



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 December 2021

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Oxfam International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being
circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council
resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Oxfam is deeply concerned that climate crisis continues to gain ground within the pandemic accelerating humanitarian need and human suffering. Women and girls, LGBTQIA+ people, racialised communities and marginalised groups around the world continue to experience the adverse impacts of climate crisis. The Global Humanitarian Overview (2021) indicates that in 2021, 235 million people will need humanitarian assistance and protection. This number has risen to 1 in 33 people worldwide – a significant increase from 1 in 45 at the beginning of 2020, a figure which was already the highest in decades.

The world is still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and approaching the end of the second year of this global crisis. This occurred in the context of the ever-worsening climate crisis, which impacted the economic development of societies by threatening natural resources and the livelihoods on which most people rely.

During the pandemic, exacerbated by the climate crisis, women small holder farmers have less farm produce and experience loss of income. In addition, government-imposed lockdowns, and curfews have limited their access to markets and active income generation. Women workers around the world are bearing the brunt of job losses and increased care responsibilities throughout the pandemic. Oxfam showed that the COVID-19 crisis cost women around the world at least \$800 billion in lost income in 2020, equivalent to more than the combined GDP of 98 countries.

Women's economic empowerment is further affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with an increase in the unpaid care workload and a decrease in women's participation in the paid labour force. Oxfam aims to move beyond the fact that women and girls suffer more the consequences of the climate crisis, to embrace an intentional gender transformative approach by examining and addressing the causes of gender discrimination and inequalities structurally. Furthermore, we aim at working towards solutions that fight structural gender inequalities at the same time as supporting climate solutions.

We therefore urge Member States to promote gender equality of all women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs, and in line with the commitments in the Sustainable Development Goals 13 and 5 on climate change and gender respectively, as well as the Security Council Resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its General Recommendation 30.

Oxfam has recommendations on four key areas which we urge Member States to consider during the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women:

Climate Crisis

The climate crisis is the greatest existential threat to humankind, affecting all genders in their diversity, in every corner of the world. But the impacts are not the same for everyone: the poorest and most marginalised face the worst effects, despite having done the least to cause the crisis. Gender-based violence (GBV) rates increase due to increased displacement caused by weather related disasters such as droughts, floods, and cyclones. Climate related disasters drive human migration due to diminishing resources, increasing the vulnerability of women and marginalised groups to GBV. During climate disasters, LGBTQIA+ people are generally excluded from response, relief and recovery efforts and often left homeless, and emergency centres are rarely equipped to adequately provide a safe and comfortable space for shelter.

To avoid catastrophic climate crisis, more than 90 per cent of known fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground. Countries bearing the greatest responsibility for historic greenhouse emissions must phase out fossil fuel extraction first and fastest, consistent with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Indigenous women are largely excluded from natural resource governance decision-making and policy formulation. A just transition requires an intersectional feminist natural resource governance agenda that centres the leadership and realities of women and frontline communities. Such an agenda is based on equity and respect for human rights and recognizes that women and communities may oppose resource extraction as we transition to renewable energy.

Member States must:

- Continue to put pressure on world leaders and governments to keep the 1.5°C goal set out in the Paris Agreement within reach. And ensure that action for mitigation and transition are just, integrate the gender dimension of loss and damage, and transform the drivers of gender inequality.
- Ensure access to climate finance for vulnerable countries, social groups and communities making sure that there is equal and meaningful access by women and girls, and that climate finance addresses and transforms the drivers of gender inequality.
- Reinforce mechanisms that promote and protect gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster preparedness, risk reduction and response, climate crisis mitigation, national adaptation plans and strategies and the sustainable development goals.
- Promote transparent, accountable natural resource governance that guarantees women and marginalized people's political participation, including in decisions over the use of extractive industry revenues.
- Always obtain free, prior, and informed consent from impacted Indigenous and local communities.
- Mandate independent, publicly disclosed intersectional gender impact assessments of extractive projects.
- Adopt measures to end GBV in impacted communities, protect women human rights defenders, and ensure access to accountable grievance mechanisms.

Women's Economic Empowerment

Heavy and unequal care responsibilities remain one of the most significant barriers to gender equality across the world. Women have been hardest hit by the impacts of the pandemic – experiencing record unemployment rates, filling the ranks of health care workers, and managing increased care responsibilities with family members at home. Women and girls' disproportionate responsibility for care work has profound consequences for their participation in public and political life. Yet comprehensive care policies remain limited in most countries – in both high and low-middle income settings alike.

The situation of paid care workers in various sectors – such as domestic work – has always been precarious. During the pandemic, domestic workers have faced increase loss of employment and a reduction in their working hours because of the economic crisis, the fear of contagion, and restricted mobility associated with lockdown measures. This has caused a serious decrease in their income, putting their wellbeing at risk of both the workers and their extended families and dependents.

Member States must:

- Invest in care systems and treat care as critical infrastructure in COVID-19 recovery plans globally, and promote care-responsive strategies within International Financial Institutions.
- Recognize, reduce, and redistribute the underpaid and unpaid care work that is done predominantly by women and racialized women in particular, and expand social protection for care workers.
- Ensure the representation of care workers in decision making spaces and promote laws globally that legislate the right to care.
- Reorient macroeconomic policies to enable the care economy to thrive. Commit to measure socio-economic progress more broadly than growth and GDP, including emphasis on labor, health outcomes, and the care economy.

Inequality

Existing inequalities have been heightened and new inequalities have developed because of the pandemic. These inequalities are felt and manifest differently between women and men. They disproportionately impact people from working-class backgrounds, people in poverty, women, and girls and those who belong to racial and ethnic-marginalized groups. UN Women (2020) reports that globally, 247 million women aged 15+ will be living on less than \$1.90 per day in 2021, compared 236 million men.

There are three areas proven to be essential if a country is going to reduce the gap between rich and poor. These are pro-poor public services (on education, health, and social protection); the progressivity of the tax system, and finally the extent to which labour rights and minimum wages are in place. Without significant national and international action, inequality is likely to worsen.

The climate crisis exerts more pressure on land and territories and increase the vulnerability of communities that rely on land for their livelihoods particularly women. Land and territory are the basis of the identity, dignity, livelihoods, housing, food, local knowledge, and a sense of security for women living in rural areas and indigenous communities. Any act which perpetuates the climate crisis such as deforestation and forced evictions, threatens women's wellbeing, which is a form of violence against women. Grassroots and indigenous women whose lives highly depend on their land and territory, perceive this as an extension of their bodies, hence, equate violence against their territories as violence against their bodies.

Secure access, use and control of land are critical to embedding a system of rights, responsibilities, and relationships to the natural world. These allow women to imagine and invest in an environmentally sustainable and socially just future.

Member States must:

- Urgently scale up sustainable investment in public health systems by upgrading and expanding primary health care and invest in additional health workers needed for a successful vaccine roll out and for delivering everybody's right to healthcare. Health services should be free at the point of use, and all user fees eliminated. Sustained financing of healthcare is urgently needed to ensure global security from emerging diseases, realise the goal of Universal Health Coverage and achieve the right to health for all.
- Ensure universal access to social protection, including basic emergency income in the short run and sustained basic income security beyond the current crisis.

- Amplify rural and indigenous women's voices ensuring that they are at the front and centre of decisions on climate crisis discussions and enable their meaningful engagement in the whole investment cycle.
- Show political will to protect women's land and territorial rights of rural and indigenous women against the effect of climate crisis.
- Compel companies to commit to demonstrating zero tolerance for violence against women's land and territorial defenders in their supply chains.

Gender Based Violence

Gender Based Violence is a horrifying reality and human rights violation for women and girls globally. It is a power, health, rights, and protection issue that is deeply rooted in gender inequality and structural norms that disempower and discriminate. The risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse is heightened during emergencies. (The Call to Action on Protection from GBV, 2021- 2025).

The climate crisis and the pandemic have exacerbated existing GBV, and eroded the space for effective delivery of quality and specialised support services for those at risk, and survivors of GBV including in humanitarian crises.

Violence increases during crisis caused by the climate as well as the Covid-19. According to a report by the Frontiers in Global Women's Health, women, trans and non-binary people experienced significant reductions in income during the pandemic, increasing their dependence on abusive spouses and family members, and leaving them with little or few options for safely leaving. In addition, climate related conflict in countries limits women's leadership and participation in peace processes, due to high exposure to different forms of violence including conflict related sexual and gender-based violence.

Member States must:

- Commit to the protection and prevention of violence against women and LGBTQI+ people in peace processes to enable their full and effective leadership and address GBV as a key component of the women, peace and security agenda.
- Allocate funding support to feminist and women's rights organizations and movements working to end GBV as a foundational element to achieving gender justice.
- Establish and strengthen the rule of law (particularly after conflicts) to ensure that GBV perpetrators are brought to justice. This is integral to the protection for women's rights and can prevent a relapse into conflict, thus achieving sustainable peace.
- Adopt and implement the commitments on the Call to Action on the protection of GBV in Emergencies.