

CARE International COVID-19 Policy Agenda

Putting women's and girls' rights and leadership at the centre of global efforts to recover better, greener and more inclusively



Summary for Policymakers

COVID-19 represents one of the biggest disruptors to sustainable development, human rights and gender equality in our lifetimes.

Policymakers worldwide are responsible for addressing immediate health, food and nutrition, and security concerns. They also face a historic opportunity to leverage response measures to help reinvigorate international cooperation towards the achievement of the Global Goals, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

Women and girls' rights, leadership and participation are critical for ensuring an effective, just and accountable COVID response, and for building a more resilient and inclusive post-COVID world.

CARE calls on policymakers to:

- 1. Support a women-led, localized response**
Recognize, fund and support local women's organizations as critical allies in efforts to reach the most affected and hardest-to-reach populations. Challenge myths and misinformation and enable community-based surveillance and detection.
- 2. Guarantee women's meaningful participation in decision-making at all levels:** Ensure women and girls in conflict and fragile settings are able to safely and actively participate in the COVID-19 response without fear of repercussion. Promote women's leadership in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and relief and recovery efforts at all levels.
- 3. Strengthen and scale up gender-based violence prevention and response:** Place women and girls' safety at the centre of all COVID-19 preparedness and response plans. Treat survivor-centered GBV prevention and response services as essential, life-saving interventions.

4. Ensure access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights: Treat gender-responsive and adolescent-friendly sexual and reproductive health services as a core element of a non-negotiable, basic healthcare package throughout the COVID response, in line with global standards.

5. Scale up support for food and nutrition security Immediately scale up safety net programs, including cash and voucher assistance and school feeding programs, for vulnerable rural and urban populations. Minimize disruptions to markets and agricultural activities by ensuring that smallholder farmers, especially women, can access key resources, such as inputs, information, storage, and market linkages.

6. Strengthen existing water and sanitation services Maintain and scale water and sanitation services as fundamental to COVID-19 prevention and preparedness, and ensure these services consider the role, needs, equity and safety of women and girls. Ensure access to soap, handwashing facilities and reinforce key messages on hygiene and handwashing with soap to prevent COVID-19. Scale cash, vouchers or subsidies to guarantee consistent access to safe water supply.

7. Prioritize women and girls in short-term relief and longer-term economic and financial recovery and funding: Integrate a gender-lens into the economic response, including into the analysis, progress tracking and data collection. Prioritize women in the response because it is right and as agents of change. Ensure women's voice and leadership and balanced decision-making on economic and financial recovery.

8. Prioritize women and female entrepreneurs in stimulus packages: Scale up social protection, safety nets, and access to financial and other services that account for women's unequal caregiving burden. Take a gender-transformative approach to assistance modalities, including on ODA, tax, concessional and non-concessional funding and debt relief. Accelerate ratification of ILO Violence and Harassment Convention.

9. Recover better, greener and more inclusively: Align all economic stimulus with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Put people's needs and prospects at the center of all social and economic relief packages, and harness the benefits of a zero-carbon, climate-resilient, inclusive, gender-just and sustainable post-COVID economy. Uphold financial support commitments to developing countries towards these objectives.

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