

# Voices from the Grassroots: Policy Recommendations

## Preamble

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OCIC's Gender Equality Hub is a 'community of practice' that seeks to actively examine how a gender transformative and intersectional approach to development can shape our work towards universal sustainable development, and how we can work together to identify gaps and challenges and mobilize around current opportunities.

In 2020, individual members of the Hub, and those representing OCIC member organizations Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO-SACO), World Accord, and World Renew worked together to document the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable women and girls from seven countries. This publication profiles the women and girls' experiences of increased debt loads, job and income loss, heightened levels of gender violence and assault, especially amongst young girls, increased crime amongst male youth, food insecurity and hunger, transportation challenges, civil unrest, unresponsive and inconsistent governments, exacerbation of inequality and discrimination especially for persons with disabilities and increased mental stress. Their stories echo those of women, girls and other vulnerable and marginalized groups across the world, including in Canada.





The work of the Voices from the Grassroots project invites readers to reflect on these testimonials and use them to catalyze increased gender responsive approaches by all sectors in response to COVID-19, and in rebuilding societies after the pandemic. By compiling firsthand accounts from Afghanistan, Guatemala, Kenya, Mali, Philippines, Uganda, and South Sudan to highlight the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 on women and girls, the initiative also showcases the resilience of these women and girls in the midst of the pandemic and calls for more gender-responsive approaches as we build back better from the crisis. We encourage all to more deliberately include diverse and multiple stakeholders and at all levels, including women's groups and organizations, civil society, religious groups, the private sector, community-based organizations at the grassroots, with diaspora communities, and more.

## Context






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In commemoration of the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Voices from the Grassroots initiative welcomed recommendations from a diverse group of partners and speakers on the topic of “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.” You can find their recommendations below.

### *ENSURING EQUITABLE AND GENDER-SENSITIVE FINANCING*

-  Finance women-led grassroots organizations directly, thereby enhancing gender equality and ensuring a sustainable future by putting money in the hands of the communities and individuals that need it;
-  Ensure funds allocated in national stimulus packages are dedicated to supporting unpaid care work to help alleviate the reproductive care work women often carry disproportionately;
-  Consider a quota system to ensure that women-owned businesses are able to access the financial relief at the same level as their counterparts, in cases where government funds are used to rescue businesses;
-  Ensure that, when funds are given to businesses, the impact of this funding on women and girls is monitored and evaluated through a contextual, culturally-sensitive, and holistic lens, and is therefore reflective of their lived realities.

### *GREENING ALL SECTORS - ECONOMICAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND MORE*

-  Promote environmental education and amplify the effect of environmental issues by creating awareness in adults and young people through education, including contextually-relevant curricula and information dissemination, taking into account the impact on the communities to which young people belong;
-  Incorporate and emphasize greener practices at the local, national, regional, and international levels, primarily within the private sector and their spheres of influence;
-  Focus international and national post-COVID economic and financial recovery strategies on investment into renewable energy and circular economy efforts, not just carbon energy;
-  Bolster sectors and jobs that will support a green economy through finances, education, awareness, and more;
-  Incorporate green practices into the standard operating procedures and programming of international development organizations. All livelihoods and economic development programming should not just employ gender intersectional, but green lenses - ensuring that program participants' capacities are built for engaging in green practices in both the formal and informal sectors; that selected partners promote environmentally friendly practices;



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- ✚ Recognize, amplify, and elevate existing local, Indigenous green and sustainability practices where and when possible.

## *RECOGNIZE COMMUNITY AND CONTEXTUAL NEEDS*

- ✚ Ensure that rural women are visible in development statistics, thereby acknowledging their roles as agricultural producers, educators, organizers of their communities and fighters for the future of their children;
- ✚ Tailor disaster risk reduction and environmental responses, programs, and opportunities to all contexts, including rural, peri-urban, and urban contexts by recognizing the unique needs of each context;
- ✚ Conduct cross-cutting GESI (Gender, Equity & Social Inclusion) analyses throughout the implementation of programming and activities in local communities, by integrating monitoring and evaluation strategies and creating opportunities to adapt and reiterate initiatives based on feedback and results;
- ✚ Recognize that conflict has a multiplier effect on the impacts of climate change, resulting in women and girls facing the disproportionate impacts of climate change and natural disasters in addition to the plethora of systemic and structural barriers they face as a result of their gender and sex.

## *BUILDING STRONG NETWORKS FOR COOPERATION*

- ✚ Build a joint advocacy agenda and platform for Global South and Global North stakeholders to push for systemic change through collaboration, partnership, and the amplification of existing work;
- ✚ Ensure women are included in planning committees, program design, as leaders of recovery efforts and that women and girl's voices are included in community consultations;
- ✚ Hold regular calls and create intentional spaces to build solidarity and partnership between Global North and Global South actors and stakeholders to advocate for and amplify the work of grassroots movements;
- ✚ Encourage collaboration among actors and stakeholders at the international, national, local and community level to ensure the empowerment of women and girls through economic and educational means, thereby building their resilience and ability to adapt to climate change.