

# A transformative agenda for the G7

Recommendations from UK civil society



# Introduction: a transformative agenda for the G7

The UK will host world leaders at the 2021 G7 Summit in an exceptionally challenging context: a global pandemic, climate and ecological emergencies, increasing humanitarian needs, threats to democracy and human rights, rising poverty, and widening socio-economic inequalities. Covid-19's colossal impact on global economies has exacerbated an unprecedented scale of need globally. While donor fatigue and a recent retreat from internationalism among some countries means the world faces a critical juncture.

There is a short window for the wealthiest countries to support efforts to build back better after the pandemic. Now is our chance to help tackle the systemic issues that have left countries ill-equipped to withstand a global health emergency and prevented progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The importance of these universal and interconnected goals has never been clearer: none of us are safe until we are all safe.

The G7 nations are critical for setting a truly transformative agenda that can help stimulate global action to address these challenges. Change is possible, if G7 leaders and ministers prioritise creating a more sustainable, inclusive, equitable and resilient world for all – especially the most marginalised and excluded people. The commitments the G7 make in June should focus on setting a good example through achieving the SDGs, fulfilling the Paris Agreement, and delivering human rights, racial justice, gender equality and labour standards.

**The Civil Society 7 (C7) is an annual group of civil society organisations (CSOs) that convenes alongside the G7.** As coordinators of the C7, Bond and our partner networks call on the UK to use its G7 leadership to take and promote the actions laid out in this report. We developed these recommendations in consultation with a wide range of international organisations and issue-specific networks. The UK and G7 can take a giant stride towards building a better world by addressing the following priorities:



Health



Climate and environment



Sustainable economic recovery



Open societies and civic space



Education



Food security and nutrition



Conflict and atrocity prevention

No country can achieve the objective of building a just and sustainable world alone, or without the support of civil society. The G7 have a crucial opportunity to engage with diverse, locally-led CSOs and communities to forge together a better future for all. We look forward to collaborating on these proposals over the coming year.

# Health



**The Covid-19 pandemic has led to more than 2 million deaths globally.<sup>i</sup> The pandemic has exacerbated existing health inequalities within and between countries, with risk and impact significantly increased depending on age, gender, ethnicity, geography and deprivation, as well as the existence of comorbidities or pre-existing health issues.**

The pandemic has also had significant indirect health impacts. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), almost 90% of countries have experienced disruptions to health services and all types of health services have been affected.<sup>ii</sup> The pandemic is exacerbating weaknesses in health systems and barriers in access to health care, impeding and reversing progress to meet the targets outlined in SDG 3. It has also shown that health is interconnected with every aspect of our lives. We cannot have prosperous societies and economies without healthy populations worldwide.

The pandemic has highlighted the need for, and given new impetus to, increased efforts to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) and build on the commitments made in the UN Political Declaration on UHC in 2019.<sup>iii</sup> We know no one is truly safe until we are all safe, so access to decent health care is fundamental. Given the legacy and learning from the UK's National Health Service and the country's position as the second-largest government donor to global health, the UK is well-placed to push for real change across the G7 in achieving health for all.

## Recommendations

**As part of a comprehensive global response to address Covid-19, health inequalities and progress towards UHC, the UK should use its G7 presidency to encourage all G7 members to:**

### **1 Invest in strengthening health systems in their own country, regionally and globally:**

- Implement standing health and finance ministerial meetings within the G7, commit to spend at least 0.1% of Gross National Income (GNI) on Official Development Assistance (ODA) for health,<sup>1</sup> and support countries to equitably mobilise progressive and sustainable domestic resources to reach at least 5% of GDP for health, including through tackling corruption in the health sector.
- Ensure all health (both physical and mental), nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services are accessible and affordable to all, gender- and age-responsive, disability-inclusive and resilient to health shocks.
- Build and increase the capacity of the health workforce to fill global shortages, in this International Year of Health and Care Workers,<sup>iv</sup> and strengthen primary health care at the community level to build the resilience of the overall system, as per the Alma Ata and Astana declarations.
- Use appropriate digital health technologies, including boosting tele-medicine (and tele-rehabilitation), while ensuring the highest quality of health care and rights to privacy and data protection.

### **2 Improve global health security, which can only be achieved through global solidarity:**

- Help to create and ensure equitable access globally to Covid-19 vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, by equitably funding all components of the Access to Covid-19 Tools Accelerator, as well as

helping to remove intellectual property barriers and encouraging sharing of the science, know-how and technology of Covid-19 health technologies.

- Finance efforts to mitigate the indirect impacts of Covid-19 on other health issues and services.
- Where appropriate, integrate the delivery of Covid-19 health technologies through existing health systems, in a way that optimally balances pandemic response with existing health priorities.
- Ensure investments in pandemic preparedness align with and strengthen existing health, nutrition and WASH systems and capacity at global, national and sub-national levels.

### **3 Take a 'One Health' approach, for the prevention and early detection of future pandemics, and to holistically improve health and wellbeing:**

- Ensure a multisectoral, multidisciplinary and integrated approach to human, animal and environmental health, including antimicrobial resistance, zoonotic diseases, vector ecology and management, food security and nutrition, and WASH.
- Adopt a 'health in all policies' approach, domestically and internationally, to ensure coherence and that all sectors – such as trade, agriculture, manufacturing, transport and energy – are promoting and not compromising good health.
- Commit to combat climate change, reduce pollution and improve environments, to strengthen the health of people and planet.
- Address the social and gender determinants of health, including consideration of where we live, learn, work and play.

<sup>1</sup> As per the WHO recommended target.

# Climate and environment



**The UK has the opportunity to issue a clear vision for how it can capitalise on the opportunities of its G7 presidency, coinciding with Italy's G20 presidency and their joint presidency of COP26, to weave climate and environment as a 'golden thread' throughout international action and cooperation in 2021. The G7 must deliver tangible outcomes that will enable transformational results across COP26 priority areas, including closing the gap to 1.5°C; adaptation; loss and damage; nature-based solutions; and climate finance.**

Just as the world has come together and responded to the science to address the Covid-19 emergency, so the G7 must tackle the climate and ecological emergencies with the same science-led approach and level of urgency, recognising that they pose the greatest threat to securing a sustainable, inclusive and resilient future for all. Crucially, the G7 needs to prioritise the integration of the Paris Agreement and SDGs into global recovery spending, to ensure every penny is consistent with limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C, adapting to climate change, and halting and reversing biodiversity loss and nature's decline.

We call on G7 leaders to recognise the interconnection between the drivers of – and solutions to – poverty and inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. In this way, other recommendations in this document relate to climate and environment, particularly economic recovery, food security and nutrition, and health.

## Recommendations

The UK government should use its position as president to lead the G7 to:

### 1 Lead the decarbonisation of the global economy in line with the climate emergency:

- End investment from all G7 countries for all fossil fuels overseas, following the UK's lead, and significantly scale-up support to lower-income and more vulnerable countries to ensure renewable energy access for all.
- Commit to present a roadmap by the first G7 Finance Ministers of 2022 of how they will phase out fossil fuel subsidies by 2025 at the latest, including tax concessions, export credits, and all finance and technical assistance provided through multilateral development banks.
- Prioritise effective approaches of carbon pricing and implement carbon border adjustment mechanisms.
- Take urgent action to reduce emissions from land use, through the protection of carbon-rich ecosystems and the transition to regenerative agricultural practices.

### 2 Catalyse a global just transition for workers and their communities:

- Make Just Transition a standing priority of the G7 agenda, including by promoting commitments that unlock the transition of all sectors of the economy, so as to ensure a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient future.
- Lead a global initiative to end the expansion of fossil fuels and support a just transition for workers, communities, women, young people, and Indigenous Peoples around the world.

### 3 Deliver on financial obligations and act in solidarity with vulnerable countries:

- Make climate finance, especially achieving 50% for adaptation, a key priority for 2021, as well as committing to doubling national climate finance for the post-2020 period, without compromising non-climate ODA, and increasing finance for adaptation.
- Make a commitment to work urgently towards a post-2025 financial goal, including a dedicated goal for adaptation, that is inclusive, promotes gender equality, and meets the needs and aspirations of the lowest-income and most vulnerable countries.
- Establish a new loss and damage finance window that is additional to existing climate finance for adaptation and mitigation, and make ambitious pledges to fund this window above and beyond existing finance.

### 4 Halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 – a prerequisite for limiting global warming to 1.5°C, preventing mass extinctions, and achieving social justice and human wellbeing for all:

- Call on all countries to sign the Leaders Pledge for Nature, join the High Ambition Coalition for Nature, and then deliver on the commitments outlined by both initiatives.
- Commit to delivering an ambitious and transformative Global Biodiversity Framework at COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and to resourcing its implementation.

# Sustainable economic recovery



Coordinated by Bond's working group on Sustainable Economic Development, supported by the Women 7, Labour 7, Jubilee Debt Campaign and Trade Justice Movement

**The full impact of Covid-19 on national and local economies and livelihoods is yet to be realised. In the first half of 2020 alone, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reported a 49% drop in foreign direct investment and the World Bank predicts a significant increase in extreme poverty.<sup>v</sup> Such effects are especially felt by lower-income and highly indebted countries, without the fiscal space to fund recovery.**

Informal workers, women, children, young people, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and other excluded groups are disproportionately affected.<sup>vi</sup> Building back better from the pandemic will require a rigorous focus on addressing structural inequalities, putting gender equality and the most marginalised people at the centre of recovery efforts.

Countries already struggling to manage the economic fallout of the pandemic are having to borrow more to afford Covid-19 vaccination programmes, with prices kept artificially high through monopoly protections. Responding to increasingly urgent global calls for debt relief and universal, publicly funded social protection would help build resilience, increase equality and economic empowerment, reduce child labour, and secure decent work and livelihoods for all.<sup>vii</sup>

Most of the causes of international economic inequalities pre-existed the pandemic, although many have been exacerbated by it. We have already seen trillions of US dollars allocated for Covid recovery packages, the majority in industrialised countries. We have to address the ongoing injustices of the global economic system, and their painful historical legacy grounded in colonialism and exploitation, if we hope to withstand similar crises in the future. The world's richest countries can shape a recovery that centres on resilience, decent work for all, and the livelihoods of the most marginalised – commitments we hope to see included in the G7 Leaders' Declaration. All recovery spending should support a global just transition (in line with our recommendations on climate and environment).

## Recommendations

**The UK should ensure the G7's plans for building back better and global economic recovery deliver lasting, systemic change and focus on tackling structural inequalities:**

**1 Create a comprehensive system to cancel global external debt to a level consistent with sustainable development across private, multilateral and bilateral creditors:**

- Agree immediate legal changes to ensure private lenders are included in international debt cancellation initiatives.
- Implement development approaches that allocate aid according to need, in line with recommendations from the Equitable Access Initiative,<sup>viii</sup> to ensure policy making considers countries' fiscal space, debt burdens and domestic capacity when allocating finances.
- Ensure all future loans are fully transparent and help build socially and environmentally healthy and just economies that can meet their Paris Agreement targets.

**2 Secure a G7 leaders' commitment to support publicly funded, actionable, universal social protection, specifically proposals for a Global Fund for Social Protection:<sup>ix</sup>**

- Commit additional finance for and expand provision of fully accessible, child-sensitive, disability-inclusive and gender-responsive social protection programmes, focused on those whose livelihoods have been most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the most vulnerable and discriminated against people.<sup>2</sup>
- Align humanitarian cash support with national protection systems, to reach those most at risk of exclusion.

**3 Commit to invest at least 2% of domestic national income in the care economy:**

- Provide public funding to ensure universal access to health care, childcare, eldercare, care for people with disabilities, and quality education.
- Promote decent work by ensuring care workers are paid a living wage.<sup>x</sup>

**4 Support fair, sustainable trade policies and practices:**

- Commit to the reinvention of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) as a multilateral forum focused on aligning trade rules to other international standards, especially the SDGs and Paris Agreement, and addressing the longstanding concerns of low- and middle-income countries, particularly regarding food and agricultural trade policies.
- Ratify, fund and enforce International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on collective bargaining, freedom of association and eliminating child labour, Convention 190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, and the Palermo Protocol on trafficking in persons, throughout G7 supply chains.<sup>xi</sup>
- Protect the policy space of governments to deliver a sustainable, inclusive, equitable, resilient economic recovery, by excluding critical public services, such as health, education, early childcare and WASH, from trade deals.

<sup>2</sup> Particularly informal workers, small and micro enterprises, women, children, young people, people with disabilities, migrants, refugees, displaced people, minority groups and people living in fragile and conflict-affected states.



# Open societies and civic space



Coordinated by Bond's working group on Civic Space and the UK  
Anti-Corruption Coalition

Civil society, human rights, democracy and the rule of law were under pressure prior to Covid-19.<sup>xii</sup> The pandemic has exacerbated trends like rising authoritarianism, corruption, securitisation, discrimination and political instability. It has also demonstrated the importance of information and communication technologies in daily life, forcing our dependence on online platforms to access essential services and exercise freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Protecting civic space, tackling corruption, improving access to trusted information, and greater support for human rights defenders, environmental activists, journalists, election management bodies, judiciaries and CSOs – online and offline – are critical to building back better and achieving SDG 16.<sup>xiii</sup>

Many governments have used Covid-19 as a pretext to introduce or expand emergency- or security-related laws and regulations that restrict freedom of assembly, association, participation, expression and access to information.<sup>xiv</sup> This includes online restraints to prevent and limit organising and protest through illegal internet shutdowns, social media restrictions and other limits to activism. Sixty-seven countries and eight territories have postponed electoral events, creating disturbances and uncertainties that undermine consolidated and newer democracies.

Attacks on human rights defenders (HRDs), environmental campaigners, civil society activists and journalists are increasing globally. In one year, 156 journalists<sup>xv</sup> and 304 HRDs were killed worldwide, many with impunity.<sup>xvi</sup> HRDs are also experience surveillance, criminalisation, stigmatisation, physical attacks and kidnapping, especially women, LGBTI+ people, and those from minority groups. Many governments have adopted restrictive laws or teamed up with private actors to quell climate activism and target environmental defenders, organisations and movements.<sup>xvii</sup>

Global corruption undercuts democracy and sustainable development, damages trust in public institutions, breeds instability and conflict, and risks siphoning away much-needed resources during a global pandemic. The global nature of corruption requires coherent global action from the G7.

## Recommendations

In line with its stated intention to use the G7 to focus on open societies, we call on the UK government to:

### 1 Promote and protect global civil society space:

- Issue a statement and support actions that hold to account governments that take advantage of Covid-19, including through excessive emergency and security-related measures to restrict civil society space, increase surveillance on and target political opponents, civil society and the media, disrupt electoral processes, shut down, throttle or block the internet, and limit human rights and civic freedoms, going well beyond legitimate, proportionate and necessary measures under international human rights law.
- Use diplomatic channels to encourage governments to hold credible elections, protect rights to freedom of assembly, association, participation, expression, opinion and access to information online and offline, address digital divides, and place civil society at the heart of an inclusive and sustainable Covid-19 recovery.

### 2 Ensure human rights defenders, environmental campaigners, civil society activists, whistleblowers and journalists at risk<sup>3</sup> have access to rapid response, individual and collective preventative and protection mechanisms at the national level, close to where they are being attacked and threatened:

- Prioritise funding for emergency protection mechanisms and champion the development and strengthening of regional- and national-level 'basket funds' for emergency protection grants, to which international embassies can contribute.
- Provide CSOs under pressure<sup>4</sup> with access to sufficient and flexible core funding that enables them to respond to increasing pressures and restrictions, and keep their employees and volunteers safe from harm.

### 3 Embed integrity in international recovery efforts, by prioritising tackling global flows of stolen wealth:

- Use the G7 – as well as the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in June 2021 – to maintain and advance the UK's coordinating role on corporate, extractives and procurement transparency, and lead by example through effective domestic reforms.
- Place a renewed emphasis on tackling corruption in democratic and electoral processes (through political finance) and support election management and judicial bodies, independent oversight bodies and CSOs to tackle corruption, maintain democratic integrity, ensure digital rights and freedoms, safeguard voting rights, and ensure widespread participation.

<sup>3</sup> This includes women's rights defenders, child human rights defenders, campaigners for racial justice, environmental defenders, anti-corruption and right to information campaigners, LGBTQI+ activists, disability activists and those defending rights of indigenous people and minority ethnic and religious groups.

<sup>4</sup> Especially disabled people's organisations and associations, networks and organisations working to promote women's rights, children's rights, racial justice, LGBTQI+ people, indigenous people's rights, environmental protection, access to information, transparency and anti-corruption, and democratisation.

# Education



Coordinated by the UK Committee for UNICEF (UNICEF UK) and Plan International UK, with support from members of the G7 Global Taskforce and Send My Friend to School

**Education is in crisis and the future of the world's most marginalised children is in jeopardy. The Covid-19 pandemic pushed more than 1 billion learners out of school at its peak. School closures challenged the realisation of the right to education for over 90% of young people. Millions of children risk never returning to school by the time the pandemic has passed, including up to 20 million girls.<sup>xx</sup>**

The Covid-19 crisis has only added to the existing challenges holding back achievement of SDG 4, including poverty, conflict, the climate crisis, violence and discrimination. Even before the pandemic, one in five children and young people were out of education, including 130 million girls.<sup>xxi</sup> For girls, the risk of never returning to school is drastically heightened, as they are more likely to take on extra burdens of care, or be forced into early marriage or domestic servitude to shoulder the economic burden arising from the pandemic.

The most marginalised children are bearing the brunt of the pandemic. In 2020, four out of five children reported that they felt they were learning little or nothing while out of school, with girls, displaced children and those living in low-income households most likely to report learning nothing at all.<sup>xxii</sup> This lost learning has huge economic ramifications, with the World Bank predicting an \$872 reduction in annual earnings for today's primary and secondary-aged children, totalling a long-term economic loss of up to \$10 trillion.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Education is both a human right and plays an instrumental role in economic growth, community health, stability, and climate resilience. Given this crucial role, the G7 must ensure quality, inclusive and equitable education for every child, underpinned by strong platforms for youth engagement. Education, in particular for girls, has been a pillar of the development agenda across recent G7 meetings, which we hope will set the stage for life-changing commitments from every G7 country. The UK must lead these efforts and build on the strong reputation of the G7, with a renewed sense of urgency in the Covid-19 context.

## Recommendations

**To meaningfully implement its commitment to international education, in particular for girls, the UK should launch a five-year girls' education initiative to deliver a holistic systems approach to education. This should include financing the meaningful participation of girl-led groups and youth activists, ensuring accessible information and opportunities to participate in global decision-making processes, including the G7 itself. The initiative should cover the following areas:**

### 1 Get SDG 4 back on track:

- Prioritise girls' education to prevent lost learning during Covid-19, by addressing the gendered impacts of the pandemic, developing and financing catch-up plans, and accelerating efforts to close the digital divide.
- Provide full financial support to address and meet all elements of the girls' education initiative inclusively and equitably, with a progressive commitment to 15% of ODA going to education by 2025.
- Directly fund programmes designed to ensure 40 million more primary- and secondary-school-age girls in lower and lower-middle income countries are in school and learning, and 20 million more girls are achieving foundational literacy, with a focus on the most marginalised in every programme.

### 2 Reach every learner:

- Prioritise legal and policy protections that address the structural barriers that prevent girls from accessing and completing education, including poverty and inequality, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, unpaid domestic work, and high rates of violence against girls in schools and communities.
- Develop, fund and implement policies and programmes that create safe learning environments, end school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), embed comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for girls, boys and all children in the curriculum, and develop strong female teaching workforces.
- Strengthen inclusive education programming to reach all children, including girls, through adopting sub-targets focusing on disability, developing an agreed method of tracking ODA spending for inclusion, monitoring progress through data disaggregation, and recommitting to the full delivery of SDG 4 for every child.

### 3 Build resilient systems:

- Ensure every girl receives gender-transformative learning on climate and environmental issues as a key climate change strategy in Nationally Determined Contributions.
- Invest in girls' education and skills through climate financing and systems strengthening to increase resilience and minimise disruption.
- Implement fully the commitments made in the Charlevoix Declaration, including: ensuring 50% of international development financing is spent in conflict-affected and fragile states; designing Education in Emergencies funding to achieve learning outcomes for girls, boys and all children equally; and investing in research, and monitoring and communicating progress towards these outcomes.

# Food security and nutrition



Coordinated by Concern Worldwide UK, supported by members of the Global G7 Taskforce, SUN Civil Society Network and ICAN

**Food insecurity and malnutrition are driven by poverty, climate change, conflict, poor governance, and inequality. These drivers are exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and are hindering the G7's commitment to lift 500 million people in low-income and vulnerable countries out of hunger and malnutrition by 2030.**

Globally, one in nine people are hungry or undernourished, while one in three live with overweight or obesity. Dietary risk factors contribute to more deaths than any other risk factor, with malnutrition linked to almost half of all child deaths. Levels of hunger have been increasing since 2015. In 2019, 135 million people experienced food insecurity.<sup>xxiv</sup> This is now predicted to almost double to 265 million.<sup>xxv</sup>

Urgent action is needed to avoid catastrophic loss of life. More than 30 million people in 36 countries face emergency levels of acute food insecurity, the last warning before famine.<sup>xxvi</sup> The cost of providing a daily single meal for one year to such people is approximately \$5 billion. The majority are in conflict-affected and fragile areas, meaning funding must be coupled with strong diplomatic efforts to support humanitarian access and uphold International Humanitarian Law. The proposed establishment of a Famine Prevention and Humanitarian Crises Panel is a welcome step.

A longer-term approach that addresses systemic inequalities is also needed to build resilience and improve global nutrition. Good nutrition underpins at least 12 of the SDGs. Yet almost 3 billion people could not access a healthy diet in 2020. People with disabilities, women, adolescent girls, children and infants are some of those most affected. Other marginalised groups that are particularly affected include displaced people, indigenous people, the urban extreme poor and smallholder farmers.

The G7 is the first of many significant moments this year, including COP26, the Food Systems Summit and the Nutrition for Growth Summit. The G7 must start addressing immediate needs while tackling root causes and building a fairer and more sustainable food system for future generations.

## Recommendations

The UK government should use the G7 presidency to:

### 1 Lead global efforts to prevent food and nutrition crises and ensure an effective humanitarian response:

- Mobilise at least \$5 billion for comprehensive famine prevention and relief to reach 30 million people at greatest risk.
- Lead diplomatic efforts to prevent humanitarian situations deteriorating, ensure humanitarian access, and hold actors accountable for violations of International Humanitarian Law.
- Drive collaboration on the treatment and prevention of malnutrition as part of food security responses, including prioritising primary nutrition services in at-risk areas.

### 2 Catalyse a system-wide shift to preparedness and anticipatory action that delivers rapid, flexible funding and support where it is most needed:

- Significantly scale-up evidence-based and locally-led early warning systems that link risk analysis with pre-agreed plans for early action, backed by pre-arranged financing.
- Ensure the widespread availability of climate risk insurance, inclusive social protection, livelihoods support and cash assistance before the onset of crisis, particularly to the most marginalised groups.

### 3 Commit to preventing and treating undernutrition, diet-related chronic disease and nutrient deficiencies, and prioritising access to nutritious food:

- Integrate nutrition into prevention and treatment strategies in health systems, so essential nutrition services are available to all, especially people with medical conditions associated with underweight, obesity or overweight.
- Implement the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s nutrition policy marker to allow better progress tracking on all global nutrition targets, including funding to programmes that directly target reducing malnutrition (such as stunting-, wasting- and diet-related non-communicable diseases).
- Mobilise G7 members to make ambitious financial commitments at the Nutrition for Growth Summit.

### 4 Accelerate efforts to build sustainable, nutritious, equitable food systems:

- Ensure an increased proportion of funds reaches local organisations, through initiatives such as the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme.
- Support smallholder farmers, particularly women and indigenous people, to build resilience to climate change by investing in local adaptation, agroecology, crop diversification, and strengthening local markets to cope with shocks.
- Amplify calls for more sustainable, nutritious and resilient food systems at the Food Systems Summit and COP26, ensuring the meaningful involvement of local communities and organisations in decision making.

# Conflict and atrocity prevention



**The consequences of neglecting conflict prevention and civilian protection during the pandemic will have long-term effects into the next decade. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) predicts another heightened emergency given that existing humanitarian needs were already extremely high before Covid-19.<sup>xxvii</sup> Conflict-affected populations will become even more vulnerable.**

Climate-related issues contribute to many conflicts. Reliance on agricultural systems that are fast becoming defunct, loss of livelihoods, resource scarcity and climate-related migration increase the fragility of communities and states, resulting in violence. A complex emergency is unfolding, with the climate change, prolific conflict and Covid-19 crises intersecting and intensifying.

Conflict is still one of the biggest drivers of migration and refugee flows. According to the UN Refugee Agency, there are more than 79 million refugees and internally displaced people, the largest figure ever recorded. More than two thirds of the world's refugees come from just four fragile and conflict-affected states (Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan and South Sudan). The failure to respond to the refugee crisis risks more conflict, triggering further refugee flows and creating a cyclical problem with no clear end in sight. The cost to future generations is even more alarming. At the beginning of 2020, 60% of all displaced people were children, who risk losing out on education during and following Covid-19.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Our recommendations focus on the diplomatic and economic interventions where G7 countries can have the most meaningful impact to de-escalate current conflict and nurture peaceful societies.

## Recommendations

In line with the UK's intention to use the G7 to prioritise human security and build peaceful societies, we call on the UK government to encourage G7 leaders to:

### 1 Promote investment and cooperation in long-term peacebuilding and stability initiatives:

- Invest in initiatives, in partnership with local peacebuilders, that include conflict, natural disaster and atrocity early warning systems to trigger earlier action, supporting mediation experts.
- Earmark defence expenditures to enable contributions to collective preventive and protective action in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.
- Ensure funding models are flexible to respond to rapidly evolving conflict settings, while not forgetting concerted action on legacy conflicts (for example, Syria and Afghanistan).

### 2 Implement and resource national civilian protection strategies that work cross-government to ensure policy coherence across foreign, defence, trade and aid agendas, provide accountability mechanisms for protecting civilians living in conflict, and stick to the letter and the spirit of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.<sup>xxix</sup> As part of this, the G7 should commit to pursue a gender- and child-sensitive approach for all conflicts:

- Unequivocally and consistently condemn gender-based violence and invest in initiatives that prevent sexual violence.
- Work together to fully implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and promote investment and cooperation in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security.

### 3 Commit to developing clear sanctions, counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism financing policies that safeguard civic space and allow unimpeded humanitarian work in line with International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, as well as peacebuilding efforts that tackle the root causes of violence:

- Incorporate legal safeguards for human rights and civic freedoms and exemptions and/or general licenses for humanitarian work and peace-support efforts into all relevant UN Security Council resolutions and domestic legislation.
- Provide political leadership to multilateral stakeholder dialogues addressing the negative impacts of sanctions, counter-terrorism and counter-terrorism financing measures on civic space, humanitarian and peacebuilding action, and pursue shared approaches to managing risks, while delivering support in complex conflict contexts.
- Through the UK's membership in the UN Security Council and the upcoming review of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, invest in efforts to include stronger protections on human rights, civic space, gender and humanitarian space, and ensure civil society voices have opportunities for meaningful participation in the review process.

### 4 Take urgent action on some of the most pressing crises today, particularly in Yemen, the world's worst humanitarian crisis:

- Pursue bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to pressure conflict parties to return to a fully inclusive peace process.
- Prioritise funding the Yemen Humanitarian Response Plan, which at its last review remained only 50% funded.



## Endnotes

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- ii Pulse survey on continuity of essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic: Interim report, 27 August 2020, WHO
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- iv '2021 designated as the International Year of Health and Care Workers', WHO
- v Investment Trends Monitor, Issue 36, UNCTAD; 'COVID-19 to add as many as 150 million extreme poor by 2021', World Bank
- vi For example: Press release: 'COVID-19 will widen poverty gap between women and men, new UN Women and UNDP data shows', UN WOMEN; 'Building forward: Creating a more equitable, gender-just, inclusive and sustainable world', Care International
- vii For example: 'Locked down and left behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on refugees' economic inclusion', Center for Global Development; Data Dashboard: Universal Social Protection, ILO
- viii 'Equitable Access Initiative', The Global Fund
- ix Homepage, Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors
- x 'Investing in the care economy: A pathway to growth', ITUC
- xi C190 - Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), ILO; Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, UN Human Rights
- xii Civicus Monitor, Civicus
- xiii 'Rethinking civic space in an age of intersectional crises: A briefing for funders', Funders Initiative on Civil Society
- xiv Covid-19 Civic Freedom Tracker, ICNL-ECNL
- xv UNESCO Director-General's Report on the Safety of Journalists and the Danger of Impunity, UNESCO
- xvi Global Analysis 2019, Front Line Defenders
- xvii Briefer – Closing civic space for climate activists, ECNL-ICNL
- xviii Corruption and Covid-19, UNODC
- xix 'Reopening schools: When, where and how?', UNESCO
- xx 'Malala Fund releases report on girls' education and COVID-19', Malala Fund
- xxi Launch of the 2019 SDG 4 Data Digest, UNESCO/UNIS
- xxii Protect a generation: The impact of COVID-19 on children's lives, Save the Children
- xxiii 'Learning losses could add up to \$10 trillion', The World Bank
- xxiv Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) 3 and above
- xxv 2020 – Global Report on Food Crises, WFP
- xxvi IPC 4
- xxvii COVID-19 in humanitarian crises: A double emergency, IRC
- xxviii 2019 in review: Trends at a glance, UNHCR
- xxix The 1951 Refugee Convention, UNHCR