

**For Official Use****English - Or. English****26 October 2020****PUBLIC GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE  
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE****Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance****Empowering Women as Drivers of the COVID-19 Recovery**

*Following consultation of the Working Party on Gender Mainstreaming and Governance, the Public Governance Committee, the Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Committee (ELSAC), Environment Policy Committee (EPOC), and the Committee on Fiscal Affairs (CFA), the Development Centre Governing Board (DEV/GB), the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) as well as the DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet), which concluded on 15 October 2020, this document is transmitted to Ministers as a Background Document at the Ministerial Council Meeting, which will be held on 28 and 29 October 2020.*

*This document is issued under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD and does not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD Members.*

**JT03467434**

## Empowering Women as Drivers of the COVID-19 Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated a profound shock worldwide – its reverberations however are felt differently among men and women. Although men seem to be impacted harder by mortality from the virus in some countries, women are disproportionately impacted socially and economically - exacerbating pre-existing inequalities.<sup>1</sup> When aligning policies for a strong, resilient, inclusive and green recovery, governments have an opportunity and responsibility to collect gender-disaggregated data on the pandemic, address differentiated impacts and support women's economic empowerment as well as women's participation in decision making. Given that women are at the frontline of the response as workers and carers, they also need to be central to response and recovery solutions.

### THE IMPACT OF THE CRISIS IS NOT GENDER-NEUTRAL

*Women are taking greater risks for less pay and represented in fewer decision-making positions...*

Women make up 70% of the global healthcare workforce, including 85% of nurses and midwives, half the doctors and more than 90% of long-term care workers across OECD countries.<sup>2</sup> They are facing exceptional demands, and considerable risks, yet women only make up 25% of decision-making and leadership positions and receive less pay than men in the healthcare sector.<sup>3</sup>

*...shouldering the increased unpaid care and domestic responsibilities due to widespread school and care facility closures...*

Even before the crisis, women provided two hours per day more of unpaid care work than men across the OECD,<sup>4</sup> and up to ten times as much globally according to the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI). This not only confirms that unpaid care work performed by women accounts for the equivalent of 9% of global GDP (USD 11 trillion), it also risks further constraining the role of women, their ability to hold their jobs as well as limiting their professional advancement.<sup>5</sup> Albeit with variations across countries, early survey data suggests that women took on additional family care responsibilities as a result of social

---

<sup>1</sup> OECD (2020) Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>. (See Box 1: Gender and Health Impact of COVID-19)

<sup>2</sup> OECD (2020) Who Cares? Attracting and Retaining Care Workers for the Elderly, OECD Health Policy Studies <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/92c0ef68-en>

<sup>3</sup> WHO (2019) Gender equity in the health workforce: Analysis of 104 countries: Health Workforce Working paper 1, <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/311314/WHO-HIS-HWF-Gender-WP1-2019.1-eng.pdf?ua=1> ; WHO (2019) Delivered by Women, Led by Men: A Gender and Equity Analysis of the Global Health and Social Workforce, Human Resources for Health Observer - Issue No. 24, [https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/en\\_exec-summ\\_delivered-by-women-led-by-men.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/en_exec-summ_delivered-by-women-led-by-men.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2020) Gender Portal, <https://www.oecd.org/gender/>

<sup>5</sup> ILO (2018) Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work, [https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS\\_633135/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_633135/lang--en/index.htm)

distancing measures.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, girls have tended to spend more hours on chores at home compared to boys, which suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic may potential increase drop-out rates of girls from school in line with evidence from past pandemics.<sup>7</sup> In addition, further research is required in terms of the impact of the pandemic on women’s mental health, given that even before the crisis women reported higher rates of depression in 26 EU Member States based on Eurostat and that intensive caregiving is associated with 20% higher prevalence of mental health problems (e.g. depression) than among non-carers, with women disproportionately affected as they represented 60% of those providing daily informal care prior to the pandemic.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, girls have tended to report higher anxiety and lower life satisfaction in general across most Programme for International Student Assessment’s (PISA) participating countries.<sup>9</sup>

*...facing higher risks of economic insecurity and therefore unable to absorb shocks...*

Women, especially single parents, are often more economically vulnerable than men as they tend to have more non-standard (typically involuntary part-time)<sup>10</sup> and informal jobs, thus lower hourly wages,<sup>11</sup> lower entitlement<sup>12</sup> and access to social security benefits, weaker job protection, fewer opportunities to access training and re-employment and less wealth, leaving them more at risk of losing their jobs or falling into poverty during economic downturns.<sup>13</sup> Already before the crisis, across the OECD, poverty rates for single-adult families were on average three times as high as for families with two or more adults present.<sup>14</sup> This translates into vulnerability across the life course. Because of the many career interruptions and earnings concessions that they make for care reasons, women’s pensions tend to be smaller than men’s – in 2015, on average across European OECD countries, women’s (65+ year-olds) pension payments were 25% lower

<sup>6</sup> Alison Andrew, Sarah Cattan, Monica Costa Dias, Christine Farquharson, Lucy Kraftman, Sonya Krutikova, Angus Phimister and Almudena Sevilla (2020) How are mothers and fathers balancing work and family under lockdown?, <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14860>

UN Women (2020) Ipsos survey confirms that COVID-19 is intensifying women’s workload at home, <https://data.unwomen.org/features/ipsos-survey-confirms-covid-19-intensifying-womens-workload-home>

<sup>7</sup> UN Women (2020) Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/report-policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en-1.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> OECD (2017) Health at a Glance, p. 61, [https://doi.org/10.1787/health\\_glance-2017-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/health_glance-2017-en)

OECD (2011) Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care <https://doi.org/10.1787/2074319x>

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2017) PISA 2015 Results (Volume III): Students’ Well-Being, <https://doi.org/10.1787/19963777>

OECD (2019) PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed, <https://doi.org/10.1787/19963777>

<sup>10</sup> OECD (2020) Distributional risks associated with non-standard work: Stylised facts and policy considerations, [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134\\_134518-2bfush541w&title=Distributional-risks-associated-with-nonstandard-work-Stylised-facts-and-policy-considerations](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134518-2bfush541w&title=Distributional-risks-associated-with-nonstandard-work-Stylised-facts-and-policy-considerations)

<sup>11</sup> Noting that this refers to general gender pay gap, as in many countries there are very explicit “equal pay for equal work” national legislation.

<sup>12</sup> See the OECD Employment Outlook 2019 (Chapter 7), where the analysis shows that in some countries there can be a gap in welfare support for (formal) non-standard workers, relative to standard workers, meaning that some may work too few hours to qualify for the benefit. <https://doi.org/10.1787/19991266>

<sup>13</sup> OECD (2019) Tackling Vulnerability in the Informal Economy, Development Centre Studies, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/939b7bcd-en>

<sup>14</sup> OECD Family Database, <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/database.htm>

than men's.<sup>15</sup> As the crisis extends, an additional 47 million more women and girls will be pushed below the poverty line.<sup>16</sup> While in many OECD countries the true extent of job losses is not yet clear, evidence suggests the crisis is hitting women's employment at least as hard as men's, unlike in the previous crises where male-dominated sectors were largely affected. Since the end of 2019 (between 2019 Q4 to 2020 Q2), across OECD countries, women's employment rates have fallen by 3.5 percentage points – fractionally more than the decrease for men (-3.4 percentage points). In some countries e.g. Canada and Slovenia, women were losing jobs at a disproportionately higher rate than men during this period. Between February and July, the OECD total unemployment rate for women has increased by slightly over 50 percent (from 5.4 percent to 8.2 percent) – again, a slightly greater increase than for men (46 percent, from 5.1 percent to 7.4 percent). In the same period, the unemployment rate among women rose by 3.3 percentage points, while for men the increase has been of 2.9 percentage points. Furthermore, more women (-2.4%) than men (-2.2%) dropped out of the labour force.<sup>17</sup> Part of the reason is that the short-term economic fallout from COVID-19 affects particular sectors that rely on physical customer interaction, many of which are major employers of women, particularly in part-time work.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, even if their employers allow remote working, the existing digital gender divide could hold women back from fulfilling their potential. The decline in women's labour force participation rate is particularly worrisome because it can affect the long-term goal of bringing more women stably into the labour market and the prospects of reducing the gender wage gap.

*...compounded by increased gender-based violence.*

As social distancing and confinement measures have likely increased prevalence of violence against women, women face multiple challenges.<sup>19</sup> Although there is lack of information and data on violence against women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, at the end of April 2020, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) predicted an additional 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence for every three additional months of lockdown.<sup>20</sup> While noting the global cost of violence against women and girls to be approximately at 2 per cent of global GDP (or USD 1.5 trillion per year), the case for investing more governments' fiscal and structural efforts in preventing and ending domestic violence is only becoming

<sup>15</sup> OECD (2019) Pensions at a Glance 2019: OECD and G20 Indicators, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b6d3dfc-en>

<sup>16</sup> UN Women and UNDP (2020) From insights to action: Gender equality in the wake of COVID-19, <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/gender-equality-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5142>

<sup>17</sup> OECD Short-Term Labour Market Statistics Database, between Q4 2019 and Q2 2020, 15- to 64-year-olds, <http://dotstat.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=STLABOUR>

<sup>18</sup> ILO (2020), ILOSTAT Database, <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/>, cited in OECD (2020) Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/>

<sup>19</sup> OECD (2020) Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis,

OECD (2020) COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: An overview of government responses to the crisis, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean-an-overview-of-government-responses-to-the-crisis-0a2dee41/>

<sup>20</sup> UNFPA (2020) Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/impact-covid-19-pandemic-family-planning-and-ending-gender-based-violence-female-genital>

more compelling as the crisis prolongs.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, women’s access to health services are often restricted with resources diverted towards crisis response efforts. Lack of timely and reliable statistics does not allow us to address this issue correctly. All the factors mentioned here are compounded in the development and humanitarian context.

## DESIGNING GENDER-SENSITIVE RECOVERY PACKAGES AND POLICIES

### *The challenge now is determining how to integrate gender equality into recovery efforts from the COVID-19 crisis*

Many of these challenges are not new – but the crisis has contributed to revealing or exacerbating them. Recovery policies need to be accompanied by well-targeted support for women as described below. As UNDP and UN Women identify, less than 40% of all measures from over 2,500 measures across 206 countries and territories in response to COVID-19 are gender-sensitive.<sup>22</sup> As we turn towards recovery, governments could ensure that all policies and structural adjustments aimed at recovery go through robust gender and intersectional analysis, so that differential effects on women and men can be assessed and reflected in the planning and implementation so as to build a resilient structure to withstand future shocks. Socio-cultural norms and stereotypes also need to be addressed as they may pre-determine the role of women and men in our society.

### *Tackle discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes that affect the role of women*

Gender norms and stereotypes shape women’s and men’s behaviours and beliefs.<sup>23</sup> As care work is predominantly women-driven, partly due to pre-determined gender roles, it is critical to encourage men to share unpaid work with women by providing expanded coverage and use of social policy tools (e.g. financial incentives such as well-paid parental leave) as well as further analysis to address a driver of unpaid work (e.g. tax disincentives for second earners). Policies should encourage more equal distribution of care work between men and women at home. Innovative measures to reinforce countries’ specific workers’ rights to flexible working arrangements based on the increased use of remote working would be welcome (e.g. introducing flexible start and finish times, “time-banking”, and the ability to work condensed weeks). In addition, affordability and accessibility of quality care services outside the home should continue to be a policy priority, supported by public investment in childcare, especially targeting essential service workers and those with no access to flexible working. As home increasingly becomes the centre of our lives and work for those who can connect online, policy makers should be strongly encouraged to take actions to address the urgent needs of victims of domestic violence with adequate policies or budget allocation.<sup>24</sup> Integrated service delivery across various spheres is required (including mental and physical health, housing, income support, and access to legal and justice resources) – involving multiple stakeholders, including for non-government organisations working with survivors, or making use of inter-agency crisis task forces on violence against women to guide, coordinate and monitor the measures taken by governments. As highlighted in the OECD’s 2013 Recommendation on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship [OECD/LEGAL/0398], efforts in tackling stereotyping in

<sup>21</sup> UN Women (2016) The economic costs of violence against women, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/9/speech-by-lakshmi-puri-on-economic-costs-of-violence-against-women>

<sup>22</sup> UNDP/UN Women (2020) The COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker, <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/> (covering countries of both agencies)

<sup>23</sup> OECD (2019) SIGI 2019 Global Report, <https://doi.org/10.1787/53ee9277-en>

<sup>24</sup> Led By HER and the Kering Foundation (2020) Comparative Research on Workplace Laws to Combat Domestic Violence, <http://www.trust.org/contentAsset/raw-data/1028cd92-5e5a-4509-8f93-3afe30756bd/file>

school through educational programmes as well as raising awareness of gender stereotypes could be accelerated. Reshaping gender stereotypes at home and in the workplace does not just require changing women's behaviour but also changing men's behaviour and norms of masculinity.<sup>25</sup>

*Promote equal pay, provide expanded opportunities and pay special attention to non-standard and part-time work*

The precariousness of women's employment situation has too often amplified the disproportionate impact of crises on women. It is an urgent task to improve working conditions and pay for women in the health sector during and beyond the pandemic and support access to professional development and leadership roles to break the glass ceiling to achieve gender equality in critical health response. Special attention should be paid to women in more vulnerable situations, including single-parents, migrants and refugees, the elderly or those with disabilities, whose households depend on both their unpaid care work and their income by ensuring that they receive income support as well as review and simplify entitlement criteria and application procedures. To this end, avoiding a sharp withdrawal of special leave and other forms of temporary family care support (be prepared to reintroduce them in case of a potential second wave of the pandemic), and considering a gradual scaling back of these measures, fine-tuned to the evolution of the situation would be essential to avoid leading to "cliff-edges" as benefits are withdrawn. Governments in both advanced and developing countries could introduce temporary support for non-standard workers and persons in the formal and informal economy who are not covered or entitled to social protection and aim to close the gaps in social protection through reforms. To address poor working conditions more generally, policy makers could also focus on attracting and retaining Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from businesses that prevent and mitigate potential risks for female workers and promote equal opportunities for women and men in their companies and supply chains.

*Support the private sector to create more and better jobs for women and increase access to finance to women-owned businesses*

Job loss has shot up across industries where women are over-represented.<sup>26</sup> Prioritising efforts to save businesses and workers in these hard hit sectors could safeguard these sources of economic growth in the post-COVID-19 world. This will require ensuring that employment subsidies, liquidity support to entrepreneurs and Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and incentives such as grants and tax deferrals are targeted at SMEs and entrepreneurs in women-dominated sectors (such as services, which have also been hard hit by the crisis) and are accessible for female entrepreneurs. Furthermore, creating targeted financial instruments for female entrepreneurs can represent a concrete action that would support women-owned businesses and thus help mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic's negative socio-economic effects on women. Reducing barriers to trade and investing in trade facilitation can benefit women as traders, but also as consumers (such as on food and clothing that attract higher tariffs) and as workers (by creating new opportunities).<sup>27</sup> Adjustment assistance for industries experiencing trade or technology shocks also needs to take account of any differing gender impacts.<sup>28</sup> It will also be necessary to ensure that

<sup>25</sup> OECD (2017) The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>

<sup>26</sup> OECD (2020) Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis

OECD (2020) Tourism Policy Responses to the coronavirus, <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/tourism-policy-responses-to-the-coronavirus-covid-19-6466aa20/>

OECD (2020) Facebook/OECD/World Bank Future of Business Surveys (May-Wave 1, June-Wave 2)

<sup>27</sup> OECD (forthcoming) Trade and gender: a framework of analysis [currently [TAD/TC\(2020\)4/REV1](#)]

<sup>28</sup> World Bank Group and WTO (2020) *Women and Trade: The role of trade in promoting gender equality*, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34140>

any new tax measures aimed at fostering the recovery are viewed through a lens that looks at the different impact on women and men, and do not inadvertently reinforce gender biases. In the longer-term, tackling the root cause of the problem requires addressing gender stereotypes, reducing gender gaps in education and training where they exist, removing barriers that limit access to finance for women entrepreneurs, and targeting a wide range of policies to reduce gender-related unconscious bias.

### *Tackle digital gender divide for a digital intensive future work and learning*

With a few exception across OECD countries, women are more likely to be engaged in work activities that can be performed at home compared to men, suggesting that the immediate impact of strict social distancing policies on their employment prospects could be less severe in some countries.<sup>29</sup> However, whether or not women can adapt to teleworking arrangement depends on whether they have access to as well as the necessary skills to use digital tools, particularly in developing and emerging economies. For example in 2019, 48% of women were using the Internet globally, compared to 58% of men. The root-causes of this gender-based digital divide are diverse, but among the most important include: hurdles to accessing digital technologies, unaffordability of digital means, lack of digital education and technological literacy, online safety and security concerns, time poverty - often resulting from unpaid care work, and inherent biases and socio-cultural norms. Furthermore, a survey found that in Europe full-time teleworking is particularly challenging for parents with children under the age of 12 as 22 % of them reported difficulties in concentrating with their work compared to just 5% for those without.<sup>30</sup> Recognising the gender gap in access, use and skills around digital technology across the globe requires urgent and systemic policy interventions targeting women and girls. Providing additional academic support to compensate for the learning loss, promoting ICT use, as well as the development of skills and learning are as important as addressing the issues of online harassment and cyberbullying, as all of these issues diminish women's and girls' self-confidence in the digital world.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, efforts to close the digital gender divide should be accompanied by measures to reduce structural discrimination and introduce complementary policies to improve supportive infrastructure for additional care responsibilities, as women with such responsibilities may have to cut down their activities or even leave their jobs entirely. To support women in harnessing the potential in the increasingly digitalised world of work, comprehensive support measures should be put in place to address these intertwined challenges.

### *Empower women as drivers of a green recovery*

Furthermore, reallocation of labour, engendered by the crisis, could be an opportunity for women to get access to jobs or better jobs in expanding firms and sectors, including in the green economy (particularly in critical sectors for the environment such as energy, transport, manufacturing as well as advanced manufacturing, computer programming).<sup>32</sup> Gender-sensitive approaches must not only explicitly recognise girls' and women's diverse and gender-specific interests and needs, they must also ensure their participation and leadership in developing, implementing and monitoring mitigation and response actions.

<sup>29</sup> Ricardo Espinoza and Laura Reznikova (2020), Who can log in? The importance of skills for the feasibility of teleworking arrangements across OECD countries, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 242, <https://doi.org/10.1787/3f115a10-en>

<sup>30</sup> Eurofound (2020) Living, working and COVID-19: First findings – April 2020, cited in ILO (2020) Teleworking during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A Practical Guide, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms\\_751232.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_751232.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> OECD (2020) Protecting Children Online: An Overview of Recent Developments in Legal frameworks and Policies, OECD Digital Economy Papers, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9e0e49a9-en>

<sup>32</sup> OECD (Forthcoming) Gender and the Environment: Building the Evidence Base and Advancing Policy Actions to Achieve the SDGs

In that context, training and requalification schemes are needed that take into account women-specific needs and constraints, including through bridging the digital gender divide. In rural areas where women have an important role to play in agriculture especially in emerging economies, it might be important to consider providing sustainability training.

### *Support women-targeted policy responses in developing countries*

Integrating developing countries into the global economy can accelerate gender equality. Facilitating trade and harnessing FDI will be important in expanding opportunities for women, both in sectors where women already work and in opening new sectoral possibilities. The impact of the crisis on women is further amplified in developing countries, as women are exposed to particular challenges such as informal employment and sometimes-vulnerable positions in international supply chains, higher health risks with limited access to health services, and child marriage – an issue in a range of countries. It is therefore critical to deepen exchanges of best practices to inform gender-sensitive policies both in the domestic context and in development co-operation efforts. These policy responses should take into consideration gender inequalities in unpaid work as well as the diversity of women, including those in vulnerable situations. To maximise development impact and accelerate COVID-19 recovery, OECD countries have an essential role to play through their development co-operation in ensuring gender analysis is part of all response, recovery and fiscal stimulus packages in developing countries.<sup>33</sup> Donor countries could increase the share of aid that integrates gender equality, which stands at 42% in total - with 38% of aid to gender equality integrated across sectors and 4% dedicated to its advancement - including by focusing on removing barriers that stand in the way of women's equal participation in the economy. Governments also need to help prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in their COVID-19 response efforts, including through implementation of the DAC Recommendation on Ending Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment in Development Co-operation and Humanitarian Assistance: Key Pillars of Prevention and Response [[OECD/LEGAL/5020](#)].<sup>34</sup>

## **ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY IN LEADERSHIP, WORKFORCE AND GOVERNANCE**

### *Increase women's leadership in decision-making in the public and private sectors*

In the private sector, countries may wish to consider measures such as voluntary targets, disclosure requirements, boardroom quotas and private initiatives that enhance diversity on boards and in senior management.<sup>35</sup> Enhancing diversity in leadership may help improve work-life balance at all levels and prevent discrimination in human resource management systems – bringing additional profits and productivity to companies.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> OECD (2020) Response, recovery and prevention in the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in developing countries: Women and girls on the frontlines: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=136\\_136621-wc776cqdgx&title=Response-recovery-and-prevention-in-the-coronavirus-%28COVID-19%29-pandemic-in-developing-countries-Women-and-girls-on-the-frontlines](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=136_136621-wc776cqdgx&title=Response-recovery-and-prevention-in-the-coronavirus-%28COVID-19%29-pandemic-in-developing-countries-Women-and-girls-on-the-frontlines)

<sup>34</sup> <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-5020>

<sup>35</sup> The G20/OECD Principles of Corporate Governance (2015), <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264236882-en.pdf?expires=1603124846&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=71EA922AEE43F7A413AF2F0985183810>

<sup>36</sup> ILO (2019) The Business Case for Change, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_700953.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_700953.pdf)

In the public sector, gender-balanced composition of, and the representation of gender expertise in, national and international emergency response frameworks is required. These efforts should be advanced in parallel with the continued work on increasing gender equality in public decision-making and political empowerment of women from diverse backgrounds. Innovative approaches, such as behavioural science, can offer actionable insights to improve gender equality outcomes, and weed out ineffective policies in the absence of legislative reform or potentially business-burdening measures.

### *Mobilise a whole-of-government response*

In the short term, central gender equality institutions or relevant policy experts could provide relevant expertise to support emergency and recovery decision-making structures in integrating gender perspectives. Emergency measures taken during the pandemic should be monitored to identify any disproportionate impacts on women (e.g. to ensure that measures equally benefit men and women from diverse backgrounds; and potential unanticipated consequences on gender inequality are addressed) and lessons learned used to adapt future measures. The use of various government levers such as ex-post gender impact assessments,<sup>37</sup> stakeholder consultations and audits by independent bodies can be particularly useful in this regard. To this end, it is important for governments to accelerate efforts in collecting gender-disaggregated data on the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has also revealed the importance of ensuring that risk analysis and contingency plans for future crises undergo gender analysis. In the medium term, countries should continue to integrate evidence-based assessments of gender impacts into various dimensions of public governance (e.g. regulatory policy) and consider integration of gender perspective in all phases of the budget cycle, as appropriate, with a view to addressing structural gender inequalities.

## **ALIGNING OUR ECONOMIC THINKING AND EVIDENCE-BASED ANALYSIS WITH GENDER EQUALITY GOALS**

*There is an important link between gender equality and economic growth* as demonstrated by the OECD's analysis from the G20 Brisbane Target (reducing the gender gap in labour force participation and pay could increase global GDP by 1 percentage point by 2025) and as evidenced in several country experiences.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the impact of the crisis on women will also imply lost economic opportunities, as women are in many societies still an untapped potential for economic growth. Further analysis is required to demonstrate that tackling gender inequalities and empowering women could accelerate recovery and growth. According to SIGI data, discrimination in laws, attitudes and practices is estimated to cost the global economy close to USD 6 trillion (7.5% of global GDP).<sup>39</sup> The other side of the coin indicates that fully removing the legal barriers to women's economic activity could increase annual GDP by USD 7.7

<sup>37</sup> As covered in more detail in OECD (2019) Fast Forward to Gender Equality (<https://www.oecd.org/gov/gender-mainstreaming/fast-forward-to-gender-equality-g2g9faa5-en.htm>), gender impact assessments (GIAs) refer to the process of assessing and identifying the impacts that government decision-making can have on women and men. Ex-post GIAs, in particular, are applied during the evaluation phase of the policy cycle in order to identify the actual impacts a policy has had on women and men. Findings from a 2017 OECD survey of 17 countries demonstrate that this practice is relatively uncommon, with only one-third of responding countries reporting using GIAs in the ex-post stage.

<sup>38</sup> OECD (2017) The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264281318-en>  
 OECD (2018) Is the Last Mile the Longest? Economic Gains from Gender Equality in Nordic Countries, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264300040-en>

<sup>39</sup> OECD (2019) SIGI 2019 Global Report

trillion, or 8.3 %.<sup>40</sup> It is also important to note that although women’s empowerment and economic growth are closely related, continuous commitment and policy actions are needed, as growth will not simply deliver gender equality due to pervasive gender stereotypes.<sup>41</sup>

The OECD’s analytical base should be upgraded to improve its capabilities to anticipate and better respond to emerging priorities in the gender equality agenda. The OECD’s work could wire together different silos to tackle problems that are systemic in nature. To do so, it is important to enhance co-operation between the OECD, governments and stakeholders to strive for timely collection of gender-disaggregated data, foster continuous improvement in policy analysis that aligns gender equality with recovery policies and ensure effective implementation and monitoring of policy and governance reforms.

---

<sup>40</sup> The White House Council of Economic Advisers (2020) W-GDP Index, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-W-GDP-Index-Empowering-Women%E2%80%99s-Economic-Activity-through-Addressing-Legal-Barriers.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Esther Duflo (2012) Women Empowerment and Economic Development, *Journal of Economic Literature* 2012, 50(4), 1051–1079, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/jel.50.4.1051>