

# STEPPING UP FOR GENERATION EQUALITY



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AUSTRALIA'S COMMITMENTS TO THE GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM\*

30 JUNE – 1 JULY 2021, PARIS

### Introduction

In June 2021, world leaders will step up at the Generation Equality Forum to make bold, ambitious and game-changing commitments on gender equality. These commitments will be drawn from a set of recommendations designed by six Action Coalitions, made up of over 90 leaders from civil society, private sector and government globally. Over 18 months these Action Coalition Leaders have worked to develop, refine, and build support for transformative actions that can spur progress towards gender equality.

It's now up to world leaders to meet the challenge.

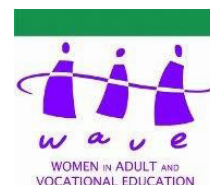
The Generation Equality Forum kicked off in Mexico in March 2021, and will culminate in Paris in June with a global summit where world leaders will make concrete, ambitious and sustainable commitments on gender equality.

These commitments will be critical to galvanize progress on gender equality for the decade ahead.

The World Economic Forum predicts that it will take 135 years to close the gender gap.<sup>1</sup> Equality cannot be the promise of another lifetime.

26 years on from the Beijing Platform for Action – the most comprehensive and bold global agreement on women's rights to date – and with less than a decade left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Generation Equality represents a critical juncture to close the gender gap – not 135 years from now, but in this generation.

Australia must step up to play its part.



Supporting women. Defeating poverty.



## Recommended Actions

These recommendations have been developed by a diverse group of organisations working across feminist movements in Australia and internationally. They draw from the Commitments Playbook developed by the six Action Coalitions of the Generation Equality Forum, and identify areas where concrete action from Australia can advance gender equality – both in Australia and our region.

### Gender-based Violence

*Led by the governments of Iceland, Kenya, the United Kingdom and Uruguay*

Globally, 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence (GBV) in her lifetime.<sup>2</sup> In Australia, an average of one woman per week is killed by an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup> The Pacific has one of the highest rates of GBV in the world, with as many as 60-90% of women experiencing sexual violence since the age of 15.<sup>4</sup> COVID-19 and related lockdowns have led to an increase in GBV, which creating challenges for those seeking to access services. Evidence shows that supporting autonomous women's rights organisations and movements, and shifting harmful gender norms, are critical interventions to reducing GBV.<sup>5</sup> Governments must work together to support specialist women's services to respond to rising demand while maintaining good practice service models,<sup>6</sup> and move away from a "one size fits all" approach to addressing violence by working with diverse communities to better address the needs of diverse groups of women.<sup>7</sup>

**ACTION 1:** Increase Australia's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget to GBV prevention, mitigation and response,<sup>8</sup> and ringfence a minimum of 25% of this funding to women's rights and feminist organisations who are developing culturally relevant and evidence based solutions to transforming gender norms and attitudes which underpin violence.

**ACTION 2:** Commit to adequate and guaranteed funding for women's specialist services in Australia to ensure these services can respond to rising demand while maintaining good practice service models.

**ACTION 3:** Consult with diverse communities to support all levels of government in Australia in mainstreaming an intersectional lens to better address violence against diverse groups of women, and provide diverse women's rights organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled legal services with the autonomy, funding and resourcing to lead the implementation of such policies and programs.

### Economic Justice and Rights

*Led by the governments of Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and Sweden*

Around the world, unpaid care responsibilities are disproportionately undertaken by women. In Asia and the Pacific women do four times more unpaid care work than men.<sup>9</sup> This reduces their time to enjoy leisure activities and to engage in paid work, impacting women's economic autonomy and mental and physical health. This unequal burden – coupled with the fact that women make up the majority of people in insecure and informal work and the persistence of the gender pay gap worldwide – means that women are more likely to rely on social protection systems.<sup>10</sup> Strengthening these systems can help to support economies during times of crisis, while also building long-term strength and wellbeing for societies at low cost compared to the benefits.<sup>11</sup>

**ACTION 1:** Raise Australia's contribution to women's rights organisations and movements to 5% of our international development assistance to unlock \$120 million per year in funding for gender equality, and support women's rights organisations who are working to change the norms underlying gendered roles and responsibilities related to work and care – both paid and unpaid.

**ACTION 2:** Support partner governments in Asia and the Pacific to implement and fund social protection systems which are universal, accessible and gender responsive.

**ACTION 3:** Significantly increase Australia's investment in social infrastructure (including early childhood education and care and aged care), by:

- a. Permanently increasing JobSeeker and related payments in line with costs of living;
- b. Linking the Jobseeker rate to wage growth,
- c. Boosting Commonwealth Rent Assistance,
- d. Reforming the Child Care Subsidy, including investigating an increase in the subsidy and taper to address the Workforce Disincentive Rate; and
- e. Reviewing the structure, funding and provision of care services to inform a coordinated strategy that will maximise investment for quality, fit for purpose client-centred services based on qualifications linked career pathways to decent, secure employment in care related occupations and industries.

## Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

*Led by the governments of Argentina, Burkina Faso, Denmark, France and North Macedonia*

More than half of the global unmet need for contraception – where women want to delay or prevent pregnancy but are not using any method of contraception – is in Australia’s neighbouring countries in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>12</sup> Despite greater availability, there is still an 8% unmet need for contraception among Australian women.<sup>13</sup> Increasing access to long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) is a primary strategy to address this unmet need.<sup>14</sup> Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) covering reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing, consent, positive and respectful relationships, gender and sexual diversity, and the influence of technology is a critical intervention. Australia does not have a consistent approach to the delivery of CSE, and young people in the Pacific face multiple barriers to accessing comprehensive information, education and services.

**ACTION 1:** Increase support for women’s rights and feminist organisations in Asia and the Pacific who are delivering CSE to support continued implementation of the *Transformative Agenda for Women, Adolescents and Youth in the Pacific: Towards Zero Unmet Need for Family Planning 2018- 2022*.<sup>15</sup>

**ACTION 2:** Increase support to programs aimed at increasing the sustainable supply and provision of contraception, including LARCs, in the Pacific.

**ACTION 3:** Expand the Medicare Benefits Scheme to include registered nurses for insertion and removal of LARCs.

**ACTION 4:** Fund the development of a national CSE curriculum in Australia focused on gender equality, bodily autonomy and empowerment that is aligned with the 2018 UNESCO technical guidelines, informed by the views of diverse young women and people of marginalised genders, and is well-resourced and consistently delivered across the country.

## Feminist Action for Climate Justice

*Led by the governments of Costa Rica and the Maldives*

Women and girls face disproportionate climate risks as a result of discriminatory gender norms and structures. Changes to natural resources caused by climate change increase the labour demands of gendered activities such as subsistence farming and collecting food, fuel and water.<sup>16</sup> Evidence demonstrates that in the aftermath of natural disasters, women, non-

binary people, and people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations face increased violence.<sup>17</sup> Women and marginalised genders are excluded from leadership and decision-making at all levels from community to regional and multilateral structures.<sup>18</sup> Including women as leaders – especially Indigenous women who play a central role in environmental knowledge management – is critical to ensuring that we can avoid global warming of more than 1.5°C, while ensuring that all climate policy and finance is gender-responsive.

**ACTION 1:** Increase the proportion of gender responsive climate finance within Australia’s 5 year \$1.5b climate finance commitment to at least 65%.

**ACTION 2:** Commit increased funding for women’s rights organisations working at the intersection of gender equality and climate justice, including disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, including through community-based models and indigenous-led solutions.

**ACTION 3:** Actively promote women’s leadership in climate change decision-making at local, regional and global levels by mandating quotas for diverse women in decision-making bodies within Australia, and promoting the use of quotas and other positive measures through multilateral forums.

## Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality

*Led by the governments of Armenia, Chile, Finland, Rwanda and Tunisia*

COVID-19 has emphasised the world’s reliance on technology, while also highlighting the barriers and gaps in access based on gender, age, wealth, geographic location, ability and other factors. Taking steps to enable technology-assisted service delivery, especially for those living in rural and remote areas, beyond the pandemic is a simple and practical step to increase access to health and other services. Education and training in Australia is still highly segregated, with comparatively fewer women completing qualifications and degrees in sectors such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).<sup>19</sup> This affects the pipeline from school and university to employment, deepening the gendered divisions in technological access and literacy and resulting in a sector which is less-responsive to the needs of half the population. The benefits of the Coral Sea Cable – funded by Australia to bring high speed internet to Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands – on lowering mobile internet prices have yet to be realised.<sup>20</sup> Additional effort will be required to ensure that women can benefit from Australia’s investment, and to manage the risks of facilitating new forms of technology assisted gender-based violence.

**ACTION 1:** Commit targeted additional resources to women’s rights organisations in the Pacific to conduct prevention of and response to technology assisted violence.

**ACTION 2:** Invest in evidence based strategies to increase women’s representation in STEM fields, starting at school and continuing through all levels of education and training including:

- Role models and mentors from STEM occupations;
- Low stakes opportunities for young women to taste and experience STEM roles and occupations prior to and during their senior secondary years of schooling;
- Gender sensitive STEM education and training programs at all levels including appropriate curricula and pedagogies;
- Critical mass in all STEM strategies and initiatives especially in training courses and those in workplaces;
- Provision of community based education and training in technology programs for out of school post school women and girls
- The expansion and sustainable development of gender-informed partnership broker programs and initiatives, which can play an important role in supporting and enhancing school based career exploration approaches.<sup>21</sup>

**ACTION 3:** Ensure that the benefits of technology-assisted service delivery can continue beyond the pandemic by making sexual and reproductive health Medicare Benefits Schedule item numbers permanently available to all telehealth providers.

## Feminist Movements and Leadership

*Led by the governments of Canada, Malawi and the Netherlands*

Decades of evidence show that diverse, autonomous feminist movements are the key drivers of legal and policy change on gender equality, but they receive less than 1% of international development funding globally.<sup>22</sup> States with higher levels of gender equality tend to have a lower likelihood of conflict and violence, lower levels of corruption and citizens who place a higher level of trust in their government.<sup>23</sup> Women in Australia, Asia and the Pacific still face barriers to full participation and leadership in social, economic and political life. To embed gender equality, we need policies which ensure equality in the private sphere, equal outcomes in the economic sphere and equal access

to political structures. There is an urgent need to dramatically increase the amount of core, flexible, multi-year and sustainable funding that goes directly to feminist organisations and movements and ensure all areas of policy are based on feminist principles including gender-responsive budgeting.

**ACTION 1:** Increase Australia’s contribution of core, flexible, long-term funding to women’s rights organisations, including by committing at least \$10m in funding to a new Pacific Feminist Fund.

**ACTION 2:** Adopt a feminist foreign policy framework to guide all areas of Australia’s foreign policy including trade, diplomacy, defence and development.

**ACTION 3:** Continue Australia’s leadership in gender data innovation, including through programs such as Equality Insights, by announcing new, significant, multi-year funding to rapidly build the availability of gender-sensitive data and its use by diverse actors and movements.

**ACTION 4:** Commit to ensuring that women, non-binary and transgender people make up 50% of all public leadership positions in Australia by 2030, using methods including but not limited to quotas.

**ACTION 5:** Commit to implementing gender responsive budgeting at all levels of government in Australia, working with women’s rights groups and experts to support gender mainstreaming in government processes.

## References:

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