



2020 G7 Task Force

March 2020

## 2020 G7 Recommendations

Foreign Ministers' Meeting: Pittsburgh, March 24-25



When G7 foreign ministers meet on March 24-25 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to discuss pressing global issues, it is imperative that they take action to address the needs of people living in the world's poorest and most vulnerable countries. This paper contains the recommendations of InterAction's 2020 G7 Task Force. We call for the United States to play a leading role in encouraging the G7 to take the following actions.

## HEALTH

**Leads: Matt Robinson, Lead Multilateral Engagement Officer, PATH ([mrobinson@path.org](mailto:mrobinson@path.org))  
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Three weeks into the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, outbreak, economists projected a 1.3% loss to the global growth rate, equivalent to US\$1.1 trillion in revenue.<sup>1</sup> As part of a comprehensive global response to address emerging global health security challenges and prevent significant economic damage, G7 members should:

1. **Invest in strengthening the resiliency of health systems in their own country, regionally, and globally.**
  - a. G7 countries should commit to investing in the digitalization of health and the standards and norms that support it.
  - b. G7 countries should commit to strengthening laboratory networks, which are integral in emergency response efforts.
  - c. Primary health care (PHC) is the most cost-effective and resilient approach to health service provision. G7 member states should prioritize investments in PHC at the community level to build the resilience of the overall system.
2. **Invest in research and development for new tools.**
  - a. As the world continues to respond to COVID-19 in over 100 countries, commit to investing in research on safe, effective, and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutic countermeasures.
  - b. Enhance public confidence in and equitable access to these technologies as essential parts of infectious disease preparedness and response.
3. **Build health workforce capacity, which is more important now than ever.**
  - a. Strengthen efforts to build a health workforce with expertise in infectious diseases and increase contributions to capacity building measures for vulnerable populations.

- b. Catalyze investment in women’s economic empowerment through health employment in underserved settings, including by investing in health information and services for women and girls.
4. Invest in Gavi replenishment.
    - a. Recognize the critical role of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) in advancing global health security, strengthening health systems, tackling drug resistance, and preventing unnecessary deaths from infectious diseases. The recent presidential budget request would represent the largest U.S. commitment ever made to Gavi, sending a strong signal to partners around the globe.
    - b. Commit to increasing contributions and support the Alliance’s efforts that enable countries to move toward sustainable, self-financed immunization programs.

## GENDER EQUALITY

**Leads: Justin Fugle, Head of Policy, Plan International USA ([justin.fugle@planusa.org](mailto:justin.fugle@planusa.org))  
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With the announcement that the United States will highlight the Women’s Global Development and Prosperity initiative (W-GDP) during its G7 presidency, the following recommendations build on existing U.S. and G7 efforts from the Canadian and French presidencies to advance women’s economic empowerment (WEE) globally. The U.S. should expand its efforts in the following ways:

1. Promote the advancement of women’s economic rights, empowerment, and decent work globally.
  - a. The U.S. should build upon the W-GDP’s approach to the WEE-enabling environment<sup>2</sup> by addressing legal, social, and informal barriers, including violence and harassment in the world of work, unequal pay, heavier unpaid care burdens, discriminatory social norms and women’s and girls’ unequal access to healthcare, quality education, training, and technology.<sup>3</sup>
  - b. The first annual [W-GDP implementation report](#) reflects a U.S. interest in advancing WEE through the articulation of SMART goals and the collection of data and public reporting on progress and impact. The U.S. should expand this effort by working with G7 partners to develop a similar tool for initiatives such as the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi), and the 2X Challenge.

2. Bearing in mind the central importance of girls' advancement for global prosperity, work with G7 partners to ensure that girls complete safe, quality, inclusive secondary education.
  - a. Education should promote the transition of adolescent girls and young women to higher value, safe, and paid work opportunities.
  - b. Education must address underlying social norms that impede girls' progress, as identified through the meaningful participation of adolescent girls in the design and implementation of the interventions.
  
3. Bearing in mind the central role women play in peace and global stability, and building on commitments from the U.S. government and G7, work with G7 countries to advance the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.
  - a. Undertake substantive consultations with local women's organizations involved in peace and security.
  - b. Commit financial resources to strengthen partnerships between humanitarian operators and such local women's organizations.
  - c. Accompany national strategies and/or action plans for women, peace, and security with U.S. implementation plans, budgets, and evaluation mechanisms.

## EDUCATION

**Leads: Rachel Wisthuff, Assistant Director, Public Policy & Advocacy, UNICEF USA ([rwisthuff@unicefusa.org](mailto:rwisthuff@unicefusa.org)) Jennifer Rigg, Executive Director, Global Campaign for Education – U.S. ([jrigg@gce-us.org](mailto:jrigg@gce-us.org))**

The United States has played a leading role at the G7 in supporting education globally and must maintain this global leadership to reinforce education, with a focus on girls, children with disabilities, children in conflict and crisis, and other marginalized groups. The U.S. should continue to lead in the following ways:

1. Recognize the importance of safe, equitable, quality education inclusive of all children and youth—including those affected by conflicts and crises—with a focus on girls, children with disabilities, and marginalized groups.
  - a. Acknowledge inclusive, quality education as a lifesaving intervention that must be prioritized in the first phase of and throughout any humanitarian response.
  - b. Ensure that child protection and online safety are integral to education systems, to address violence and bullying in and around schools and school-related gender-based violence.

- c. Reaffirm the Charlevoix commitment and Biarritz Declaration on Gender Equality to tackle gender-related barriers to girls' education. These include, among others, violence, mobility constraints, adolescent pregnancy and child marriage, menstrual hygiene management, unpaid domestic labor, and harmful norms that prevent girls' ability to reach their full educational and economic potential.
  - d. Ensure that children with disabilities, girls, and all marginalized groups are fully included in education and early childhood development, encompassing equal access to internet connectivity and technologies that promote inclusive learning.
2. Reinforce commitments to education from past summits to improve learning for all children, particularly the most vulnerable, that leads to quality employment opportunities and resilient communities.
  - a. Building on the G20 Early Childhood Development (ECD) Initiative, support inclusive ECD—including proper care, nutrition, and parenting—as a proven investment in children's development and school readiness, including pre-primary education.
  - b. Reaffirm the Charlevoix commitment and the Biarritz Declaration on Gender Equality to recognize and promote technical and vocational skills-building among adolescents, particularly girls, as a foundational step toward economic empowerment in line with the W-GDP initiative.
  - c. Invest in education programs that include and measure social-emotional skills necessary to succeed in school and life.
  - d. Commit to defining and measuring progress toward meaningful, inclusive education outcomes, including disaggregation by gender, type of disability, attendance, safety, and learning outcomes.

## FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

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Agenda 2030 placed the eradication of poverty and hunger among its core priorities, identifying food and nutrition security as key to achieving equitable, sustainable development. However, at the current pace, countries are not on track to achieve these goals, calling for a redoubling of efforts, if the global community is to eradicate hunger and malnutrition by 2030.

Given this, the United States should work with other G7 countries to:



1. **Accelerate collective action on global hunger and malnutrition, and fulfill commitments made at the Elmau Summit, to lift 500 million people out of hunger and malnutrition.**
  - a. Describe how the target population will be identified.
  - b. Outline the process and timeline for achieving this commitment.
  - c. Specify the mechanism to monitor and track the effectiveness and success of proposed interventions.
  
2. **Ensure programs prioritize nutrition-focused initiatives and provide access to sufficient amounts of culturally appropriate food that meets the needs of food-insecure communities.**
  - a. At the 2020 Nutrition for Growth Summit, support an ambitious strategy that seeks to align G7 investments to country plans, via processes that are participatory and inclusive and integrates gender equality, to create resilient communities.
  
3. **Provide time-bound measurable indices for progress on initiatives that the G7 has adopted, to date, to ensure that they reach the most vulnerable populations and “will leave no one behind.”**
  - a. Incorporate outcome-based indicators (e.g., addressing stunting and wasting) to complement the existing output-based indicators, to demonstrate how G7 investments concretely address food security and nutrition.

## BACKGROUND

### HEALTH

Since its discovery in December 2019, infections of COVID-19—the disease caused by the novel coronavirus—have soared past 100,000 and caused significant turmoil in over 100 countries.<sup>4</sup> At the date of publication, the World Health Organization has declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, and any vaccine is likely at least 12-18 months away. The outbreak illustrates the critical need for stronger global capacities to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease threats—particularly in the places they originate—in order to avoid significant damage to the global economy. These investments are not charity; their return can be clearly measured in lives and money saved.

Investment in the health workforce would empower women by providing tangible resources and capacity for advancement and growth. With a projected shortage of 18 million health workers globally by 2030, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, investment in the health workforce to meet these needs would directly employ millions of women. Globally, women's labor contributes \$3 trillion to the health system, roughly half of which goes unpaid. With an estimated \$28 trillion increase in global gross domestic product, if women were able to participate in the economy equally, adequate investment in the health workforce would bring huge returns by addressing the unpaid labor many women provide.<sup>5</sup> The investment would also create avenues to support underutilized cadres and positions, diversifying the levels of employment possible, and opening up access to underserved and vulnerable populations.

As the world continues to respond to COVID-19, monitor the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and grapple with emerging health threats from MERS to Disease X<sup>6</sup>, we encourage G7 countries to invest in research on, confidence in, and equitable access to safe, effective, and affordable vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutic countermeasures as an essential part of infectious disease preparedness and response.

Finally, Gavi plays a pivotal role in building health resilience in-country. Since its inception in 2000, Gavi has supported routine immunization programs and vaccination campaigns that have reached more than 760 million children and prevented more than 13 million deaths.<sup>7</sup> Contributions to this multilateral mechanism not only advance Gavi's work to address some of the leading causes of death but also help to strengthen health systems as a whole.

## **GENDER EQUALITY**

Building on the commitments of the Canadian and French presidencies, including the commitments at Charlevoix and Whistler and the Biarritz Declaration on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, the U.S. should work with its G7 partners to advance new financial commitments and public accountability reporting to promote gender equality. Having announced that the United States will highlight the W-GDP initiative during its G7 presidency, our gender equality recommendations build on existing U.S. efforts to advance women’s economic empowerment globally. The U.S. G7 is an ideal opportunity to deepen the policy focus and program implementation of these efforts.

## **EDUCATION**

Access to safe, inclusive, equitable, quality learning from early years through adolescence is the foundation for building stable nations and growing economies.

More than 175 million pre-primary school-age children and 258 million primary and secondary school-age children—nearly one in five—are still not accessing education. Children with disabilities are significantly marginalized, —50% of children with disabilities in low-income countries are out of school.<sup>8</sup> ECD is an important means of screening children at risk of developmental delay or disability.

At least 75 million crisis-affected children are in urgent need of educational support, and more than half of all school-aged refugees are out of school.<sup>9</sup> Most teenage refugees will never get a secondary education. Adolescent girls in conflict-affected countries are 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict.

For adolescent girls, each year of secondary education correlates to an increase of 18% in their future earning power.<sup>10</sup> Yet globally, females make up three-quarters of young people not employed, educated, or trained. Girls’ education cannot succeed without adequate systems of child protection—systems that address harmful practices and cultural barriers such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual harassment and violence, and gender-based discrimination. Twelve million girls are married before 18 each year, almost always reducing their participation in education.

Quality of education is too often inadequate: an estimated 60% of children worldwide do not meet minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.<sup>11</sup> The crisis originates during children’s earliest years when the poorest are seven times less likely to attend pre-primary programs.<sup>12</sup> One billion young



people will enter the workforce in the next decade, who will need foundational, transferable, and necessary digital skills that meet the needs of the global labor market.

The depth of the learning crisis provides the greatest global challenge to preparing children, especially girls, to flourish in the 21st century, and creates an insurmountable barrier to women's economic empowerment.

## **FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

After decades of steady decline, globally, the number of people suffering from hunger has increased to more than 820 million in 2018. African countries have the highest prevalence of undernourishment—more than 256 million people are currently affected. Stunting levels remain high, affecting 149 million children under age five. A staggering 49 million children under five were affected by acute malnutrition.<sup>13</sup>

While severe food insecurity is associated with hunger, people experiencing moderate food insecurity have been forced to compromise on the quality and quantity of food they consume. If this group is added to those suffering from hunger, then it is estimated that over 2 billion people do not have access to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food.<sup>14</sup>

The uneven pace of recovery from economic downturns is undermining efforts to end hunger and malnutrition, exacerbated by the growing inequality within and among nations. Economic slowdowns often lead to under- or unemployment, resulting in declining wages and incomes and challenging the ability of the poor to access quality and nutritious food. To safeguard against this, policies and programs are needed that protect the most vulnerable from the impact of economic slowdowns and foster more inclusive growth.

Without renewed efforts, the goal of eradicating hunger and malnutrition by 2030 will not be achieved.

## ABOUT INTERACTION

InterAction is a convener, thought leader, and voice for nearly 200 NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people.

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<sup>1</sup> Inman, Phillip. *Coronavirus 'could cost global economy \$1.1tn in lost income.'* The Guardian. February 19, 2020.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/19/coronavirus-could-cost-global-economy-1tn-in-lost-output>.

<sup>2</sup> W-GDP's five priorities for legal reform are Accessing Legal Institutions, Building Credit, Owning and Managing Property, Safe Travel and Personal Mobility, and Unrestricted Employment Opportunities.

<sup>3</sup> This should include support for ILO Convention 190 as a logical priority.

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization. *WHO Director-General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19.* March 9, 2020.

<https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---9-march-2020>.

<sup>5</sup> McKinsey Global Institute. (2016). *Delivering the power of parity: toward a more gender-equal society.*

<https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/featured%20insights/employment%20and%20growth/realizing%20gender%20equality%2012%20trillion%20economic%20opportunity/delivering-the-power-of-parity.ashx>

<sup>6</sup> "Disease X" refers to any new unknown pathogen that could cause an international epidemic. For more, see

<http://www.centerforhealthsecurity.org/event201/>.

<sup>7</sup> Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. *Facts and figures.* <https://www.gavi.org/about/mission/facts-and-figures/>.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF. (2019). *Every Child Learns: UNICEF Education Strategy 2019-2030.* <https://www.unicef.org/media/59856/file/UNICEF-education-strategy-2019-2030.pdf>. Page 28.

<sup>9</sup> Education Cannot Wait. *Education in Emergences: A Neglected Priority.* <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/the-situation/>.

<sup>10</sup> Kim, J.Y. World Bank. *To build a brighter future, invest in women and girls.* March 8, 2018. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/build-brighter-future-invest-women-and-girls>.

<sup>11</sup> UNSECO Institute for Statistics. (2017). *More Than One-Half of Children and Adolescents Are Not Learning Worldwide.* Fact Sheet No. 46. <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs46-more-than-half-children-not-learning-en-2017.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF. *Early childhood education.* <https://www.unicef.org/education/early-childhood-education>.

<sup>13</sup> UNGA 74th session, Report of the UN Secretary-General, "Agriculture development, food security and nutrition," July 2019, A/74/237 [EN].

<sup>14</sup> Joint Report by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO. (2019). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World—Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns.* <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>. Moderate food insecurity refers to a lack of consistent access to food, which diminishes dietary quality, disrupting normal eating patterns and which have negative consequences for nutrition and health. Those facing severe food insecurity have likely run out of food, experienced hunger and may have gone days without eating, putting their health and well-being at grave risk.