



**W20 Statement to the extraordinary virtual G20 Leaders' Summit:
Call to action for gender equality in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**
23 March 2020

Women 20 (W20), the Women's Engagement Group, welcomes the extraordinary G20 Summit and strongly agrees that a coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic - and its human and economic implications - is urgently needed. We appreciate the effort of G20 Leaders to reduce the COVID-19 pandemic, to propose policies to protect people and safeguard the global economy, and their recognition that collaboration among G20 countries is urgently required. We, W20, are ready to contribute.

We urge that policies and public health efforts address the gendered impacts of disease outbreaks. Experts find that pandemics make existing gender inequalities for women and girls worse and can impact their treatment and care. Women and girls face a variety of risk factors that must urgently be addressed. Given their predominant roles as caregivers within families and as front-line health-care workers, women are more likely to be exposed to the virus. Women also make up a disproportionate percentage of workers in sectors and roles that are impacted harder in economic downturns and offer less social protection.

The achievement of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Brisbane 25x25 target, a commitment to reduce the gender gap in labor force participation by 25 percent by 2025, is jeopardized unless G20 leaders address the pandemic to pave the way for equitable economic recovery. G20 Leaders should immediately:

Accelerate inclusive decision-making

- Include women in national and global COVID-19 outbreak preparedness and response policy and operational spaces in line with the WHO Executive Board recommendation.
- Ensure women's representation at community-level decision-making, as contributors to identifying local trends and responsive policies.

Adapt labor inclusion for the changing economic circumstances

- Develop economic financial stimulus packages and forms of protection that include emergency child-care provision to encourage the division of care - roles and tasks between parents.
- Encourage employers to implement measures that recognize the role of women as carers for sick, disabled and elderly family members and that do not penalize them.
- Provide economic security for women small-business owners (SMEs), including tax exemptions, suspension of mortgages and loans for freelance women workers and entrepreneurs.
- Implement protection for workers in the informal sector by expanding safety nets through leave entitlements and support payments.
- Accelerate the use of ICT support for men and women to work from home; and provide it free of charge to the digitally excluded.

Adopt data-driven policies and commission research

- Expand and share data collection, reporting and analysis on the gendered impact of pandemic response policies, taking into account the different types of vulnerabilities women face due to discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, and health conditions.
- Factor the gendered implications of quarantine, by recognizing men and women's different physical, cultural, security, and sanitary needs in service provision.
- Increase resources for protection and assistance from gender-based violence including hotlines and monitoring.

When the pandemic is controlled, we urge G20 leaders to act on key systemic issues:

- Encourage governments to cooperate to minimize the COVID 19 pandemic's adverse impacts on gender parity and to continue the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.
- Ensure that governments and employers adopt gender mainstreaming tools as they develop strategies to consider both direct and indirect gender effects.
- Seize the opportunity to eliminate discriminatory norms and laws on women's equal participation, so that both men and women rebuild the economy.
- Increase the representation of women in global health security surveillance, detection and prevention mechanisms.
- Equip communities to take integrated measures to prevent domestic violence: increase outreach and support services for victims and promote knowledge sharing around good practices.

G20 leaders have an opportunity to develop policy responses to the pandemic that build a foundation for realizing gender equitable economic opportunity and contribute to eliminating gender inequalities. Women 20 calls on G20 leaders to act this week.