020. 'Women political leaders key to more equal and caring societies, 29 July. <https://www.wfd.org/2020/07/29/women-political-leaders-key-to-more-equal-and-caring-societies-new-report-shows/>

²⁷ Between 2017 and 2019, bilateral and multilateral donors committed over US\$1 billion to support gender equality. Few of those resources have reached feminist movements, who are the real drivers of transformative and sustainable change. For decades more than 99 per cent of official development assistance for gender equality has gone to large mainstream organisations or governments, or stayed within development agencies themselves. See Lever, E., K. Miller, and K. Staszewska. 2020. *Moving more money to the drivers of change: how bilateral and multilateral funders can resource feminist movements*. Amsterdam: AWID and Mama Cash. https://www.mamacash.org/media/publications/movingmoremoney_mama_cash_awid_cmi.pdf