GENDER, COVID-19 AND FOOD SYSTEMS:

IMPACTS, COMMUNITY RESPONSES AND FEMINIST POLICY DEMANDS

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REPORT OF THE CSM WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP

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Impressum

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SUMMARY

"We won't go back to normality, because normality was the problem."

With this sentence projected on the facade of a building in Santiago of Chile in March 2020, grassroots and feminist movements clearly articulated their perspective on the COVID-19 crisis. This is a profound and unprecedented global crisis that is exacerbating and leveraging pre-existent systemic forms of patriarchal inequalities, oppressions, racism, colonialism, violence and discrimination that cannot be tolerated.

With this sentence capturing the public space and visibility of a building, feminist movements also proclaimed that they would not surrender to isolation and the silencing of their voices, struggles and demands during this pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered the structural vulnerabilities and weaknesses of our food systems. Neoliberalism, global capitalism and feudalism[1] have been eroding for decades our social protection and welfare systems, fostering the structural colonial deprivation and grabbing of natural resources of the global south, violating human rights, harming ecosystems and biodiversity and strengthening the sexual division of labor, leaving women to face alone the burden of productive and social reproductive work.

From a feminist perspective, the COVID-19 crisis is indeed a global care crisis, where states and governments have failed to prioritize people's interests, while (transnational) corporations are increasingly capturing and dismantling the public commons to impose their own private interest. This pattern is also well reflected in the current production and consumption food systems.

It has been suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic may add between 83 and 132 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world in 2020 depending on the economic growth scenario.[2] Women are indeed positioned, due to their gender-assigned roles, to be disproportionately impacted, as they are literally on the front line of the crisis. Women and girls are the majority of food producers and providers for their households, they are the majority of nurses, care and social workers, food and agricultural workers and teachers. Yet, they have been consistently overlooked and invisible in research and responses to the pandemic.

Gender inequality and discrimination is shaping, and will continue to shape, the COVID-19 pandemic in tangible and significant ways. The collective spirit and emotional intensity generated during this time of crisis can be, and has been, mobilized, and their impacts are likely to be greater now.[3] Efforts dedicated to providing mutual aid, monitoring policy makers, defending women and workers' rights, creating strike funds to extend health benefits

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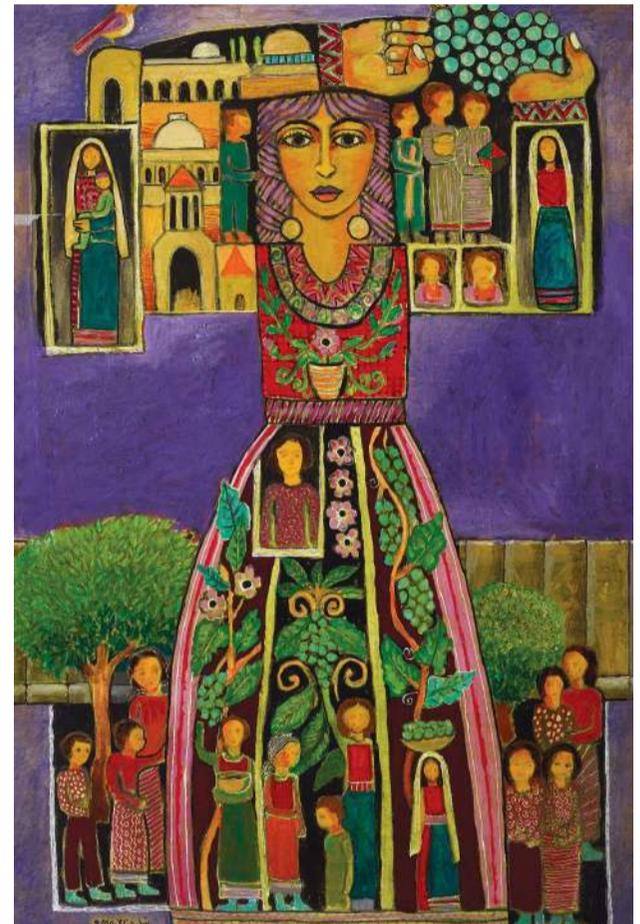
[1] Feudalism is defined as the control over vast tracts of land by a very small powerful minority of landowners who exploit and oppress rural communities, especially the small and landless producers, particularly in the Asian context.

[2] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en. p. xvi

[3] Bao, H. 2020. 'Anti-domestic violence little vaccine' : A Wuhan based feminist activist campaign during COVID- 19. *Interface*. https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bao.pdf

to those who lost their jobs, strengthening popular education, organizing food distributions, offer a perspective of the crisis 'from below' and provide us with concrete examples of rebuilding social fabrics based on concrete solidarity. Feminist and food sovereignty movements have been, and continue to be, central to these efforts.

Given this context, this report summarizes research around the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on women in and across the constituencies and regions of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS). Based on the research, the report summarizes acts of mutual aid and solidarity, as well as negative impacts experienced by women around the world. Principles to guide policies and programmes are identified and concrete policy demands are articulated in four areas: 1) economic activities, markets and access to resources; 2) care work, public health and gender-based violence; 3) participation, representation and digital equity; 4) government responses and social protection.
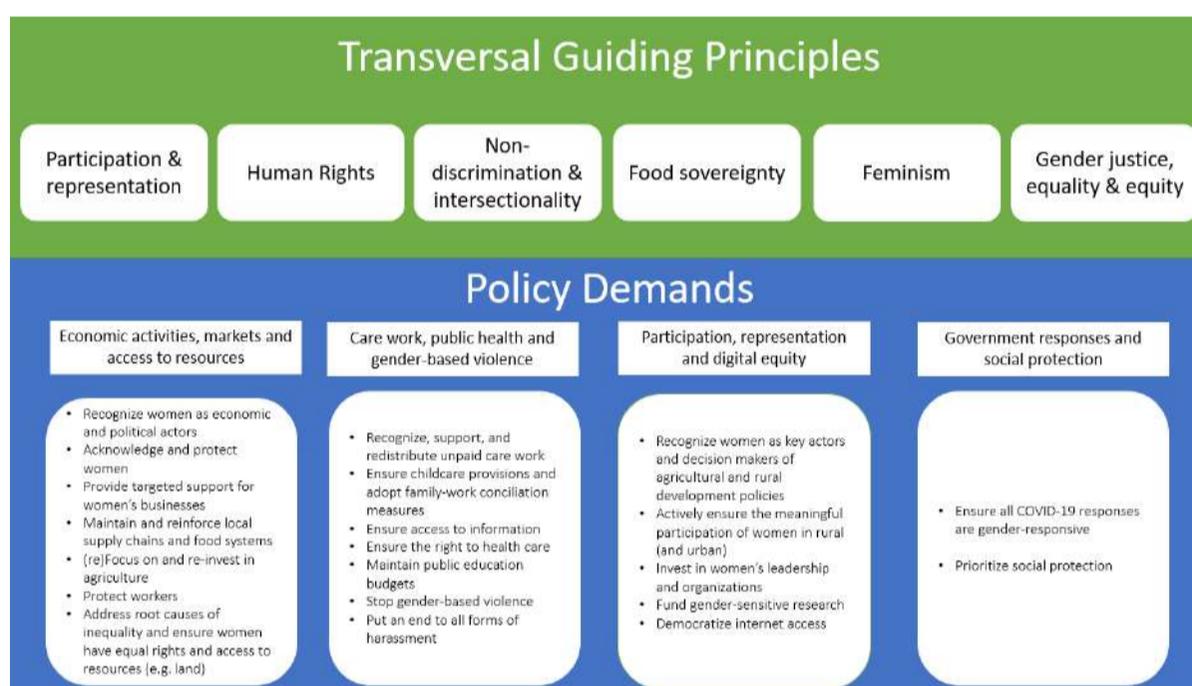
Figure 1 Summary of principles and policy demand

Drawing from the interviews and document analysis five cross-cutting principles were identified to guide policies and program in relation to gender, COVID-19 and food systems:

A. Participation and representation

B. Human Rights

C. Non-discrimination and intersectionality

D. Food sovereignty

E. Feminism

F. Gender justice, equality and equity

Building on these principles, a number of key policy demands were formulated in each of the four themes highlighted above:

1) Economic activities, markets and access to resources

• Recognize the role of women and their organizations as economic and political actors.

• Acknowledge and protect women working in the informal economy

- Provide targeted support for women cooperatives and women-led small businesses.

- Maintain and reinforce local supply chains and food systems

- (re)Focus on and re-invest in agriculture

- Protect workers

- Ensure women have equal and non-discriminatory ownership rights to and control over land and other natural resources

2) **Care work, public health and gender-based violence**

- Recognize, support, and redistribute unpaid care work

- Ensure childcare provisions and adopt family-work conciliation measures

- Ensure access to information

- Ensure the right to health care

- Increase public education budgets

- Stop gender-based violence

- Put an end to all forms of harassment

3) **Participation, representation and digital equity**

- Recognize women and their organizations as key actors and decision makers of agricultural and rural development policies. This is a first step towards integrating a feminist perspective in decision-making and policy processes.

- Actively ensure the meaningful participation of women in rural and urban areas

- Invest in and support women leaders and women's organizations

- Fund gender-sensitive research

- Democratize internet access and conduct a mapping to identify digital inequalities

4) **Government responses and social protection**

- Ensure all COVID-19 responses are gender-responsive

- Prioritize social protection

The report concludes by reiterating the important work that movements, individuals and other civil society organizations have undertaken not only in solidarity with others, but also to hold states accountable. It calls for a continuation of this momentum, recognizing that for all the negative outcomes, the pandemic, and resulting crisis, provides us with an important moment to push for equality, equity, food sovereignty and for a feminist present and future that does build on knowledges from the past.

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has uncovered even more vulnerabilities and weaknesses in our food systems. It has been suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic may add between 83 and 132 million people to the total number of undernourished in the world in 2020 depending on the economic growth scenario.[4] The OECD has declared that the pandemic has had, and will continue to have, a major impact on the health and well-being of many marginalized groups, especially on women.[5] Women are indeed positioned to be disproportionately impacted as they are literally on the front line of the crisis.[6] Women and girls are the majority of food producers and providers for their households, they are the majority of nurses and social workers, teachers and food workers. They do the bulk of the care and social reproduction work, as a result of the gendered division of labor. Yet, they have been consistently overlooked in research and responses to the pandemic.[7]

Gender inequality is shaping, and will continue to shape, the COVID-19 pandemic in tangible and significant ways,[8] both positive and negative. In this report, we present the result of research into the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on women in and across the constituencies and regions of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) for relations with the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS).[9] We highlight acts of mutual aid and solidarity, as well as negative impacts, and put forward a series of principles and policy demands to guide next steps.

2. METHODOLOGY

This research was designed through consultations with the Women's Working Group, the Working Group on Global Governance, and the CSM Secretariat. Our goal is to support the ability of the CSM to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and advance a people's policy agenda to address the current and upcoming food crises, with an emphasis on women's rights and gender. To help us bring together the perspectives and voices of women on COVID-19, the Women's Working Group identified a list of 25 women active in the CSM to be contacted for interviews, ensuring representation across region, constituency and age. We were able to interview 16 of them between July 17 and 30, 2020. For an anonymized overview of the interviewees, see section 7 of the report.

Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish and French and were transcribed, shared back with the interviewees for review, and analyzed. To complement the interview data and analysis, we undertook a review of relevant reports and other sources (webinars, etc.) related to gender, COVID-19 and food systems, produced by CSM participants and other actors, academic literature and relevant reports from international organizations (notably UN organizations, i.e. FAO). Our interviews and document analysis focused on: impacts, community responses, and policy demands emerging from constituencies and sub-regions. A draft report was circulated in three languages to the various constituencies and sub-regions of the Women's Working Group, and its main

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[4] FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020.
Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO.
https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en. p. xvi
[5] OECD. 2020. Women at the core of the fight against COVID-19 crisis. OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19) https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/women-at-the-core-of-the-fight-against-covid-19-crisis-553a8269/
Women make up 70 percent of health and social workers worldwide for example but they are underrepresented in leadership roles. See: [6]Silva, I. 2020.
Coronavirus and gender: Women on frontline need to be included in pandemic response. *EuroNews*. April 8. https://www.euronews.com/2020/04/08/coronavirus-and-gender-women-on-frontline-need-to-be-included-in-pandemic-response; OECD. 2020; and Buvinic, M. Moe, L. and Swanson, E. 2020. Tracking the Gender Impact of COVID-19. Centre for Global Development. https://www.cgdev.org/blog/tracking-gender-impact-covid-19
[7] CARE. 2020. Left Out and Left Behind: Ignoring Women Will Prevent Us From Solving the Hunger Crisis
Policy Report. https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/publications/left-out-and-left-behind-ignoring-women-will-prevent-us-from-solving-the-hunger-crisis
[8] Sharma, L. 2020. Gender, Health Care and Social Assistance Wage Inequality in Canada, and COVID-19: Why the 'women workers in general and in particular women in health care and social assistance jobs need better and equal wages now'.
[9] For a review of these sub-regions and constituencies see: http://www.csm4cfs.org/the-csm/

findings were discussed during the online meetings. Comments were also sent to the authors via email. This final revised report incorporates all comments and suggestions made, to the extent that was possible.

It is important to highlight that the complexity of the crisis and the topic do not allow for a comprehensive review. We have sought to provide a fair representation of what women told us, complemented by relevant literature and documents we were able to review, and to put an emphasis on policy proposals to advance women's rights and the right to food and nutrition at local, national and global scales.

3. SOLIDARITY: MOVEMENTS AND WOMEN IN ACTION

The collective spirit and emotional intensity generated during this time of crisis can be, and has been, mobilized, and their impacts are likely to be greater now.[10] Efforts dedicated to providing mutual aid offer a perspective of the crisis 'from below' and provide us with concrete examples of rebuilding social fabrics based on concrete solidarity.[11] Feminist and food sovereignty movements have been, and continue to be, central to these efforts.

Protest and mobilization are usually considered as the key defining feature of social movements, and lockdowns certainly impacted on movements' ability to organize. Yet, various forms of protest continued despite restrictions. In Philippines, for example, women danced in protest and managed to get the government to distribute aid.[12] The pandemic showed that the activities and roles that movements play go beyond contentious politics.[13] Rather than sit out the crisis, social movements have adapted to the unexpected and emergent realities, focusing energy around defending workers' rights; mutual aid and solidarity; monitoring policymakers; and popular education.[14] Around the globe, social movements have responded by creating strike funds to extend health benefits to people who lost their jobs due to the pandemic crisis, volunteering to re-open social centers, and organizing food distributions.[15]

During our interviews, we learned about young farmers in the United States connecting to their neighbors, via organizations or communities, making sure people had enough food.[16] The Farmers' organization NFCC organized weekly support phone calls to their members to extend support and advice. We heard about school teachers in Brazil buying food from farmers and distributing it to their students to make up for gaps when school feeding programs were interrupted. Others in Brazil formed groups to organize donations of food products bought from farmers to vulnerable communities in the cities.[17] In Canada, Indigenous peoples spent more time out on the land, hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering to preserve food resources for the rest of the year. Indigenous communities mobilized to distribute food boxes to band members, distributing different catches from fishing expeditions, as well as hunting (24). As reported by one of our interviewees:

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[10] Bao, H. 2020. 'Anti-domestic violence little vaccine' : A Wuhan based feminist activist campaign during COVID-19. *Interface*. https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Bao.pdf

[11] Pleyers, Geoffrey. "The Pandemic Is a Battlefield. Social Movements in the COVID-19 Lockdown." *Journal of Civil Society* 0, no. 0 (2020): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2020.1794398. p 9.

[12] Interview 4

[13] Pleyers, Geoffrey. 2020. "The Pandemic Is a Battlefield. Social Movements in the COVID-19 Lockdown." *Journal of Civil Society* 0(0): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2020.1794398

[14] Pleyers, Geoffrey. 2020. p 2.

[15] Pleyers, Geoffrey. 2020. p 8.

[16] Interview 1

[17] Interview 12

There has "been an uptake in traditional practices that are usually done by women, particularly different gatherings of medicinal plants, berries, and other wild edibles, which I think is really amazing. Indigenous women and girls are certainly the most resilient demographic in Canada, and the backbone of communities who have really been stepping up to the plate in terms of ensuring that community members are fed and that people are taken care of, and elders are taken care of." [18]

In Sri Lanka, there was an increase in seed sharing across different platforms and agroecological groups distributed vegetables to medical workers. In West Africa, the small farmers' network ROPPA organized consultations with their women members to discuss their situation. It also put in place a monitoring and action committee to formulate demands for political dialogue.

In Africa, the workers' organization IUF developed a leaflet with all necessary information for workers building on lessons learned from Ebola, and developed monitoring tools to ensure corporations respect health and safety measures and that these measures are applied in gender sensitive ways.[19] In Fiji, a COVID-19 Response Gender Working group was established to assess the gendered impacts of COVID-19.

In hundreds of ways, big and small, people have come together to support each other through acts of mutual aid and solidarity. This has been referred to as "resurgence of reciprocity", that is serving to undo historical efforts by the state and capitalism to "destroy mutual aid, largely through the imposition of private property".[20] Across all of these efforts, women have played key roles, with feminist organizations raising awareness and organizing around the rise of care work, loss of employment, domestic and gender violence and femicide. Making use of technology, particularly social media, webinars, information sessions and awareness-raising become common-place.

Yet, this wave of activity in response to the crisis was also tempered by the everyday challenges CSOs working on the ground faced as a result of lockdown policies.[21] People we interviewed spoke of their frustration of being unable to be in communities, limited instead to engaging through online platforms. Not surprisingly, connectivity was a major obstacle. Limited connectivity served to further marginalize rural communities and those lacking the financial means to pay for internet access. In many ways, the move online has served to replicate hierarchies of which types of people and movements are visible.[22]

Finally, experiences around COVID-19 have raised questions about, and prompted further reflection around how to maintain solidarity and social dynamics, reinvent the economy, care for nature and address the climate crisis, while also reinforcing public services and deconstructing assigned gender roles. In this way, the pandemic presents us with an opportunity to build new forms of economic and social relations around what women are already doing, and to advance food sovereignty.

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[18] Interview 24

[19] Interview 14

[20] Springer, S. 2020. Caring geographies: The COVID-19 interregnum and a return to mutual aid. *Dialogues in Human Geography*. 10(2):112-115. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820620931277 ; Springer, S. 2017. Property is the mother of famine: on dispossession, wages, and the threat of hunger. *Political Geography*. 62: 201–203. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0962629817303116?via%3Dihub

[21] Interviews 6, 8,10

[22] Chukunzira, A. 2020. Organizing under curfew: Perspectives from Kenya. *Interface*. https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Chukunzira.pdf

4. KEY PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE POLICY

In this section we summarize general principles that have been advanced by CSM actors to guide policies and program in relation to gender, COVID-19 and food systems. These principles transverse all of the policy demands outlined in the next section of this report.

Participation and representation

Women and women's organizations in rural and urban areas must be involved in decision-making and leadership roles in their communities, as well as in policy-making at all levels. These roles may not be accessible to them because of long standing discrimation. A pre-requisite to ensuring adequate participation and representation of women in decision-making processes and programs that affect them is to address social norms. This entails deconstructing patriarchal social norms that can be deeply rooted in societies and often assumed to be a matter of fact rather than social construction that could evolve. This is a long-term process.

Human Rights

Human rights must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times. When designing and implementing rights-based approaches to policies and programs, specific attention should be paid to international human rights instruments that focus on the rights of women, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its General Recommendation 34 on Rural Women,[23] as well as other Declarations that protect the rights of Indigenous, black, brown, Dalit, pastoralists, peasant and fisher and all marginalized women.

Non-discrimination and intersectionality

- Discrimination can be intersectional - e.g. a peasant woman might be discriminated against due to both her gender and status – and deeply rooted in existing legal and societal systems.[24]
- Intersectionality is a framework that identifies how interlocking systems of power affect those who are most marginalized in society. Discrimination can affect all aspects of social and political identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, age, etc.) and these aspects overlap (or 'intersect'). Applying an intersectional approach means assessing how multiple forms of oppression come together.

Food sovereignty

Food sovereignty is "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems".[25] Since 2018, food sovereignty has been recognized as a right under international human rights law (UNDROP). Food sovereignty calls on States to address structural inequalities, including gender and power relations, within food systems.[26] It also calls for a holistic approach to addressing the food, environmental, climate, economic, public health and other crises.[27]

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[23] Interview 14; FAO. 2020. Legal considerations in the context of responses to COVID-19 to mitigate the risk of food insecurity (FAO 8615). http://www.fao.org/family-farming/detail/en/c/1275277/

[24] Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.

[25] Via Campesina. 2020. Declaration of Nyéléni: Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty. Nyéléni 2007. http://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290

[26] Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.

[27] Interview 1

Feminism(s)

Feminism(s) can be defined as a range of social movements, political movements, practices and ideologies that share a common goal: to expose and redress sociopolitical power hierarchies and privilege revealed in gender relations but extending to and influenced by other power factors such as class, post/neo-colonial relationships, ethnicity, and religion. There are numerous feminisms, with different viewpoints and aims.[28] Denouncing and fighting against patriarchy as the root cause of gender assigned roles and women's burden of social reproductive work is a key feature of feminism(s).

Gender justice, equality and equity

- Gender justice/equality is a movement towards achieving equal ease of access to resources and opportunities regardless of gender, including economic participation, decision-making, autonomy and self-determination; and valuing different behaviors, aspirations and needs equally, regardless of gender.

- A gender-responsive approach is a perspective that actively seeks to address and change rigid norms and imbalances of power that impair gender equality (e.g. by facilitating and supporting alternative agricultural programs that support women-led farms and women as farmers, and promote women's traditional farming practices).[29]

Box 1 Articulating Food Sovereignty and Feminism

Some of the contributions made by feminism to the food sovereignty project are reflected in:
- The creation of spaces by and for women in agricultural organizations. These spaces have been crucial for women to develop their own agendas within the food sovereignty movement.
- The incorporation of claims focusing on the redistribution and recognition of care work and women's productive work.
- The increasingly central role given to guaranteeing women's equal access to land, territories, water, seeds, information and direct access to markets, among others.
- The numerous reflections and demands building on the links between radical food politics, gender justice and agroecology.
- The recognition of women's crucial role in food sovereignty, including the development of peasant, local, and indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing.
- The integration of food sovereignty struggles and LGBTQIA+ rights. Thus, strengthening a 'united struggle that challenges gender norms, seeks bodily autonomy, and brings down patriarchal (and related racist and colonial) structures.
- Community-driven feminisms where multiple cosmovisions and claims converge. Many of them consist of working class and field laborers, peasant, Indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

From: La Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020. Cooking up political agendas: A feminist guide on the Right to Food and Nutrition for Women in Rural Areas (page 10); also citing: Gioia, Paula. 2019. "Coming Out! Gender Diversity in the Food System". The Right to Food and Nutrition Watch. pp 6-15.

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[28] Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.
[29] Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.

5. IMPACTS AND POLICY DEMANDS

In this section, we summarize key impacts that the crisis has had, and is having, on a diversity of women across the constituencies and sub-regions of the CSM. We also outline specific policy demands that emerged from the research. We have grouped these impacts and policy demands around 4 themes:

1. Economic activities, markets and access to resources
2. Care work, public health and gender-based violence
3. Participation, representation and digital inequality
4. Government responses and social protection

5.1 Economic activities, markets and access to resources

Impacts

The situation that lockdowns created, in some cases, helped to make visible and increase understandings of women realities and existing inequalities. The crisis has served to aggravate challenges, threats and everyday risks that women around the world face, and deepened the cumulative impacts of decades of impoverishment. In terms of economic activities and access to resources, the challenges linked to power relations are striking.

<u>Loss of income and livelihoods</u>

Our interviews highlighted rising costs of living and decreasing income across all regions and constituencies

interviewed. Loss of income and job loss was frequently mentioned as a key impact. In the United States, those with jobs in essential sectors spoke of being forced to go back to work despite the risks, and of being threatened with the loss of access to unemployment benefits if they did not.[30] While job loss and loss of income impacted men and women, data suggests women were more likely to lose their jobs. A key contributing factor is the over-representation of women in the informal sector.[31] In Africa and elsewhere, women in the informal economy were particularly impacted[32] and women in small businesses saw their livelihoods most impacted (handicraft, dairy, garment).

As one interviewee working with women's movements in South Asia explained:

Many women work for daily pay and they became even more vulnerable [during the crisis]. They work today for life tomorrow. They don't have regular wages because they have daily wages. If I work today, they pay me. If I don't work, I don't have a salary.[33]

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[30] Interview 1

[31] UN Women 2020. Women in the informal economy. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/women-in-informal-economy

[32] Interview 14

[33] Interview 15

One study found that in the formal sector, women's jobs are 1.8 times more vulnerable to this crisis than men's jobs. Given that women make up 39 percent of global employment, they account for 54 percent of overall job losses.34 In the USA, the figures are worse for minority women, immigrant women and young women.35 Women who kept their jobs are also more likely to work in frontline essential service jobs as nurses, and food workers. The impacts are likely to be long term. Women in Australia who lost their jobs earlier in coronavirus crisis were found to be twice as likely as men to be unemployed and not actively looking for work.36

<u>Closure of food and agriculture markets</u>

In many places, small-holder farmers, and women in particular, were negatively impacted by lockdowns and restrictions on mobility, including the closure of food and agriculture markets. In West Africa, the closure of markets and borders, curfews and limited mobility negatively impacted trade between cities and rural areas, and between regions.37 Women were particularly impacted given that they are key actors in food markets, with 90 percent of food and produce stalls run by women. 38 Because many of these women transport products to sell by bus or taxi, they faced increased restrictions on their mobility and in turn on their ability to sell. This was only amplified by the fact that many women are active in the vegetable sector and these products are highly perishable.39 The data we collected from the Pacific region40 and South Asia tells a similar story.

In Pakistan:

In the very first few weeks [of lockdown] … the women who take care of livestock suffered quite a bit, because milk markets are generally hinged to the local restaurants, like the tea stalls, the small restaurants. Many of these restaurants are on the highway and run through the rural areas. They do a lot of business in milk.41

With the lockdown measures they were not able to sell the milk (also very perishable). Furthermore, corporations have taken advantage of this situation by purchasing milk at half price.42

In Sri Lanka, a lot of the food supply could not reach the capital but locally, it was difficult for farmers to sell at good prices because of an oversupply.43 Women were particularly impacted as they handle the planting, harvesting, trading of fish and their income sources collapsed.44

34McKinsey Global Institute. 2020. COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-work/covid-19-and-gender-equality-countering-the-regressive-effects

35 Kochihar, R. 2020. Hispanic women, immigrants, young adults, those with less education hit hardest by COVID-19 job losses. *Pew Research Centre*. https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/06/09/hispanic-women-immigrants-young-adults-those-with-less-education-hit-hardest-by-covid-19-job-losses/

36Karp, P. 2020. Australian women twice as likely as men to be 'discouraged workers' after Covid-19 job loss. The Guardian. 6 July. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/jul/07/women-twice-as-likely-as-men-to-be-discouraged-workers-after-covid-19-job-loss

37 Interview 14

38Interview 9; ROPPA, 2020, "Un Comité de Veille et d'Action. Mission, Organisation et Fonctionnement" http://roppa-afrique.org/IMG/pdf/roppa-a5-160420-1.pdf

39 Interviews 9, 14

40 COVID-19 Response Gender Working Group. 2020. Gendered Impacts of COVID-19 on Women in Fiji. Diverse Voices and Action (DIVA) for Equality Fiji, Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM), UN Women Fiji Multi-Country
Office (MCO), the Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation (MWCPA).

41 Interview 10

42 Interview 10

43 Interview 5

44 Interview 5

In Spain and Italy (as in most of Europe), markets and access to allotment were restricted, while supermarkets stayed open.45 Peasant women had to work on their farms but faced the additional burden of care work with children and the elderly.46 This burden of care has also been referenced as a key factor reinforcing women's job loss, as the responses to the virus are significantly increasing the burden of unpaid care, which is disproportionately done by women.47 Taken together, there is a spill-over effect for women as the impacts of the crisis is limiting their ability to pay back their loans, and increasing the need for more credit.48

Despite these challenges, demand for agroecological, organic and local products dramatically increased and, in many places, producers managed to turn to online or direct sales to meet this demand (at the expense of additional working hours). One of our interviewees from Brazil shared that:

People are cooking more; they want to buy natural foods to increase their immunity. Our local CSA group had a demand that was three times more than the usual.49

In many communities, people came to realize and appreciate the value of their local food systems and local food producers, raising hopes and expectations for the achievement of food sovereignty in a post-COVID world. As one of our interviewees from Sri Lanka pointed out:

The things we believe in became real. We had to rely on country and hands of small-scale farmers, as borders were closed. Farming communities were eager to supply food, agroecological farmers enthusiastically contributed. There were many discussions on agroecology on Facebook, much sharing of knowledge. It was a great opportunity to discuss food diversity.50

Yet, as noted above, the corporate sector was quick in capturing the opportunities the pandemic had opened. Supermarket sales skyrocketed and corporate actors developed new narratives highlighting their products and stores were safer to eat and buy. One of our interviewees in the US explained:

There is an ongoing fight of narratives around food safety. Corporate actors are saying: 'Our food is safe because it's packaged, it's sanitized, it's refrigerated', whatever they want to say.51

A similar analysis is shared by our interviewee from Brazil:

There was an initial breaking down of food supply chains, then the market and the corporate sector reorganized itself, and the narrative around monoculture resurfaced.52

Migrant laborers and temporary workers

The pandemic shed light on the precarious living conditions and key contributions of agricultural workers to our globalized food systems. In Spain, migrants and temporary women workers who already faced difficult conditions, had to work in closed greenhouses for the harvesting of vegetables.53 In the USA, and elsewhere, virus cases

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45 Interview 8; Diesner, D. 2020. Self-governance food system before and during the Covid-crisis on the example of CampiAperti, Bologna, Italy. *Interface.* https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Diesner.pdf
46 CSM Women's Group. Internal Document. 20 May 2020.
47 McKinsey Group 2020.
48 Interview 9
49 Interview 12
50 Interview 5
51 Interview 1
52 Interview 12
53 CSM Women's Group. Internal Document. 20 May 2020.

exploded in meat packing and processing plants. Many of the people working in these plants are migrants, who are not unionized, and not fully integrated in local communities, and therefore not fully able to access community support. 54

In addition, the pandemic fueled a surge of racism, targeting migrant workers in India and China, Asian-American in the US. All over the world refugees, minorities and poor people have been accused of spreading the pandemic.55 One interviewee from the USA explained that the crisis has fueled racism and blame, as people were accusing food workers of spreading the disease through their large families.56 In India, millions of migrant workers had to deal with the loss of income, food shortages and uncertainty about their future, and thousands of them then began walking back home, with no means of transport due to the lockdown. Soon after, Indian NGOs and social workers started receiving messages from migrant workers and families requesting food supplies and stating that they lacked the domicile documents that would allow them to access government subsidized food.57 More than 300 migrant workers died due to the lockdown, with reasons ranging from starvation, suicides, exhaustion, road and rail accidents, police brutality and denial of timely medical care. 58 In Canada, relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have reportedly become more difficult and there has been an uptake of racially charged confrontations.59

In several countries, lockdowns proved particularly harsh for domestic workers. In Brazil, about half of domestic workers were laid off without pay. Those with a contract were slightly better off but a high proportion of them were either dismissed or kept in work, and only half benefited from a paid quarantine. Caregivers were declared essential and had to continue work, with some employing families forcing their caregiver to remain in quarantine with them, often without proper equipment, with extra hours, or without being told a family member was infected. Domestic workers' unions described their situation as 'private imprisonment' and started a campaign demanding paid quarantine and adequate protection.60

Right to land and natural resources

The COVID-19 crisis also amplified the effects of women's unequal and unsecure access to land and other natural resources, including on their ability to access state support. In Pakistan, the government has backed loans through banks so that small and marginal farmers can access loans with interest. However, as it was explained to us:

women cannot go through the bank because women have no security, no bank

54 Interview 1

55 Pleyers, G. 2020. p 12.

56 Interview 1

57 Mohanty, S. 2020. From communal violence to lockdown hunger: emergency responses by civil society networks in Delhi, India. *Interface*. https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Mohanty.pdf

58 Rashid, O., Anand, J., Mahale, A. 2020. India coronavirus lockdown. Migrant workers and their long march to uncertainty. *The Hindu*. April 4. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-coronavirus-lockdown-migrant-workers-and-their-long-march-to-uncertainty/article31251952.ece

59 Interview 24

60 Acciari, L. 2020. Care for those who care for you! Domestic workers' struggles in times of pandemic crisis. *Interface.* https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Acciari.pdf

account, and they cannot take loans from the bank.61

In India, Dalit and Adivasi women are landless, many are migrant agricultural workers, who have no family or ancestral property, and no access to land even for housing. During the lockdown, they experience reductions in wages and the lands which had been distributed by land reform were taken away from them. Many Dalit and Adivasi women who are migrant workers returned back to their villages to find no food, work or money.62

In Spain, many women do not hold title to land. During lockdown, people were only able to attend to gardens and allotments outside their homes if they could prove their rights to the land. As an interviewee explained:

For women this is very difficult because usually they are not the owners. The owners are their husbands or other men. It was a crazy situation. Not only as farmers also for your home. It was difficult to get fresh food, your own food.63

Policy demands

Loss of income and livelihoods

- Recognize the role of women as economic and political actors. This necessitates moving away from limiting visions of women that fail to recognize and account for the economic contributions of their activities.64

  - Adopt special measures to support rural women's economic activities in the agri-food value chains.65

  - Invest in women leaders and women's organizations and support their formal and informal networks to contribute to the COVID-19 response.66

- Acknowledge and protect women working in the informal economy67 by taking into account their productivity, employment, and income-generating activities.68

  - Put in place gender-responsive policies that support the informal economy, small scale food producers and workers69 with both cultivating and marketing, recognizing that women make up a disproportionate percentage of workers in the informal sector.70

- Provide targeted support for women cooperatives and women-led small businesses.

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61 Interview 18

62 Email testimony sent to the authors.

63 Interview 8

64 Interview 12

65 FAO, 2020. Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition (CA9198). http://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/es/c/1276740/

66 FAO, 2020. Gendered impacts of COVID-19.

67 Interview 14

68 Interview 15

69 Interview 14

70 UN Women. 2020.

- Support women cooperatives, groups and small businesses, many of which were impacted by COVID-19. They require targeted support to address financial and organizational difficulties (technical and financial support).[71] Interest-free loans (or loans with low interest rate) should be promoted. Loans should be rescheduled and interest rates revised, particularly for women. [72] For women to take opportunity from this crisis, they need to have business trainings in entrepreneurship or in emerging sectors such as e-business.[73]

Closure of food and agriculture markets

- Maintain and reinforce local supply chains and food systems to ensure sustained and resilient food security and poverty reduction. This includes supporting local markets, CSAs, and also allotments.[74]

  - Create opportunities for direct marketing. This can help to shift power away from corporations, back to smaller and localized value chains.[75] Such actions can also protect the lived experiences of women food producers and other traditional communities from the pressure of TNCs.[76]

  - Support farmers by setting price floors in agriculture markets (in addition to but more important than subsidies).[77] Authorities should subsidize the price of basic commodities.[78]

- (re)Focus on and re-invest in agriculture. Many countries have moved away from agriculture to focus on other industries (i.e. tourism). However, during the crisis it was clear that agriculture provided a pathway for survival through employment, food, and income. Governments must re-focus and re-invest in sustainable agriculture (i.e. agroecology) with a view towards advancing food sovereignty as an alternative paradigm for food consumption and production.[79] This means prioritizing and where appropriate subsidizing agroecological and organic food production.[80]

- Address the root causes of women's inequalities and the imbalance in power relations by naming and addressing patriarchy, capitalism, racism and feudalism, as well as the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, all of which generate different forms of structural oppressions. We must recognize that these forms of oppression affect women differently depending on social context and lived experience: for example, being a minority and or Indigenous women, or living in a rural or urban place. Exploitative and oppressive practices pursued as part of the neoliberal project must stop. This includes privatization, trade liberalization, deregulation, and big infrastructure projects, as well as the the grabbing of natural resources (including land) and women's bodies.

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[71] Interview 9

[72] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020. Les femmes ouest africaines face à la COVID. 7 réalités, 7 solutions.

[73] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.

[74] Interview 8; FAO, 2020. COVID-19 and rural poverty: Supporting and protecting the rural poor in times of pandemic (FAO CA8824EN). http://www.fao.org/3/ca8824en/CA8824EN.pdf

[75] Interview 1

[76] Interview 12

[77] Interview 1

[78] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.

[79] Interview 18; COVID-19 Response Gender Working Group. 2020.

[80] Interview 10

Workers' rights

- Protect workers. End exploitation by legislating for the right to paid sick leave and free access to health care which should be rights for all workers, regardless of the employment relationship, in both the formal and informal economies; protect wages and incomes, and set up a mortgage, rent and loan relief plan.81 Emergency funds should reach all workers who have lost income on a temporary or permanent basis including all migrant workers.82

    - Recognize the right of all women to organize collectively.

    - Recognize that women workers, especially women migrant workers, are vulnerable and must be protected.83

    - Work should be decent, safe, consensual, and be properly compensated – including paid maternity leave and social security. Employment should be free from sexual harassment, exploitation, and other forms of abuse. It should also protect from exposure to harmful chemicals and pesticides through legislation and public awareness programs. Laws and policies that prevent women in rural areas from obtaining certain jobs should be eliminated.84

    - Regularize all undocumented migrant workers. 85

    - Support and protect domestic workers. Provide the adequate level of protection and pay to all domestic workers, formal or informal.

    - Ensure minimum wage and take steps towards guaranteed living wage.86

Right to land and natural resources

- Ensure and guarantee women's equal and non-discriminatory rights to access, own, equal redistribution and control over land and other natural resources, including water, seeds, forests and fisheries.

    - Address discriminatory stereotypes, norms and practices that inhibit access to land and natural resources by taking all necessary measures to achieve equality.87

    - Ensure succession and inheritance rights for women and girls, and implement moratoriums on evictions to ensure people do not lose their homes.88

    - Promote and recognize sustainable practices that respect and protect the traditional and eco-friendly agricultural knowledges of women in rural areas.89

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81 IUF. 2020. IUF COVID-19 Demands: Equality. http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/2020%20IUF%20COVID-19%20Demands%20-%20Equality.pdf

82 IUF. 2020. 4.

83 IUF. 2020.

84 CEDAW. 2016. General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/INT_CEDAW_GEC_7933_E.pdf

85 IUF, 2020.

86 Interview 10

87 Interviews 18, 6; CEDAW 2016

88 UNEP, FAO, ICLEI, RUAF and Rikolto. 2020. Webinar Women's Housing and Land Rights and Covid-19. 26 May. https://youtu.be/ySuWgyWK150

89 CEDAW. 2016.

5.2. Care work, public health and gender-based violence

Impacts

According to the FAO, 'rural women bear a disproportionate burden of the COVID-19 crisis not only as health care workers, but also from the burden of care of out-of-school children and the sick, the reduction in economic opportunities, the reduction in women's reproductive and health services, and increases in intimate partner violence.'90 Our interviews confirm this.

<u>Care work</u>

Care work consists of time and energy consuming activities performed to satisfy the physical and/or emotional needs of others. This type of labor is generally unpaid and performed by women and girls. It includes activities such as cooking, childcare, farm work, fetching water and firewood. 91 Around the world, women bear the overwhelming responsibility for care, a direct consequence of patriarchy which assigns gender roles and places the   burden of social reproductive work on women, Interruptions or gaps in social protection systems, due to lockdowns or budget cuts, quickly translated into an increased care burden for women.92
The data we collected points overwhelming to an increase in workloads for women and reinforced unequal division of responsibilities around domestic work, including care work, education, preparation of meals, ensuring hygiene measures and protocols, and emotional support.93 Other research confirms this, noting that the pandemic has dramatically increased the need for childcare, with disproportionately negative effect on women, and in turn, on their employment opportunities.94 Interestingly, this differs from other recessions which have mostly impacted men's jobs.

Research further points to shifts in the types of care women engaged in during the pandemic. For example, assistance in personal care increased along with educational activities.95 There are also differences depending on where women live. According to one study conducted in Brazil, urban women reported a greater increase in care work than rural women. This may point to the greater availability of rural women to care for children simultaneously with other activities, to communitarian ways of performing care work, or to a perception that childcare is not 'work'. However, in rural areas, almost half of the women reported an increase in caring or taking

90 FAO.2020. COVID-19 and rural poverty

91 Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020. '.

92 ESCRNet, 2020. The Day After Tomorrow: Confronting Systemic Injustices, Advancing Human Rights. ESCR-Net Global Call to Action. 1 May 2020. https://www.escr-net.org/sites/default/files/attachments/escr-net_global_call_to_action_english_0.pdf

93 Interviews 5, 9, 12,14,18,24.

94 Alon, T. et al. 2020. The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality. Working Paper 26947. National Bureau of Economic Research. (April). http://www.nber.org/papers/w26947

95 Nobre, M. 2020. Mulheres rurais em eio à pandemia: desigualdades e práticas econômicas para a vida. http://mulheresnapandemia.sof.org.br/mulheres-rurais-em-meio-a-pandemia/

responsibility for someone, perhaps linked to urban relatives being sent to the countryside for care or to stay safe.96

Insistence on regular and thorough washing of hands has probably been the hallmark of prevention of COVID 19. Yet, many of the women in rural areas are still struggling to get access to water. In both rural and urban areas, women have been largely responsible for fetching water for the families largely due to limited infrastructure for water supply. In Zimbabwe, water points have also been observed to be places where women are more exposed to risk of infection as sanitizers are not available at community water points and social distancing is often difficult to implement as people jostle in the water quest. In some cases, water barons have been reported to request bribes or sexual favors for young girls to be able to access water, increasing the risks for women.97

When it comes to education, mothers have taken on the bulk of responsibilities for homeschooling. With children at home, women also need to compensate (with time and money) for the loss of school meals.98 UNESCO has reported that the pandemic sent approximately 90 percent of students out of schools, among them 800 million girls. Drawing lessons from the Ebola outbreaks, it is predicted that these girls are at increased risk of sexual exploitation, forced marriage and pregnancy. These girls will also be expected to take on more care work at the expense of their studies.99 COVID-19 may thus widen the gender gap in education and girl empowerment.

On a positive note, COVID-19 has made the care responsibilities needs of employees visible and in turn could help to accelerate changes such as flexible schedules and telecommuting which could give women more flexibility and opportunities. Further, given the role of women as frontline workers, the crisis could create shifts inside families, with men taking on more home responsibilities. This reallocation of duties inside the home may have long term effects on gender division of roles.100

Health care

The right to health care services requires a holistic approach, encompassing, but not limited to, sexual and reproductive health.101 However, we know that women in rural areas have diminished accessibility to healthcare services as well as other services such as adequate housing, water, sanitation, energy, and transportation. The infrastructure needed to ensure adequate services is often absent in rural areas (and urban areas). Access to these services is key to the exercise of many other rights, such as health, food, and education, among others. Transportation has specific challenges and is also key to securing many rights. This is further complicated by the risks of gender-based harassment and costs.102

96 Nobre, M. 2020.

97 Email testimony sent to the authors.

98 Interview 12

99 Burzynska, K. and Contreras, G. 2020. Gendered effects of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lancet (Correspondence). 395(10242):1968. https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0140673620313775

100 Alon et al. 2020.

101 CEDAW. 2016.

102 CEDAW. 2016.

In terms of general basic hygiene, several challenges can be identified. Around the world, people are grappling with increased costs incurred from complying with recommended health measures (e.g. soap) and challenges accessing water due limited water infrastructure.103 A report by FIAN International highlights how in South Africa, women have been turned away by police when trying to collect water, having to wait until dark to go collect water from distant sources. The situation has put these women at risk and has compelled families to compromise on hygiene.104 The pandemic has brought additional challenges for certain categories of women. Through our interviews we heard, for example, that pregnant women have been impacted by limited access to antenatal clinics during lockdowns and the withdrawal of health services.105

When it comes to mental health, the epidemic has been shown to expose people to higher levels of stress and violence.106 Many are struggling with feelings of isolation and loss of community life and support due to lockdown. People also face negative stigma for getting (or supposedly spreading) the virus.107 We note that LGBTIQ+ populations face additional restrictions and suffering from the impact of lockdown measures. Policies in Perú, Colombia and Panama, that allow men and women to leave their homes on alternate days have endangered the lives of transgender, non-binary and queer people.108

Gender-based Violence

The various lockdowns served to further expose women to domestic violence.109 Since the pandemic hit, reports have come out from all corners of the globe highlighting rises in domestic and gender-based violence.110 Despite this growing awareness, lockdown measures and their emphasis on staying at home have largely ignored the security of women.111 Life under lockdown has been difficult and life threatening for many women who live in abusive relationships or who suffer from domestic violence.112 In Brazil, 12 percent of rural women claimed to have suffered from violence during isolation period versus 8 percent in urban areas.113 In Mexico, the National Shelter Network reported that from the 23 March 2020 lockdown, domestic violence helpline calls grew by 60 percent (40,910 calls) and the 69 shelters were at 80-110 percent of their capacity nationwide. Government action to combat this growing crisis has been lacking and almost non-existent. The Mexican state failed to record reports of domestic violence as services and employees stopped working due to the quarantine, and refused to acknowledge and tackle the aggravating consequences lockdown measures have on gender violence, making evident a much larger problem of patriarchal violence within the state.114 Similar challenges face Indigenous women in Canada. One of our interviewees stated:

103 Interviews 12, 14

104 FIAN International. 2020. Monitoring Report on the Right to food and nutrition DURING COVID-19 (JUNE 2020 update). https://www.fian.org/files/files/Covid_Monitoring_Report_-Template_EN(2).pdf

105 Interview 14

106 FAO. 2020. Social protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas (ca8561). http://www.fao.org/3/ca8561en/CA8561EN.pdf

107 Interviews 1, 12, 24

108 FIAN International. 2020.

109 Interview 14

110 Ventura Alfaro, J. M. 2020.Feminist solidarity networks have multiplied since COVID 19 outbreak in Mexico. *Interface. https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Ventura-Alfaro-1.pdf*

111 Leroy, A. 2020. Le genre dans la crise du COVID. https://www.cetri.be/Le-genre-dans-la-crise-du-covid?lang=fr

112 Bao, H. 2020.; Taube, A. 2020. 'A New Covid-19 Crisis: Domestic Abuse Rises Worldwide.' *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/world/coronavirus-domesticviolence.html?auth=login-google
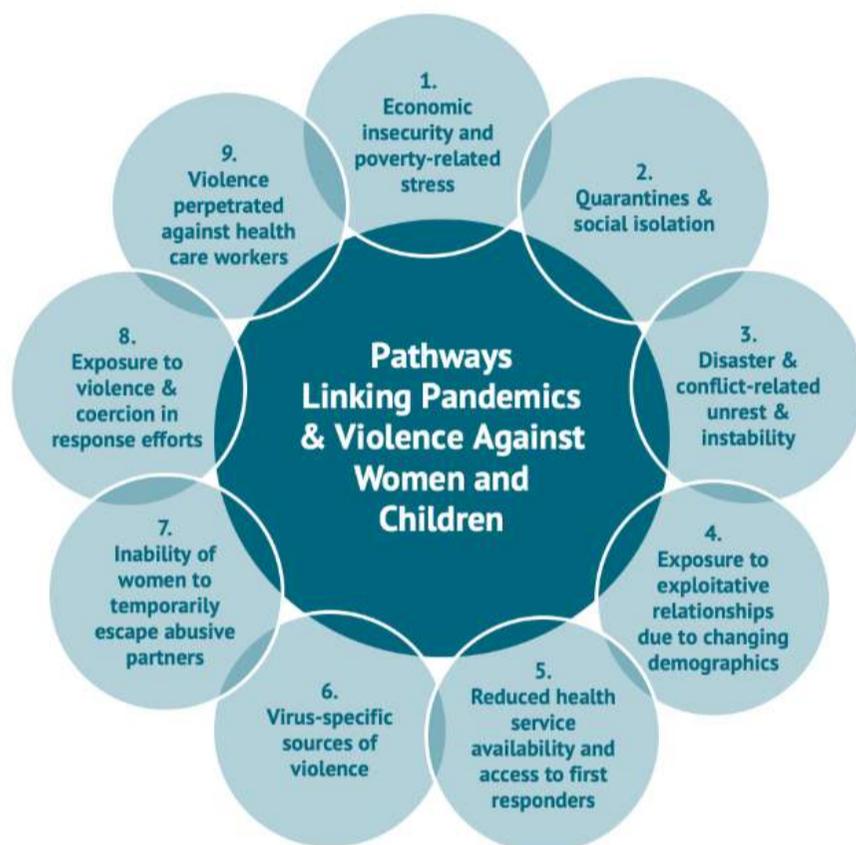
113 Nobre, M. (2020).

114 Ventura Alfaro, J.M. 2020; Lopez, O. and Murray, C. Murders of women in Mexico rise amid fears of lockdown violence. *Reuters*. 27 April. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mexico-womenviolence-trfn/murders-of-women-in-mexico-rise-amid-fears-of-lockdown-violenceidUSKCN22930V

I think you are about four times more likely to be murdered or abducted if you're an Indigenous woman in Canada. (…) There have been funds for gender violence but these are also administered by the federal government. Again, a lot of it focuses on urban centers so that opportunity for service used by Indigenous women is not there and they are the most vulnerable group or demographic of people in Canada.115

Gender-based violence is reinforced by sexist norms which must be deconstructed. Taboos surrounding gender-based violence only serves to guarantee men's impunity.116 Accurate and disaggregated data must be made available to account for the thousands of women who have been killed, abused, disappeared and who have suffered various forms of violence. Figure 1 outlines 9 pathways linking pandemics and gender-based violence.

Figure 2: Pathways to violence

Source: Megan O'Donnell, Amber Peterman and Alina Potts. 2020. https://www.cgdev.org/blog/gender-lens-covid-19-pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children

Policy demands

Care work

• Recognize, support, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work.117 Provide a care income to account for social reproductive work. 118 Invest in state provision of basic care services for women and provide support with specific care tasks such as fetching water, child care, energy for cooking and preservation of food. A strong public and universal welfare system is needed to re-distribute and take charge of care work.

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115 Interview 24

116 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.

117 ESCRNet, 2020..

118 Paulson et al. 2020

- Deconstruct gender assigned roles and address the gendered division of labor.

- Ensure childcare provisions and adopt family-work conciliation measures. Establish processes to set up childcare provisions and secure and safe transport solutions for women workers who have to continue working.[119]

- Recognize first and foremost women as human beings with their own rights including their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and not just in their role of mothers, care givers, responsible for the food security and nutrition of households and others.

Public Health and Education

- Ensure access to information. Information related to health and safety must be readily available and accessible to all people, with a particular focus on reaching women. Information system about the existing structures and services should be made available at local, regional and national levels,[120] as well as in transborder areas.

  - Set up information sessions for women (i.e. through community radio, social media, but also if possible, in person following health regulations) in order for them to access a quality and reliable information about the virus and how to treat it.[121]

  - Launch a public information drive in communities, along with free mass testing, including the mass distribution of vitamins, hygiene and protective kits, mass disinfection measures and sanitation.[122]

  - Create and implement information and awareness campaigns targeting women, girls and men to communicate about the access to health centers and the rights of women and girls regarding healthcare.[123]

  - Promote the hiring and training of women medical staff, create local sexual and reproductive health centers (and, if not, develop mobile clinics to reach isolated landlocked rural areas) and train community volunteers to give primary care.[124]

- Ensure the right to health care. Health care services must be economically and physically accessible and its facilities adequate, which includes water and sanitation services. Women and girls should have access to free sexual and reproductive healthcare, free primary care and free menstrual hygiene.[125] Pregnant women, including those experiencing early pregnancy due to child marriage, must have adequate pre- and post-natal care. This includes information on breastfeeding, healthy lifestyles and nutrition.[126]

  - Testing is key to controlling the virus. Free testing and hygiene and protective supplies should be distributed to the most vulnerable communities, with a prioritization for frontline health worker in public hospitals, schools and communities.[127]

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[119] IUF. 2020. 14B; ESCRNet. 2020.
[120] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
[121] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
[122] Interview 4
[123] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
[124] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
[125] Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
[126] CEDAW. 2016.
[127] Interview 15

- o Ensure that medical research into the development of medicines and/or vaccines takes account of sex and gender differences to provide appropriate protection.128
- o Increase or maintain public health budgets. The public health sector needs to be supported with concrete budget allocation to fund free medical services to the most impoverished and vulnerable sectors.129 This includes ensuring resources for reproductive health.130
- o Ensure affordable and safe access to transportation.

- Increase public education budgets: Governments need to invest in public education and not divert their education budget to other sectors to tackle the crisis.

  - o Implement awareness raising campaigns for girls to go back to school as soon as they reopen.131 Pregnant girls should remain in school during pregnancy and be allowed to return after childbirth.132

  - o Design curricula to combat discriminatory stereotypes about the roles of women, gender-based and ethnic discrimination, as well as to change negative attitudes towards girls' education. 133

  - o Women in rural areas should have access to education in various fields, including non-traditional careers and agriculture.134

Gender-based violence

- Stop gender-based violence.

  - o Recognize, fulfil and protect women's rights, and eliminate any form of violence and discrimination against women and LGBTQI+ persons.

  - o Adopt urgent programmatic and policy-oriented measures to stop gender-based violence and femicides. Allocate adequate public funding to women's shelters.

  - o Implement laws that prevent violence towards women and girls.

  - o Conduct training on how to implement and respect these laws must be provided to emergency responders, educators, judiciary, medical staff and elected representatives, among others to ensure that women are not further victimized.135

  - o Secure counselling: Ensure counselling centers are available online and accessible through social networks to make sure are accessible to as many women as possible.136

  - o Provide access to legal support: Women who are victims of violence need guaranteed access to affordable and appropriate legal support and access to justice, and should be provided with interpreters so that language is not an obstacle for marginalized and impoverished women.

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128 IUF, 2020.10.
129 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
130 IUF. 2020. 7.
131 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
132 CEDAW. 2016.
133 CEDAW. 2016.
134 CEDAW. 2016.
135 FAO. 2020. Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses; *ESCRNet. 2020.*; Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020..
136 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.

- Put an end to all forms of harassment.[137]

  - Put an end to all forms of state violence and criminalization that are threatening democracies worldwide and that have been exacerbated through the pandemic. Pay special attention to women's and LGBQTI+ persons struggles and the impact of crisis, war and occupation on their rights, the criminalization of women leaders and human rights/environmental defenders, and the additional challenges faced by migrant and refugee women.

It is time to build policies that recognize women … as the economic subjects that they already are. It is not necessary to invent

5.3. Participation, representation and digital inequality

other things for women farmers to do (...) The question is how to organize ways of distributing and integrating into policies this production that women already have. (12)

Impacts

Recognition

It has been mentioned before in this report, but it warrants repetition: representation and recognition matters and women are frequently under-represented and not properly recognized for the roles and the work they do. Women are not recognized as food producers or economic actors. This lack of recognition has implications for their ability to access government schemes/programs and other forms of social assistance (see below). As one interviewee working with women's movements in South Asia explained:

No one recognizes the role of women in fisheries. When they are talking about fishing, they only understand that, okay, only man fishes. Then they get compensation.138

Lack of access to documentation is another important factor that has seriously impacted women during the crisis.

Lack of sex-disaggregated data

A lack of recognition is reinforced by a lack of adequate statistics capturing the contributions of small-scale food producers, and the lack of sex-disaggregated data. This in turn significantly limits possibilities for participation and representation. As it was explained by one interviewee:

We have quite large fisheries sector, but then if you closely look into the situation our fishery sector in Thailand, there are about three or four type of producers. The majority are small scale fishers who derive their life, the food, their income from capture fisheries. These are about 80 percent of the total fishery sector in Thailand. … From the formal statistics, the government only have the statistics of commercial fishers. They only have the statistic of the aquaculture. They have statistic of the labor, both men and women working in the processing plant. They don't really have the information, good information on small-scale fisher because

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[137] Harassment is any improper and unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offence or humiliation to another person. Harassment may take the form of words, gestures or actions which tend to annoy, alarm, abuse, demean, intimidate, belittle, humiliate or embarrass another or which create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Source: Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.
[138] Interview 15

the definition of the small-scale fisher in Thailand, they consider only for those who have the boats.139

<u>Digital inequality and fake news</u>

Active participation and representation necessitate access to information. As noted above, access to information is a challenge, partly due to lower access to internet. In Brazil, it was explained that 65 percent of rural women do not have internet access at home, compared to 35 percent of urban women.140 For many women, WhatsApp groups played a key role in sharing and accessing information during the pandemic, but were also seen to be a limited way of accessing information. Some women rely on TV for their information, but this information is often distorted. Indeed, movements have also had to grapple with the so-called 'infodemic': the spread of false information, fake news and conspiracy theories.141 One of our interviewees in the US lamented that it was difficult to make sense of, and trust, COVID-19-related information because it is partial, incomplete, difficult to synthesize. This has served to generate more fear and stress.142

The pandemic made visible and reinforced digital inequality. Lockdowns have imposed, in terms of education, new means of technological and virtual communications for which the rural areas in particular were not prepared. Connectivity problems tend to marginalize rural communities and impoverished women within these.143

Policy demands

- Recognize women and their organizations as key actors and decision makers of agricultural and rural development policies, strategies and plans, including forestry, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture.

- Actively ensure the meaningful participation of women and their organizations in rural and urban areas by establishing quotas for representation, ensuring they can influence policy, and addressing power discrepancies between men and women.144

    o Ensure adequate representation of women in decision making.

    o Ensure the active participation of diverse groups of affected women from design to implementation of all process that affect them.145

- Invest in and support women's leadership and women's organizations, financially and technically, and support their formal and informal networks. Investing in women's leadership and engaging them in the design and implementation of COVID-19 response strategies is critical to ensure that their perspectives and needs are adequately considered.146

- Fund gender-sensitive research into the impacts (including economic and social impacts) of COVID-19 across the entire food system. Ensure that all such research is gender responsive and the findings are

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139 Interview 15

140 Nobre, M. 2020.

141 Pleyers, G. 2020.

142 Interview 1

143 CSM Women's Group. Internal Document. 20 May 2020. Interview 15.

144 CEDAW. 2016.

145 Interviews 9,14, 15

146 FAO. 2020. Gendered impacts of COVID-19; Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.

disaggregated by sex and identity.147 Research should be publicly funded and with appropriate safeguards to avoid conflicts of interest.

- Democratize internet access: Take steps to increase access to the internet to not only enhance equality between men and women in accessing information, but also to support engagement in diverse societal processes, including politics, education, and markets. Increase training targeted at women and girls on digital tools to make sure they can benefit from the new ways of working (e.g. webinars, virtual classrooms, and online meetings).148

Impacts

Government responses varied country to country, and also by region and municipality. Governments were forced to respond quickly to a rapidly changing and unfamiliar context. The responses highlighted tensions between politics and science, between life and capital, and policy responses spanned the full range. In some countries, militaristic lockdowns were imposed leading to a rise in authoritarianism, state violence, and serious human rights abuses, often specifically targeting women. In the Philippines, one of our interviewees explained that the lockdown functioned like martial law:

It was a military solution, and not a medical response, and was characterized by countless checkpoints, military and police deployment in communities.149

Lack of gender-responsive responses to COVID-19

What is clear is that far too often gender was not prioritized in the development of policies. Past experience shows that (rural) women are disproportionally affected by health and economic crises in a number of ways, including but not limited to food security and nutrition, time poverty, access to health facilities, services and economic opportunities, and gender-based violence.150 When it comes to COVID-19, it appears that the majority of decision-making bodies established in response to the pandemic are dominated by men and, as we have documented in this report, have ignored the lived realities of women and other marginalized groups.151

During our research we heard repeated frustration that the norms drafted by governments lacked a gender perspective. As one person explained: 'they are very general and are not making visible women's work and are not focused to protect women and girls' nutrition.'152

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147 IUF, 2020. 9.
148 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
149 Interview 4
150 FAO, Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses in agriculture, food security and nutrition (CA9198):
151 (CARE and IRC, 2020).
152 CSM Women's Group. Internal Document. 20 May 2020.

Inadequate Social Protection

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the lack of social protection systems in many countries, whose implementation should become a priority for governments in the coming months.153 Countries with or without adequately funded public health systems fared very differently and inequalities in access to public health and social protection were made blatantly apparent. Related to issues or access and recognition discussed above, one interviewee from the Philippines explained how there was discrimination built into the way social and financial aid programs were delivered, resulting in many legitimate families being disqualified.154 In India, relief funds failed to reach Dalit women and free supply of food rations from the public distribution system was denied to Dalit women.155 Across the globe, there was little recognition of the roles played by women farmers, whose work brings resilience and emergency support during pandemics.156

Food aid, corporate capture and unhealthy food environments

While there were cases of positive state support for small-scale producers, there was also concern at the ways in which policies served to reinforce the status quo, favoring unhealthy food environments. In Columbia, we learned that when it comes to food aid policies, the government is only focused on supporting industries and companies that are donating food, which is ultra-processed food. Resources from this food aid policies are pushing unhealthy consumption. This approach is also used in school meals' programs.157 Similar complaints were reported from Brazil where COVID-19 challenges added to the disastrous policies of the Bolsonaro government. The school feeding program (which requires 30 percent of sourcing from family farming) was severely impacted. With schools closing, the distribution of meals was interrupted as well as the purchasing from farmers. These disruptions added to earlier trends by many municipalities to privatize and outsource the preparation of meals. The public acquisition of food (PAA) program, which sources food from family farms to provide to social assistance entities, and which includes measures of affirmative action for women, was completely interrupted. In Madrid, Spain, an agreement was signed with Telepizza to help feed students impacted by the loss of school meals. It was apparently justified on the basis of their ability to deliver the pizzas but we were told that in the end the families had to go to the Telepizza establishments (and other locations) to collect the meals.158

Policy demands

- Ensure all COVID-19 responses are gender-responsive and appropriate.

  - Ensure all institutions, policies and laws are gender-responsive and protect the rights of women, recognizing that crises affect men and women, as well as urban and rural, black, brown and Indigenous women, differently.

  - Take measures to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its General Recommendation 34 on Rural Women.

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153 Oxfam, Care, ROPPA et al. 2020.
154 Interview 4
155 Email testimony sent to the authors.
156 Email testimony sent to the authors.
157 CSM Women's Group. Internal Document. 20 May 2020.
158 Interview 8

- Deconstruct the dominant narrative on women who are very often portrayed as victims in need of anti-poverty policies and social assistance. Policy responses should consider women's roles and contributions in agri-food systems and ensure that their multiple needs – as guardians of household food security, food producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers and entrepreneurs – are adequately addressed.[159]

- In the short term, provide emergency and recovery funds for women and women's organizations. It is key to ensure that funds go to women, for example by ensuring that funds have clear quotas for woman, and that at the implementation stage, what is dedicated to women really goes to women.[160]

- Prioritize social protection.

  - Social protection for all and specific attention to Indigenous, minorities and marginalized groups should be prioritized. This includes establishing targeted measures to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on women who may be the first affected by increased responsibilities, loss of employment and income.[161] Examples of measures could include covering water and electricity expenses.

  - All policies must ensure decent employment for workers and social protection floors.[162] Sates should adopt gender-responsive social protection floors, per ILO Recommendation number 202, to ensure women in rural areas have access to health care, childcare and income security.[163] [164]

6. CONCLUSION

This report has summarized key impacts, principles and feminist policy demands to emerge from research around women from the diverse sub-regions and constituencies of the CSM. Acts of mutual aid and solidarity have also been highlighted.

Moving forward, we reiterate the important work that movements, individuals and other civil society organizations have undertaken not only in solidarity with others, but also to hold states accountable. The efforts and impacts captured in this report point to diverse and decentralized responses to this multi-dimensional crisis.[165] Our research confirms that movements have

denounced the weight of inequalities in facing the pandemic, set up groups of mutual aid, monitored national policies and informed their fellow citizens in campaigns of popular education. Bringing together cases and initiatives from different continents should not hide the specificities of local and national contexts, the different shape of the debates on the crisis or the fact that efforts to build ties and shared perspectives among movements from different continents remained limited.[166]

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[159] FAO. 2020. Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and equitable policy responses.

[160] Interview 9

[161] FAO. 2020. Legal considerations.

[162] Social Protection floors are national sets of basic social security guarantees that secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. Source: Via Campesina, FIAN et al. 2020.

[163] ILO.2012. Recommendation 202. https://www.social-protection.org/gimi/ShowRessource.action?ressource.ressourceId=31088

[164] FAO. 2020. Social protection and COVID-19 response in rural areas.

[165] Pleyers, G. 2020. p 13.

[166] Pleyers, G. 2020. p 14.

Given this momentum, the pandemic and resulting crisis provide us with an important moment to further push for equality, for food sovereignty and for a feminist future. The solutions to current and future problems are held by the women who save and sow seeds, sell and trade food, feed children, care for elders, plow fields, catch and clean fish, shepherd sheep, and share traditional and present knowledges.

7. CSM WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP KEY POLICY MESSAGES:

The following key policy demands were drafted by the CSM Women Working Group drawing from the findings of this report and CSM Women's Vision of 2018.

We believe that the right to food, food security and nutrition and food sovereignty will never be achieved without ensuring the full respect, protection and fulfilment of women's rights and the dismantling of patriarchal, feudal and neoliberal power relations. We want to go beyond the universally agreed goal of gender equality and women's empowerment, which does not explicitly assert the centrality of women's rights, the recognition of our self-determination, autonomy and decision-making power in all the aspects of our lives and bodies, including the food we produce and consume. We recognize, in light of this pandemic, the need to deconstruct the dominant narrative on women who are very often portrayed as victims in need of anti-poverty policies and social assistance. All actors engaged in the CFS must internalize in their analysis, contributions and practical actions the fact that women are active political agents who determine their own vision, change and development, and must be recognized as having the right to self-determine themselves and their bodies, through their movements and collective organizations.

We believe that the current global food system builds on and perpetuates gender-based discrimination and the violation of women's rights. In order to achieve a fair and equal society where women can fully enjoy their rights and self-determination, we must put at the center the alternative model of consumption and production founded on agroecology and the food sovereignty paradigm.

We believe that any policy demands must be grounded on key feminist principles such as gender justice, equality and equity, non-discrimination and intersectionality, participation and recognition.

We urgently demand member states:

- to recognize, fulfil and protect women's rights, promoting the elimination of any form of violence and discrimination against women and LGBTQI+ persons, as a pre-requisite for any policy response to Covid-19

and as a pre-condition for world food security;

- to integrate a feminist perspective within the policy making processes by ensuring a central and leading role to women's grassroots organizations in the decision-making processes from initial stages onward; the directionality of the food systems transformation must be based on ecological and feminist perspectives, knowledge and practices.

- to recognize women workers' rights, with particular attention to recognize, value, and redistribute their care work, which, due to the gendered division of labor, falls disproportionately on women. The state must guarantee public services including access to water, child care, nursery schools, schools and leisure spaces for children and redistribute care work among all components of society;

- to recognize the right to collective bargaining, the right to associate and self-organize, maternity protection, safe working spaces, adequate and equal wages, with particular attention to women migrant workers and undocumented workers.

- to end any form of state violence and criminalization that are threatening democracies worldwide and that have been exacerbated through the pandemic. Pay special attention to women's and LGBQTI+ persons struggles and the impact of crisis, war and occupation on their rights, the criminalization of women leaders and human rights defenders, and the challenges faced by migrant and refugee women.

- To ensure and guarantee women's rights to access, ownership, equal redistribution and control over land, territories, seeds that are preserved and multiplied in autochthonous manners, access to water and the recognition of women's knowledge of production, which they own and preserve as their own knowledge.

- To promote with specific public policies and funding mechanisms women's access to territorial markets and women's cooperatives and small-scale food producers' organizations.

- to recognize, use and apply the CEDAW and the GR 34 as the UN global framework for the human rights of women, and for CFS to base any policy decisions on the Women's Rights as embedded in the Convention, and to promote monitoring and accountability of the CFS policy decisions from the women's rights perspective. The GR 34, which articulates the rights of rural women, should particularly guide the CFS with regard women's rights in rural areas.

- to recognize first and foremost women as human beings with their own rights including their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and not just in their role of mothers, care givers, responsible for the food security and nutrition of households and others.

- to ensure women's rights to access formal and informal education, public health services including SRH and social security and social protection policies;

- to support public policies aimed at overcoming the digital divide in rural and urban areas; ensuring a substantial increase in education and health care public budgets;

- to ensure regulatory and safeguard policies to protect the public interest from predatory corporate capture of the public goods.

- to address the root causes of women's inequalities and the imbalance of power relations by naming and addressing patriarchy, capitalism, racism and feudalism, particularly in the Asian context, as well as the disproportionate impact of climate change all of which generate different forms of structural oppressions

which affect women differently in any given social context, being rural, urban, minority and indigenous women;

• to address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition that are interlinked with patriarchy, feudalism and expanding industrial agricultural and made worse by the ongoing climate and biodiversity emergency. With the onslaught of the neoliberal model, further exploitative and oppressive manifestations are unfolding such as the land grabbing of natural resources and women's bodies, the devastating impact of big infrastructure projects, privatization, trade liberalization and deregulation.

• to ensure sexism and violence free institutions, work places and public services

• to address the current lack of monitoring, accountability and information from public institutions, including the CFS

8. OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWS

As outlined in the methodology section, 25 women were approached for interviews. Each was assigned a number. Of those 25, 16 women were interviewed. This table maintains that original number.

After consenting to the interview, each woman was asked to provide a label to describe their role and responsibilities in a way that would protect their identities. These are captured in the table below. IN the review and consultation stage, women discussed the report and provided oral feedback at an online meeting. Direct feedback was also emailed to the authors.

	Label
1	Family farmer from the US
5	Woman working for a grassroots women organization (on agroecology and climate)
6	Leader in network of rural and worker women
7	European shepherd (pastoralist)
8	Feminist grassroots activist and researcher
9	Gender and Advocacy officer working for small farmers' organization
10	Feminist activist working on farmers and women's rights in South Asia
12	Feminist activist working on farmers and women's rights
13	Indigenous woman engaged in a regional network in the pacific
14	Woman working on sustainable development
15	Woman working for land rights in South Asia
16	Rural development Eastern EU
17	Young feminist researcher from South Asia
18	Woman working with women's movements in South Asia
21	Rural gender relations expert in Eastern EU
24	Woman working for First Nations Chief in Western Canada

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Read more about their work at www.foodgovernance.com