

# Women Radically Transforming a World in Crisis

A framework for Beijing+25 shaped at a strategy meeting of feminist activists<sup>1</sup>  
Mexico City, 22-24 August 2019

29 September 2019

Between the 22nd and 24th of August 2019, a group of feminist activists from diverse regions and social movements gathered in Mexico City to strategize towards the 25th anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, which was held in China in 1995 and produced the Beijing Platform for Action. Beijing+25, dubbed the ‘Generation Equality Forum,’ will be launched in Mexico City in May 2020 and culminate in Paris in July 2020. We discussed the unique political opportunity presented by Beijing+25 to address critical structural and systemic obstacles to realizing gender justice and women’s human rights. Below, we share our collective **framework** of analysis, elaborate on these **challenges**, and put forward **proposals** that reflect the realities and struggles of diverse constituencies of women, and transgender and gender non-conforming peoples today.<sup>2</sup> At the invitation of the Mexican government, we also offered proposals on the **funding**, preparatory process, participation, format, and outcome of the Generation Equality Forum, particularly the launch in Mexico City, which we see as foundational to its culmination in Paris.

## I. Framework

In 1995, the NGO forum of the Fourth World Conference on Women was titled “Looking at the World Through Women’s Eyes.” It placed on the global stage the collective vision of women’s movements worldwide, which was pivotal to advancing the most progressive outcomes adopted by the conference. While we have seen achievements in the twenty-five years since, we have also witnessed backlash against those gains and the consolidation of power imbalances and structures underlying women’s oppression, with dire results.

The world is in a state of profound crisis, laying bare the perverse arrangement of capitalism. The ideologies that have been deployed for centuries to justify the accumulation of capital live on today through neoliberalism and the insidious contemporary incarnations of patriarchy, white supremacy,

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<sup>1</sup>The government of Mexico invited a group of feminist experts to advise them on the content and format of the Generation Equality Forum and the Mexico City launch. Participants included: Articulación Feminista Marcosur; Asia Dalit Rights Forum; Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development; Association for Women's Rights in Development; Center for Women’s Global Leadership; CatchAFyah; Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era; Diverse Voices and Action for Equality; Fundación Arcoiris por el respeto a la diversidad sexual; Fundación para el Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer; Global Fund for Women; Huairou Commission; Instituto da Mulher Negra; International Center for Research on Women; International Forum of Indigenous Women; International Women’s Health Coalition; Just Associates; Las Reinas Chulas; Luchadoras; Mexico and Central American Women’s Human Rights Defenders Initiative; Musas de Metal; Nazra for Feminist Studies; Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice; Regions Refocus; Shibuye Community Health Workers; Shirkat Gah-Women’s Resource Centre; Spectra; University of São Paulo; and Women in Migration Network.

<sup>2</sup> Stand in solidarity with this radical and urgent vision by endorsing this framework here: <http://bit.ly/B25SignOn>

and colonialism that are central to its functioning. As systemic drivers of women's oppression and inequality, they form an interlocking system that must be confronted.

In marking the Beijing+25, we must **celebrate** and affirm gains we have made in countering this system and advancing women's human rights; harness our **rage** at the crises confronting our communities and ecologies; build on the **hope** of women's mobilization and transformative actions; and take collective **action** to forge solidarity with other resistance and liberation movements, demanding accountability of states and the private sector.

Neoliberal capitalism is a key driver of current global crises. Its core logic positions "free" markets and profit above people and the planet. Women have long been at the forefront of struggles against this system, understanding it to be fundamentally incompatible with the liberation and empowerment of women, and transgender and gender non-conforming people. As we understand patriarchal structures and white supremacy to be central to the current functioning of neoliberal capitalism—evident in the mountain of unpaid care work on which corporate profits rest—the market cannot be an effective mechanism through which to correct gender, racial, or ethnic inequality. Instead, active policy interventions that seek to restructure the current, unequal state of the economy and society are fundamental to a feminist approach. Neoliberalism attacks regulation and policy interventions that might constrain capital; it is, therefore, fundamentally at odds with gender justice and human rights.

Global capital is more fearsome than ever, shepherded through decades of unrestrained growth and extractivism by neoliberal dominance, and unchecked by neo-extractivist developmentalist models. In its pursuit of profit, it has caused ecological devastation, underdevelopment, violence, and repression through deepening authoritarianism worldwide. At worst, it actively sows division and social inequality where it can profit; at best, it either ignores or co-opts popular struggles to advance its own agenda (evident in recent attempts to advance trade liberalization under the guise of women's empowerment.) From structural adjustment programs in the 1980s to contemporary debt distress, the neoliberal system has used financial and political tools to keep countries, especially in the global South, tied to the interests of global capital, undermining their right to development, and the agency to imagine and adopt policies that prioritize the needs of their people. While trade liberalization, deregulation, austerity, and privatization have been justified in the name of "economic growth," these neoliberal policies have failed to improve standards of living for the majority of the world's poor. Instead they have exacerbated existing inequalities of power, particularly along the fault lines of resource and wealth disparities between countries, between rich and poor, between men and women, and between dominant and oppressed racial and ethnic groups.

In Mexico City, we will converge as diverse constituencies of women across social movements who resist these structures of oppression in their various contexts. In a time of dire crisis, we seek a radical transformation of a world in crisis, putting women, people, and the planet over profit.

## 2. Challenges

### 2.1. Climate Crisis

Global warming is profoundly reshaping communities, ecosystems and the biosphere, threatening their very survival. Rooted in neoliberal capitalism and exacerbated by an extractivist development

model and fossil fuel dependence, this system is increasing inequalities and violence within and between states, and hastening the current sixth Anthropocene mass extinction of 150-200 species per day through habitat destruction, overhunting, toxic pollution, non-endemic species invasion, and climate change. The struggle for livelihoods in this context is compounded for marginalized women and people, as the impacts of climate change intersect with structural inequalities like gender-based violence and discrimination. This is particularly acute for those living in small island states and territories, least developed countries, the global South, as well as for indigenous peoples, urban poor, rural and remote communities, Afro-descendant people, people with disabilities, migrant communities, LGBTI people, ethnic minorities, girls, the elderly, communities experiencing descent and work based discrimination, and many others.

Climate change, disasters, and loss of biodiversity are inherently linked, and the urgency of addressing these issues through an integrated, ecological lens is now indisputable by science and expressed in international agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Climate change is also a matter of intergenerational equity for women, girls and people of future generations. Therefore, we must place gender justice and human rights at the core of all our climate responses, remove profit as a paramount goal, and ensure that safety and wellbeing, access to justice, health, democratic participation, and ecological sustainability are the ways we define and measure progress towards climate justice and sustainable development.

## **2.2. Crisis of Democracy**

In democratic states across the world, the institutional pathways that once existed, or were in the process of being created, for marginalized groups to assert their rights and seek inclusion, are increasingly being eroded or lost. Even in states with previously vibrant cultures and practices of political contestation, the assault on these mechanisms by right-wing ideologies has become a frightening new norm that is facilitating the consolidation of economic and political power by dominant groups (including state and non-state actors such as corporations, religious extremists, and organized crime.) The manifestations of this crisis of democracy, and the corresponding rise of authoritarianism, are global and manifold, deeply embedded in contemporary political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. These forces have come to power building on the economic fears of workers impacted by neo-liberal austerity programs, utilizing racism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia as tools to mobilize an angry base.

### **2.2.1. *Authoritarianism and Religious Dogmatism***

Globally, feminists have been at the forefront of struggles against oppression perpetuated by both nominally democratic and authoritarian states. The specific political configurations of states have shaped the nature of oppressive practices and the tools of resistance available to activists. Authoritarian governments, some of which were in fact democratically elected, often consolidate power in the name of security through emergency laws that indiscriminately curb dissent. This can include the limiting or withdrawing of rights and freedoms; curbing freedom of movement, expression, and dissent; criminalizing and persecuting human rights defenders and activists; putting limits on the funding or registration of non-governmental organizations; and suspending due process and the rule of law. The curtailment of these rights is intensified for populations who already find it difficult to claim human rights or human dignity. Torture, arbitrary arrests and

executions, and enforced disappearances have increasingly become the norm, often pushing women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people into the dangerous role of frontline defenders of human rights.

Many authoritarian regimes are also buttressed by the political consolidation of religious dogmatism and vice versa, with rigid, fundamentalist narratives enmeshing with the absolute power of the state to oppose plurality, difference, debate, or dissent. It is a strategy that affirms and perpetuates misogyny, patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism, xenophobia, and white supremacy, fostering an environment in which human rights are delegitimized, opposition is repressed, social dissent is criminalized, and acts of genocide perpetrated. In this context, authoritarian power is inevitably exercised by targeting women and gender-non conforming people through the regulation of their bodies, roles, freedoms, and rights. Women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people's lives are the most circumscribed and restricted by fundamentalist agendas, and are particularly vulnerable to violence and repression when they are perceived to be acting outside the boundaries set by fundamentalist forces engaged in essentialist politics. A term increasingly used towards this end is "gender ideology," which conservative groups in Latin America and Europe in particular have used to project distorted and fabricated versions of demands made by feminists and LGBTI communities, attack the advancement of women's human rights and autonomy, and strengthen heteronormative ideas around sexuality and gender .

These conservative, authoritarian forces constitute a nexus of religious groups, political elites, the private sector, entrepreneurs, religious educational institutions, movements, militants, and other diverse actors using religious idiom to advance anti-democratic, misogynist political agendas. They are, as such, increasingly dominating the public narrative and decision-making spaces, providing both monetary and intellectual resources across borders for the advancement of their shared agenda.

### **2.2.2. *Securitization, Criminalization, and Militarization***

Conflicts and wars are fundamental to the global, neoliberal economic order, and they are reinforced by strong militarized systems where state violence is justified and the rule of law bypassed in the name of protecting national security, whereas in fact, these systems service the interest of powerful state and non-state actors. Underpinned by a burgeoning global military-industrial complex, militarization in the name of national security infiltrates everyday life as the military is co-opted into civilian functions like civil governance, climate change, humanitarian and development systems, criminal justice, and policing. These public security forces are some of the biggest perpetrators of violence against women and other marginalised groups. As states increasingly engage in violence both overtly and covertly—for example, through the 'war on terror,' the 'war on drugs,' 'martial law, or quasi-military dispensations—public expenditure on, and increasing private investment and interest in, defense, armament, military aid, criminal justice, and punitive infrastructure like detention centers and prisons, increase exponentially, fueling both the military and prison industrial complex. This apparatus serves as a violent form of social control, particularly of human rights defenders and racial, ethnic, and religious minorities within countries

Some in civil society and government have adopted legislative strategies to criminalize human rights violations. However, creating and imposing punitive laws has proven to be ineffective in a number of ways. Punitive laws do not address the underlying structures—the unequal distribution of social,

political, and economic power—that lead to rights violations in the first place. They also further marginalize and compound inequalities that lead to violations, and fail to uphold the demands of those who have experienced violations, particularly women and marginalized groups. Further, under both authoritarian and democratic regimes, marginalized communities bear the disproportionate burden of punitive laws, with women's human rights defenders, LGBTI people, sex workers, HIV-positive people, environmental, land, and labor rights activists being the most vulnerable to criminalization. Under authoritarian regimes in particular, this is exacerbated by the influence of other state apparatuses on the judicial system. Authoritarian regimes rely on fear-based politics; tapping into the collective desire for 'order and control', they utilize 'law and order' politics to justify the criminalization of threats to the prevailing social, political, and economic order.

### **2.2.3. *Technology and Surveillance***

Surveillance is a historical tool of control, compounded in the contemporary period by technological advances owned by private companies with limited public accountability. These companies are reliant on the state to facilitate their growth through deregulation and low taxation, and in turn, they provide governments the data and technology necessary to surveil their citizens, at times even undertaking it directly, through, for example, the privatization of military surveillance systems. Many tech companies have also been criticized heavily for the ways they control and harvest user (meta-)data, not only as an ever-growing mode of profit but also as a means to manipulate political outcomes to protect their corporate and commercial interests (for example, the impact of Cambridge Analytica on elections in the US, Brazil, and the UK.) As well as colluding with states, tech companies facilitate the flow of data to non-state actors. For example, data is being harvested through apps that track menstrual cycles and the geotagging of abortion clinics, and sold to private actors like anti-abortion groups, putting individuals at risk of being personally targeted. Additionally, 'tech-solutionism'—the belief that a technology-based solution can resolve issues that are rooted in structural problems—remains stubbornly on the rise, with tech corporations, governments and the United Nations presenting 'solutions' to the public in which further opportunities for surveillance and control are embedded.

### **2.2.4. *Censorship and Regulation***

Governments use a number of mechanisms to control and regulate the flow of information to their citizens. This includes expanding and utilizing censorship laws, blocking internet applications, and in times of crisis, internet slow-downs and shutdowns. This year alone, Indonesia, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, Sudan, West Papua, Zimbabwe, and dozens more have experienced notable shutdowns. This authoritarian move works to control dissent by blocking public access to online communication services and stifling the flow of information, though it has proven ineffective in quelling communal violence and unrest. Many censorship and regulation mechanisms rely on the active cooperation of tech companies to facilitate and implement. Examples include Facebook's cooperation with a number of governments' requests to censor pages supporting opposition figures or promoting protest; the development of censored search engines such as proposed Dragonfly for online users in China; the sharing of facial recognition technology with state migration enforcement; and state orchestrated cyberattacks against human rights groups to access personal and institutional data.

In addition to this, tech giants regulate the public discourse on their own ubiquitous platforms through the administration of user guidelines that often lack transparency and are unevenly

implemented, facilitating the spread of fake news and the use of algorithms that expose users to skewed content proven to have profound impacts on political behavior. From search-engine result rankings influencing undecided voters to Facebook newsfeed algorithms shaping the likelihood of voting, minimally regulated tech companies are critical actors in the contemporary movement of information.

### ***2.2.5. Corporate Capture and Private Sector***

A critical challenge facing the world today is the corporate capture of the state and multilateral spaces like the UN. This appropriation of policymaking spaces and instruments by powerful private actors and interest groups occurred in the wake of the erosion of public resources and infrastructure, a process often facilitated by right-wing, pro-corporate forces, both subtly in democratic regimes and more overtly under authoritarianism. This erosion has led to governments and multilateral institutions increasingly partnering with corporations for the delivery of social services and economic projects. As state institutions became further indebted to, and intertwined with, the private sector, their dictates have come to shape agendas at local, national, regional, and global levels. As such, private interests have increasingly come to dominate public and collective ones, creating a feedback loop in which private interests use their influence on governance to erode public resources (e.g. through right-wing regimes and neoliberal fiscal policy) creating justification for private collaboration, and also diminishing the capacity of states to regulate this same private sector nationally and extraterritorially, which solidifies corporate control and threatens due diligence, accountability, and human rights compliance. The longer this dynamic perpetuates, the greater the risk of forgetting the root causes of this crisis of the state: neoliberal capitalist greed, deregulation, and excessive faith in private corporations. Instead of asserting the primacy of human rights and public interest over private interests, states are complicit in gender-washing corporate behavior, preferring to work with the relatively mild UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

With the rise of public private partnerships (PPPs) in areas as diverse as natural resource extraction, energy, infrastructure and social provisioning, private interests are invading areas central to women's lives and livelihoods. This poses a serious threat to the delivery of gender transformative infrastructure and social provisioning. Privatization affects the livelihoods and survival of women and their dependents limiting access to resources like land and water, and implementing user-fees for social services. In many contexts, resistance to these projects is met with violence, including sexual violence; limits to freedom of expression and association; and threats to the right to life as women human rights defenders are arbitrarily detained, tortured, disappeared, and killed with impunity in the face of state complicity and inaction. This is particularly problematic in the context of the increasing reliance on PPPs for financing and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **2.3. Poverty and Inequality**

Poverty and unequal access to quality essential public services such as water, sanitation, health care, education, transportation, and decent work contribute to systemic deprivation, discrimination, violence, and human rights violations, and play a major role in disempowering women, girls, and transgender and gender non-conforming people globally. The continued focus of many governments on domestic growth and employment as the panacea for poverty reduction, fails to address the structural inequalities and wider social and economic barriers that lie at the root of

poverty. Further, climate change and ecological crisis exacerbates poverty levels and lessens state capacity especially in climate vulnerable states, climate frontline small island states, and LDCs.

### ***2.3.1. Labor***

A central element of the neoliberal agenda has been the systematic attack on the wages and rights of workers, including the right to organize in unions. The majority of women workers are currently engaged in the informal sector and, as such, they are more likely to face precarious employment and lack access to social and legal protection, and institutional benefits. Combined with time poverty deriving from women's unequal roles in unpaid care work ensure women are working longer days throughout their lifetime than men. Additionally, women workers' labor is disproportionately more likely to be unregulated due to their broader social, political, and economic marginalization. For example, migrant workers are often denied basic rights in their country of work; domestic workers, often doubly marginalized as migrants in the informal sector, exist in a heightened state of precarity due to inadequate labor protections; and sex workers, largely constituted of women, and transgender and gender non-conforming people, experience some of the highest rates of workplace violence due to the stigmatized and unregulated nature of their work.

### ***2.3.2. Health***

Governments are largely failing to fulfill their human rights obligation to ensure that all people can enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Underinvestment in public and primary health care services, along with a growing reliance on PPPs to deliver core services, have introduced inequities in access to and the quality of health care services. In many contexts, private sector providers have been given the space to flourish, while low-income and marginalized communities are denied access due to user fees and bureaucratic hurdles. For many in rural, remote and maritime communities, the limited availability of nearby, well-equipped public health facilities, combined with under-investment in public transport options, puts health care out of reach. Deficits of skilled and well-trained health workers further reduces the availability of services. In addition, women and girls face multiple forms of discrimination, violence, and stigma in accessing healthcare, including from providers who refuse to provide sexual and reproductive health services, most acutely experienced by young, older, disabled, black, indigenous,, LGBTI people, migrants, and those facing descent and work based discrimination. Even where governments have committed to achieve universal health coverage, many of these programs often fail to adequately address or cover the health needs of women, transgender, and gender non-conforming people, or exclude people who work in the informal sector, migrants, and other low-income and marginalized communities, leaving them at further risk of poverty due to out-of-pocket costs for chronic health issues and health emergencies.

### ***2.3.3. Land Rights***

Asset poverty deriving from women's lack of land and other property rights compound their economic subordination. While in some countries women are formally denied the right to land ownership and inheritance, in others, women with formal rights are losing control over land and other productive resources due to land grabbing and eviction. These practices are driven by multinational corporations empowered by unregulated extractive and agricultural industries, and are often undertaken in the name of development or reconstruction in the aftermath of environmental and man-made disasters. On these issues, it's necessary to pay special attention to the added burdens experienced by black, indigenous, and descent-based communities.

## **2.4. Bodily Autonomy and Sexuality**

The human rights of individuals to exercise autonomy over their sexuality, to freely express and relate, interact and form relationships with others without any form of coercion, violence or discrimination, and to exercise choice over whether and when to have children, is fundamental to their ability to exercise autonomy over other areas over their lives. Yet, the human rights of women, transgender, and gender non-conforming identities, adolescents, and girls are routinely violated and the target of intense attacks by religious institutions and authoritarian governments. It is here that the rhetoric of anti-gender proponents has become most potent, mobilizing new opposition to hard-won rights to comprehensive sexuality education, abortion and contraception, assisted reproductive technologies, and marriage equality, among others.

In this context, states are using criminalization as a tool to punish and increase stigma, discrimination, and violence against and exclusion of LGBTI and people of non-binary identities; people who seek or have had abortions; and others who transgress sexual and social norms, such as sex workers and sexually active adolescents. This is combined with efforts to elevate individuals' rights of conscience, or religious freedom, in order to justify and provide state sanction for discrimination against these very groups. At the same, indigenous women, women living with HIV, women with disabilities, Roma, Afro-descendent and intersex people, and transgender people, among others, continue to be denied their agency and are subjected to forced or coerced sterilization, contraceptive use, or genital surgery. Adolescents are routinely denied access to evidence-based information, and their agency to make informed decisions on matters concerning their bodily autonomy, pleasure, and sexualities. These challenges are rooted in complex factors that affect and shape women's, girls', and gender non-conforming people's lived realities and abilities to exercise their rights, including patriarchy, colonialism, racism, and white supremacy.

## **2.5. Violence Against Women Including Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)**

We are currently witnessing the expansion of repressive measures by state and non-state actors—including organized crime, corporations, and religious fundamentalists—targeting women, gender non-conforming people, and WHRDs. Hate speech and public calls for violence against these groups have become increasingly normalized by authoritarian regimes and fascist actors in different regions. Violence is exacerbated by growing inequality, climate and ecological crisis, and economic policies that deepen the social and economic vulnerability and marginalisation of women and their communities, in particular black, indigenous, ethnic minorities, and those experiencing descent and work based discrimination. Due to a clear rise in sexism and misogyny, violence against women has been on the increase, including extreme forms of violence such as disappearances, torture, and feminicides, which are widespread and happen with alarming impunity. Although we are seeing an unprecedented level of awareness globally due to mobilization by women survivors of different forms of violence, violence has persisted and even deepened as the structural issues related to women's oppression have not been seriously addressed.

## **2.6. Racism, Casteism, and Xenophobia**

The contemporary global political economy is inextricably linked to the sustained occupation, exploitation, enslavement, and pillaging of the global South by the global North and vis-à-vis

corporate proxies. These persistent structures of colonialism and neocolonialism, and the deep history of slavery, have been built on white supremacy, which continues to play out in economic, social, and political systems both within and between nations and remain embedded in such ideologies as the Doctrine of Discovery and in religion, media and cultural “norms.” White supremacy has, as such, shaped the lived experiences of millions

Some of the most profoundly impacted communities worldwide experience casteism, or discrimination based on work and descent (DWD), including the Roma of Europe, Dalits of South Asia, Quilombolas of Brazil, Burakumin of Japan, and the many enslaved and formerly enslaved communities of Africa. They share a common struggle against social structures that ascribe them a permanent status of devalued personhood and requires of them the performance of stigmatized and exploitative forms of labour. However, DWD remains unrecognised in many states and within most regional and global policy frameworks as a significant source of exclusion, violence, and stigmatisation. In states where DWD is formally recognised and legal mechanisms exist, persistent structures of exclusion and stigmatisation have prevented the construction and implementation of effective policy responses.

Women face multiple oppressions due to the intersection of gender-based discrimination with discrimination on the basis of race, caste, ethnicity, status as Indigenous, religion, migratory status, national origin and other factors. Race and caste are key factors in efforts to divide and conquer workers and has also been a factor in dividing women’s movements for equality. The impact of neoliberalism on domestic work forces has intensified racist and xenophobic responses, pitting those workers deeply hurt by austerity against groups seen as the “other”, including migrant workers. Scapegoating has become an effective political tool for gaining political power in times of deep economic stress.

## **2.7. Migrants and Refugees**

Neoliberal policies have intensified inequalities, extractivism, the loss of land and livelihoods, the effects of extreme weather and slow onset climate events, authoritarian regimes, militarization, war, and the growth of criminal gangs. These factors are among those driving migration from rural to urban areas and across borders, entailing mixed movements of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers. At the same time, state and corporate interests seek migrants to meet labor demands, often without also extending human rights protections. This global regime is falsely promoted as a “win-win” situation. In destination countries, “guest workers” and undocumented workers are kept in poor working conditions but remain compliant due to the fear of return or non-renewal of visas, and they guarantee a two-tier labor force that undermines the wages and labor rights of all workers; in migrant sending states, they provide critical remittances that often exceeds international aid to the receiving state.

Globally, about half of international migrants are women and LGBTI people, many of whom are quite young (14% under the age of 20). Every stage of women’s migration is marked by structural, systemic violence. This includes lack of access to social services, legal services, and labour protection. Many are engaged in gendered and racialized global care chains and other systemically undervalued work. As a result, they are more likely to face precarious and dangerous conditions, and less likely to access regular pathways for migration or labor protections. Women also raise families

on their own when their spouses migrate and may take on responsibilities that shift gender relations. States and other actors often portray migrant women as “vulnerable victims” rather than recognizing and addressing the structures and policies that make women vulnerable and migrant women’s agency.

### 3. Proposals for Action

#### 3.1. Climate Crisis

- A. Unpack and **connect indigenous and feminist visions of ecological and climate justice** by developing a new framework of concepts, issues, and policies, and convening a dialogue to advance collective understandings toward Beijing+25.
- B. **Salvage the Paris Agreement** on climate change using the Beijing+25 inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder spaces to dialogue with states on economic and ecological justice, including with marginalized and colonized peoples across the global North and South.
- C. **Halt efforts to gain “undistorted access” to natural resources**, including marine resources, in negotiations toward the 2020 Post-Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific states.

#### 3.2. Crisis of Democracy

##### 3.2.1. *Authoritarianism and Religious Dogmatism*

- A. Defend and expand democratic spaces through **sustained autonomous political activism, not tied to the electoral agendas** of any political party to secure the foundational pillars of democracy for all. These include majority governance (with minority rights and representation), the rule of law, equality before the law, the separation of powers, and the inviolability of democratically framed constitutions.
- B. **Support progressive infrastructure** within and across the global South and North—including civil society, think-tanks, media, academia, policymakers—and facilitate their collaboration and collective strategizing towards countering authoritarian pro-corporate forces.
- C. **Build capacity within feminist organizing** to dissect and respond to structural issues arising from the intersection of neoliberal capitalism, militarisation, authoritarianism, and climate change by drawing from progressive economic analysis and building connections with other progressive movements.
- D. Defend the **secularity of multilateral fora and the state**, including expelling the Vatican from the United Nations and ensuring that “freedom of religion” is not used as a license to discriminate.
- E. As governments, refrain from allocating **public resources** to religious institutions or for religious instruction in public institutions.

##### 3.2.2. *Securitization, Criminalization, and Militarization*

- A. **Replace punitive laws with comprehensive social interventions** to seek justice for survivors/victims of human rights violations. Establish diversion law, court systems, and programs and services as a form of ‘remedy.’
- B. As governments, reject authoritarian responses to crisis and conflict, such as increasing securitization and militarization, and instead **reallocate state budgets from**

**militarization efforts** to invest in enhancing public infrastructure and social protection networks.

### 3.2.3. *Technology and Surveillance*

- A. **Ensure data collection upholds the privacy and confidentiality of rights holders**, is consensually conducted, and used exclusively to enhance public programming, infrastructure, and services.
- B. As governments, **refrain from blocking public internet access** and/or internet-based services and applications, and stand against internet shut-downs in other countries.
- C. As governments, protect the integrity of women human rights defenders in online spaces by adopting laws, policies, and practices that **protect their right to privacy, and to counter libel and hate speech**.

### 3.2.4. *Censorship and Regulation*

- A. Strengthen public and global mechanisms to hold states and corporations bartering data and manipulating public perception and opinion **accountable beyond national censorship schemes**.
- B. **Integrate cognizance of human rights violations** against online users by states and corporations in feminist analyses and cross-movement actions. Increase access to technical knowledge and tools for human rights groups and civil society actors to **deepen on-ground mapping of such violations**.
- C. **Apply international human rights law to online spaces and platforms**, in addition to expanding the human rights framework to address issues specific to online spheres.

### 3.2.5. *Corporate Capture and Private Funding*

- A. **Install safeguards around private financing** (such as public-private partnerships, privatization, blended finance), including **consistent, *ex ante*, *periodic* and *ex post* gender, human rights, and environmental impact assessments** of all financing mechanisms, trade agreements, and infrastructure projects.
- B. **Formulate and support the elaboration and adoption of a legally binding instrument** to regulate, in line with international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises, including in public spaces. **Strengthen the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights** as an interim measure until a binding treaty is adopted and enforced to deal with corporate accountability.
- C. **Reform investment agreements** to eliminate investor-state dispute settlement clauses and mandatory arbitration clauses to ensure states cannot be sued for implementing public interest policies, including gender equality, human rights, and environmental obligations; have recourse through domestic courts; and have processes whereby stakeholders impacted by corporations can seek redress and accountability.
- D. **Prevent any undue influence by the corporate sector and private funders** in agenda-setting and policy making processes, including revoking the observer status of the International Chamber of Commerce at the UN and re-assessing the UN's partnership with the private sector.

- E. **Tackle illicit financial flows, including cross-border tax abuse** (such as corporate tax avoidance and trade misinvoicing), by ensuring low- and middle-income countries are able to have more decision-making power in the global tax system and rules, and through measures such as: country-by-country reporting, automatic exchange of information, public disclosure of beneficial ownership, addressing transfer pricing, and cracking down on tax havens and other measures.

### 3.3. Poverty and Inequality

- A. **Enable women's participation as rights holders, rather than beneficiaries**, in designing poverty reduction and social protection policies. Recognize, support, and fund the contribution of grassroots women's organizations to poverty reduction and social protection. Establish principles and standards of accountability and engagement with poor and marginalized communities.
- B. **Reform national tax systems to be progressive and gender-responsive** through more stringent taxation of wealth, assets and inheritances; reducing dependence on sales and consumption taxes that place a disproportionate burden on poor women and men; increased marginal tax rates on the income of the highest earners and on corporations; and ending tax incentives for multinational corporations.
- C. **Adopt a systemic and consistent approach to address and resolve debt crisis and distress**, both externally and internally, such as through the establishment of a global debt resolution forum, and alleviating the particularly harsh effects of austerity on increasing internal debt, particularly of young women.

#### 3.3.1. Labor

- A. Collect gender-disaggregated data on unpaid work and enact laws and policies to **recognize, reduce, and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work**, including ensuring universal access to quality public care services; guaranteeing living wages and access to social protection in care jobs; significantly increasing public investment in the care economy; mandating paid parental and family leave; and providing pension care credits for time spent out of the labour force to raise children/care for dependants.
- B. Enact laws and policies to **prevent gender-based discrimination in employment**, including measures to address gender-based violence and harassment, including measures to prevent discrimination based on pregnancy and parenthood, rules establishing a right to accommodations for pregnant workers; and legislation towards pay equity. Ratify and implement ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 on the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.
- C. Protect and **promote the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, and collective bargaining** to enable all women workers to organize and freely join unions, and support tripartite collaboration among government, employers, and organizations representing women workers to prevent and remove barriers to gender equality.
- D. **Address the over-representation of women in precarious employment, low wage employment, and the informal economy** by adopting measures that ensure universal access to a living wage and social protection. This includes an evidence-based and regularly adjusted statutory minimum wage that reflects the cost of living; requirements for employers to provide the same wages and benefits to all categories of workers;

programs to facilitate access to formal employment, prevent worker misclassification, and ensure informal workers have access to social protections in line with ILO Recommendation 204; programs to address both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation; measures to improve women’s access to quality vocational education and training; and just transition measures for women workers affected by climate change, digitalization, and automation.

### 3.3.2. *Health*

- A. Guarantee **universal access to comprehensive, gender-responsive, public health care services** that are free at the point of care, including access to the full spectrum of **sexual and reproductive health services and information** to all women, adolescents, girls, and transgender and gender non-conforming people, eliminating barriers to access. This includes modern contraceptives; abortion; comprehensive maternal health care; diagnosis, support, and treatment of STIs, including HIV; assisted reproductive technologies and treatment of infertility; prevention, diagnosis and treatment of reproductive cancers; and services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.
- B. **Eliminate out of pocket payments and catastrophic health expenditures** that drive women into, and keep them in, the vicious cycle of poverty and debt.
- C. End **cervical cancer** by guaranteeing universal access to HPV vaccines and cervical cancer treatment, free from coercion, including funding primary health care services to scale up training and equipment to “see and treat” cervical cancer.

### 3.3.3. *Land Rights*

- A. Ensure **women’s right to own, access and control land** by ending discriminatory laws and cultural practices that deny this. Guarantee women access to banking and credit (not microcredit) to support their purchasing and use of land to strengthen food sovereignty and ensure sustainable livelihoods. Support women’s use of traditional farming practices to rehabilitate soils, improve production, and ensure long-term resilience and sustainability, especially in response to climate change.
- B. **Halt and reverse land grabs** by ensuring the free, prior, informed, and continuous consent of all communities affected by land-based investment. Eliminate public policies that fuel land grabs and prioritize sustainable land use and the needs of women and other small-scale food producers.

## 3.4. **Bodily Autonomy and Sexuality**

- A. Ensure state provision of **comprehensive sexuality education** within and beyond schools, grounded in evidence, human rights, gender equality, and respect for bodily autonomy and integrity.
- B. **Revoke laws and policy frameworks that criminalize and penalize** bodies, sexualities, and identities.
- C. Address the shortcomings of existing laws and policies that criminalize violations of women’s and girls’ rights to bodily integrity and autonomy, such as female genital mutilation, domestic and intimate partner violence, and child, early and forced marriage, in order to **ensure an approach to justice that does not further marginalize or stigmatize** affected

people and communities, and invest in addressing the root causes of these violations through comprehensive policies that address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

- D. **Decriminalize and destigmatize abortion** by removing abortion from criminal and penal codes, addressing barriers to services especially for marginalized groups, supporting pregnant people who choose to self-manage abortion, demedicalizing abortion care, providing access to post-abortion care without limitations or barriers, and ensuring service providers do not have the right to refuse services on the basis of conscience.

### 3.5. Violence Against Women Including Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)

- A. Accelerate the implementation of the recommendations for action to **eliminate violence against women** developed in the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent UN studies, guidelines, and reports. This involves escalating political will to make this task a priority of governments and civil society, building the knowledge base to inform better policy and practices; ending impunity for actors engaged in such violence; protecting the right of women to control their bodies and sexuality, experience social and economic security; and ensuring women's access to justice.
- B. As governments and multilateral institutions, allocate adequate resources to fund work **addressing and preventing violence against women, including the work of civil society and WHRD** which is often the most critical, and also survivors of violence.
- C. Establish stronger and more **agile alliances** between state, civil society, and multilateral actors to ensure better coordinated and **strategic actions** that acknowledge the vast and inter-connected nature of gender-based violence against women and activists.
- D. Protect the rights of WHRD including by taking a public stand against all state and non-state actors who violate these rights, **ceasing all attacks and threats against WHRD** and investigating all that occur, ensuring that impunity does not prevail.
- E. Ensure that WHRD enjoy safe and enabling environments to exercise their rights. This includes **addressing systemic and structural discrimination and violence** that they experience and enacting laws to recognize and protect the rights of all human rights defenders, with a specific focus on the needs of WHRD.

### 3.6. Racism, Casteism, and Xenophobia

- A. Adopt and strengthen **national, regional and international legal frameworks** in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to ensure their full and effective implementation, focusing on women and girls.
- B. As governments, **take legislative, budgetary, and programmatic measures** against racism, xenophobia, and discrimination based on work and descent (DWD), including programs such as anti-racist training for police, military and migration enforcement. There must be accountability for racial profiling by police and racist behavior.
- C. Continue to **utilize temporary special (affirmative action) measures** to address inequalities due to race, national origin, and belonging to communities experiencing DWD.
- D. **Adopt reparational policies within and between nations** to address inequalities created by centuries of global and national white supremacist policies.
- E. As governments, officially recognise DWD affected communities, **implementing constitutional, legislative, budgetary, and programmatic measures** to ensure the

protection of their dignity, safety, and bodily, educational, and cultural wellbeing, and guaranteeing their right to live free from abuse, violence, and social, political, and economic exclusion.

### 3.7. Migrants and Refugees

- A. Ensure that irregular entry and stay in a country by migrants is not treated as a criminal offence. **Do not criminalize or otherwise penalize** the provision of support and assistance to migrants, by human rights defenders.
- B. **Prioritize migrant women's access to public services**, including sexual and reproductive health care services, regardless of migration status. Address the intersection of identities and multiple oppressions through integrated policy responses.
- C. **Guarantee access to justice for migrant women and girls**, including regarding gender-based violence in the home, community and the world of work and regarding labor rights violations. Ensure that migrant women and girls can report crimes without the risk of detention or deportation.
- D. **Provide access to regularization, permanent residence, and pathways to citizenship**, including family reunification initiatives. Do not condition development aid on another country's facilitation of returned migrants or third country migration enforcement.

## 4. Funding the “Generation Equality Forum”

The Generation Equality Forum is a critical time to assess, critique, and re-invigorate the funding landscape for advancing gender justice and women's human rights. While the Beijing conference was a landmark event in recognizing key barriers to achieving gender equality, the related financial commitments have been woefully inadequate. While UN agencies and governments have made commitments since the Beijing process, the amount and distribution of funds has been unequal and support is often channeled through government entities and International NGOs based in donor countries, which follow agendas conceptualized in their headquarters and do not necessarily follow the priorities of movements and organizations in the contexts where they operate. UN funding often does not reach those local civil society actors most in need of resources and less than 1% of government funding for gender equality goes to women's rights organizations. Funds are both woefully inadequate and not distributed equitably. An OECD report on the role of private donors shows that philanthropic funds are important but modest when compared to government ODA. Overall 67% of overall philanthropic funding goes to 10 key countries with the majority going to reproductive health and maternal health and not rights. Moreover, funds are focused on technical solutions or women's empowerment versus being rights-based and inclusive of the systemic barriers to justice and equality.

Some of the most consistent funders of local groups have been global, regional, and local women's funds – funds created by and for women - who seek to generate more and better funds for women's groups and ensure that grassroots communities and local feminist movements are funded. Only a few women's funds existed at the Beijing conference but since that time over 40 women, indigenous, LBT funds have been created across the globe. They, as well as other regional funding mechanisms are an important way to ensure that civil society actors are resourced adequately to advance the Beijing platform. The Generation Equality Forum is a critical moment to listen closely to what

multiple constituencies of feminists are identifying as the challenges of their contexts and to seize on the opportunities that they identify so that diverse funding sources are mobilized to properly heed their call.

#### 4.1. For Donor Governments

- A. Commit to feminist international development assistance policies that **substantially increase direct flows to women's rights funds, organizations, and movements** as a significant part of their funding for gender equality.
- B. Commit to working with the OECD-DAC to **improve the gender marker** in line with feminist funding principles, including independent and standardized assessments of aid flows (i.e., not self-reported).
- C. **Refrain from interfering with funding provided to women and gender non-conforming people** for human rights work and ensure that legal and administrative frameworks do not restrict access to funding for human rights activism.

#### 4.2. For All Governments

- A. Commit to significantly increasing national resource allocation towards **strengthening national women's machineries** charged with implementing state policy on women's rights.
- B. Commit to feminist domestic resource mobilization policies that substantially increase direct funding to women's rights organizations and movements, as well as **feminist analysis of national budgets**.

#### 4.3. For Private Foundations

- A. Commit to include women's rights organizations and movements in **designing program strategies**. Increase budget allocations towards women's rights funds, organizations, and movements.

#### 4.4. For All Donors

- A. Adopt the following feminist funding principles at the Generation Equality Forum and apply them to new funding commitments, actions, and strategies:
  - Provide **core, flexible, multi-year funding**;
  - Publish and accept funding **applications in multiple formats and languages**;
  - Remove **onerous requirements**;
  - Support **cross-movement and cross-regional organizing**; and
  - Ensure commitments that are **free of conditions that undermine women's rights**.

Stand in solidarity with this radical and urgent vision by endorsing this framework here:

<http://bit.ly/B25SignOn>

For any further information, please email [team@regionsrefocus.org](mailto:team@regionsrefocus.org)