

# FROM THE PANDEMIC TO 2030: FEMINISTS WANT SYSTEM CHANGE ENDING HUNGER, ACHIEVING FOOD SECURITY AND HEALTH FOR ALL

## HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In 2015, the world agreed to a roadmap to sustainable, equitable development made up of 17 goals: the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). With this roadmap, achieving [gender equality](#) is its own goal, as well as a cross-cutting aim necessary to achieve the Agenda.

Women, girls, and gender non-confirming people fight everyday to have control over our bodies. Systems, including **patriarchy**, **neoliberalism**, and unchecked **corporate power**, determine what and when we eat, when we seek care, and what care is available to us. Lockdowns and the resulting losses - of livelihoods, services, and freedoms - has made it even more difficult to care for our bodies, even as societies require our reproductive labor to survive.

As a result of **patriarchal gender norms**, globally, [just over half](#) of married women or women who are in unions were making their own decisions about sex, contraception, and health care prior to the COVID-19 crisis. During crises, women act as ["shock absorbers"](#) for their families eating less and less nutritious food and spending more time finding it.

"We are very scared now, even to go to our fields becomes very difficult. If Coronavirus did not kill us, hunger will do so."

- Victoire, a rural woman, Cameroon

"It really has become profit over lives." - [Cyndi Murray](#), grocery store worker, USA



"The government is calculating that in the middle of a pandemic they can start discussing the draft bill for tightening the anti-abortion law. We cannot gather, but we can still protest and say a firm no."

- [Zaneta Gotowalska](#), Poland



The crisis has amplified these inequalities and burdens. As a result, we risk backsliding on progress made to achieve the 2030 Agenda, including in [ending hunger](#) and achieving [good health for all](#).

**Neoliberalism** treats basic human rights - such as food and health - as commodities, prioritizing profit over justice and pushing for privatization of public services. Now in the context of a deadly pandemic, health systems are struggling because of years of [underinvestment due to privatization and austerity](#) leading to deficits in quality of care and poor working conditions for healthcare workers - the [vast majority of whom are women](#).

During previous crises, [health systems failed to deliver](#) the services that women, girls and gender non-confirming people, in all their diversity need, especially **sexual and reproductive health** (SRH) services. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many women and girls struggle to access SRH services or exercise their right to safe abortion because of lockdowns or fear of exposure to the virus. On top of this, **patriarchal** governments are using the pandemic as an excuse to violate reproductive rights, such as [restricting abortion access](#) by claiming falsely that these services are not essential or that abortion care will deplete essential medical supplies, such as personal protective equipment.

For other themes, please see the full series. WMG also has a set of cross cutting recommendations that can be found separately, within the series.

Our food and agriculture systems have been captured by **corporations** at the expense of natural resources, biodiversity, local food security, and workers' rights, health, and safety. [Large-scale commercial farms and supermarkets](#) have primarily benefited from government support during the crisis even though small-scale producers produce the majority of food consumed globally. In addition, many governments have [shut down local markets](#) preventing small-scale producers from selling their produce even as people struggle to feed themselves.

Governments and employers are failing to protect other workers in the food systems that have been deemed "essential," such as grocery store workers and food [processing plant employees](#). These workers often come from [marginalized communities](#) already at greater risk because of [multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities](#).

## WOMEN'S MAJOR GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

Though the situation is dire, we can emerge from the COVID-19 crisis ready to build a just, equitable future for all and achieve the 2030 Agenda by following these recommendations.

- **Support local, diverse, and resilient food systems.** Provide public support to local production and food systems, including to smallholder farmers, peasant cooperatives, and fisherfolks, to foster their production, ensure their access to markets, and consumers' access to their products.
- Work with workers' groups all along the food supply chain to design response packages that **respect their rights** and protect their health and safety.
- Distribute food and other emergency rations to those most affected, in cooperation with feminist organizations and mutual aid societies. In areas where people can purchase food safely, provide rapid, consistent **cash transfers** so that they can determine the appropriate food for themselves and their families, as well as support small-scale farmers and food vendors, the majority of whom are women.
- Build, strengthen, and fund **public health systems** that deliver **universal health coverage (UHC)** that works for women, girls, and gender non-conforming people, without discrimination, regardless of age, ability, or documentation:
  - Fully incorporate gender-based violence, HIV, and SRH services into UHC packages. Designate these services as essential and ensure that, even in times of crisis, they are available, accessible, and of high quality.
  - Guarantee access to quality, respectful **prenatal and maternal health** care free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.
  - Support and protect the health and rights of **health care workers** through the provision of high quality personal protective equipment, protection from violence, safe working conditions, childcare services, and increased pay.
  - Incorporate **mental health services** into UHC packages and increase the provision of these services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Create a **global health response** based on **universality, equity, solidarity, and justice** by working collaboratively to develop and distribute testing, treatments, and any eventual vaccines for COVID-19, and other medical supplies, equipment, and essential medicines with funding and support to the UN and its agencies, especially the World Health Organization.