

FROM THE PANDEMIC TO 2030: FEMINISTS WANT SYSTEM CHANGE BOLSTERING LOCAL ACTION TO ACCELERATE IMPLEMENTATION

“You know even today, that social distancing bit is a sad laugh for us. You see in Mathare, we are a heavily densely populated slum. All of us are too close for comfort. Poverty forces us to stick close together, literally.”



– [Rachel Mwikali](#), coordinator,
Coalition for Grassroots
Human Rights Defenders,
Mathare, Kenya

“Let us rebuild. Let us retool. Let us repurpose, because this is perhaps the most apt reminder of what we must fight for in the multilateral system... We can do it, working together, but we need to respect each other, to see each other, to hear each other and to work together.”

– [Mia Mottley](#), Prime Minister of
Barbados



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In 2015, the world agreed to a roadmap to sustainable development made up of 17 goals: [the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). If achieved, we would live in a more just world with [sustainable cities and communities](#) and [resilient infrastructure](#), among other achievements. With this roadmap, [achieving gender equality](#) would be a goal in and of itself and a cross-cutting aim necessary to achieving the whole Agenda.

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, however, countries were [not on track](#) to achieve the Agenda because of systems, such as **authoritarianism**, **neoliberalism**, and **patriarchy**, that create and maintain the inequalities that determine who will be most affected by and who will profit from this crisis.

The paradox of the COVID-19 crisis is that we need deeply local responses and unprecedented levels of global solidarity and cooperation at a time when the rise in **authoritarianism** and **nationalism** threatens to [weaken multilateralism](#) and **global governance**. The threat to [defund the World Health Organization](#) is just the latest example of the actions right-wing strongmen will take to undermine global governance at the expense of public health, sustainable development, and human rights.

The **privatization of services** and **proliferation of public-private partnerships (PPPs)** pushed by **neoliberal economics** and **unfair trade agreements** has impaired public infrastructure and services and made their distribution more unequal, particularly impacting the poorest and most marginalized women and girls. When public services are underfunded, cut, or privatized, women and girls use our bodies, labor, energy, and time to fill the gaps.

As a result of these forces, [more than 50% of urban women](#) lack at least one of the following: clean water, improved sanitation facilities, durable housing, or sufficient living area. The women and girls without access are usually the most marginalized coming from racial or ethnic minorities, are poorer, and / or with limited education. Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, when lifesaving measures require frequent hand-washing and physical distance from other people, these deprivations could be even more deadly.

Women are [overrepresented in many slums and informal settlements](#). From [India](#) to [Peru](#) and beyond, hundreds of thousands of rural-to-urban migrants are completing arduous journeys to return to rural areas as their work in cities – much of it informal, such as domestic work – ended. Urban capitalist economies have exploited these workers without providing them with the types of protection that would promote their resilience during this crisis.

For other themes, please see the full series. WMG also has a set of cross cutting recommendations that can be found separately, within the series.

The **gender digital divide** has always been a roadblock to gender equality. In low- and middle-income countries [433 million women](#) are not connected to the internet and are 14% less likely to own a mobile phone compared to men. This divide did not just happen. Within **patriarchal** systems, women and girls [do not have phones](#) because they have less money and education than men and boys and because of restrictive gender norms governing phone ownership and the ability to be in public to purchase a phone.

During the COVID-19 crisis as some relief, work, education, and socialization opportunities move online, lack of access to the **internet and communications technologies** can lead to isolation, lost wages, and lower educational attainment that may not be recouped. In addition, lack of access to the internet can be particularly dangerous for women and girls experiencing violence who may have no other way to seek help and protection.

WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

By following the recommendations below, we can emerge from the COVID-19 crisis ready to build a just and equitable future for all and to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

- Support a **multilateral response** to the COVID-19 crisis based on the principles of human rights, gender equality, accountability, solidarity, and international cooperation.
- Treat the **internet as a public good** and take immediate and long-term action to bridge the **gender digital divide** by expanding free access to a wide range of information and communications technologies, ensuring women's economic empowerment, and changing patriarchal gender norms.
- Actively **engage with women and girls in urban settings** and ensure that COVID-19 crisis response measures fulfill their human rights and meet their needs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Uphold the **human rights to water, sanitation, housing, and energy** by:
 - Immediately [stopping all forced evictions and displacements](#), including for those in slums and informal settlements and migrants in labor camps.
 - Decriminalizing homelessness and providing **safe and adequate housing for all**, with special attention to the needs of women and girls with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, and LGBTI people.
 - **Freezing payments for utilities, such as water, heat, or electricity.**
 - In partnership with community-based organizations, immediately providing **access to clean water** for all, including and especially in informal settlements and rural and remote areas. After the end of the crisis, continue these partnerships to extend public water and sanitation services for all.
 - **Ending or readjusting PPPs** so that governments can provide life-saving essential public services, in a rights-based manner that promotes gender equality and justice over profit.