

**E N D**

**EXTREME POVERTY**

**NOW**

**O U R F U T U R E C A N ' T W A I T**

We must break systemic barriers,  
take climate action, empower girls,  
and defend advocacy—NOW.

**GLOBAL  
CITIZEN®**

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# Executive Summary

Over the last two years, humanity has undergone some of the biggest challenges of our lifetime. We are now faced with the urgent need for action, as the cycle of poverty continues and the 2030 Agenda remains further out of reach than ever. We cannot continue business as usual, while the world slides further into crisis. We need to demand and take action to end extreme poverty NOW.

This year, Global Citizen is focusing on these critical areas which we believe will drive the most change, and deliver the largest impact quickly to end extreme poverty NOW. If invested in, these areas are the key to accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Break Systemic Barriers NOW

More than ever before, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the fragilities of our healthcare systems, exacerbating and highlighting existing inequalities in healthcare and global finance that perpetuate the cycle of poverty. Vaccine rollouts have been grossly unequal, and the gap between the rich and the poor only continues to widen, as proper financing development for poorer countries remains lacking. The system must ensure health and economic justice at large, by achieving financial equity to fund essential needs and global challenges, in order to begin to break down the systemic barriers that keep people in poverty.

As we enter the third year of the pandemic, it is clear that inequitable access to COVID-19 vaccines and their production have fostered the emergence of new variants, thereby extending the pandemic far longer than could have been anticipated. We are therefore advocating for funding and support to build regional production capacities to be able to produce 16 billion doses in a single year against future pandemics, and sharing of vaccine intellectual property, technology, and know-how in order to expand production. Additionally, we call for fulfilling long-standing aid commitments, reallocating at least \$100 billion of Special Drawing Rights from wealthy to low-income countries, and advancing policies for fairer and more effective global taxation.

## Take Climate Action NOW

Ending climate change, and ensuring that everyone, everywhere, is protected from its life-threatening consequences, are critical if we wish to end extreme poverty NOW. People living in poverty and those in the Global South are disproportionately impacted by climate change, and lack the resources to overcome climate change-related shocks to their lives.

Climate change is already ravaging the planet, and without immediate action, it could push 132 million more people into extreme poverty by 2030. Action on climate must be centered on supporting low-income countries, and wealthier nations must deliver on the \$100B per year climate finance promise, to open the way for decisive collective action to keep warming below 1.5°C. In addition, food security, nutrition, and livelihoods must be prioritized by directing significant climate adaptation resources to rural communities and smallholder farms, and we must work to protect and restore nature in partnership with local and marginalized communities.

## Empower Girls NOW

Across nearly every metric, women have fared worse from the pandemic — losing jobs at a higher rate, facing greater barriers to accessing assistance, and suffering an increase in vulnerability to gender-based violence. We believe adolescent girls to be the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has not been gender blind, and so we need to address the cycle of poverty with a gendered lens — investing in girls is both morally right and an economically smart way to maximize impact.

Girls must be at the forefront of the recovery agenda, and we must prioritize investments in gender equality as a path towards ending extreme poverty. \$400 million is needed now to fund key international mechanisms to address girls' poverty and reach millions of young women in immediate need. This includes delivering on commitments to girls' education, including providing them with school meals, new investments in girls' health, including sexual and reproductive health, and new commitments to valuing the care economy. 2022 must be the year that we place gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of our work to build back better.

## Defend Advocacy NOW

Cutting across all our work throughout the year is a strong commitment to defend advocacy, ensure that marginalized voices are heard, and hold leaders accountable to deliver on their promises. At the core of this mission is an open civic space, which acts as an antidote to authoritarianism, and is an absolute prerequisite for inclusive democracies, good governance, and sustainable development. History has shown us the power of individuals speaking out and asserting their rights to bring about social change, and we believe that promoting, encouraging, and defending the right to advocate is central to ending extreme poverty NOW.

Both physical and virtual civic spaces are shrinking, and although new technologies have helped activist networks grow, they have also enabled governments to pass repressive laws that impose funding restrictions, and control citizen movements and media freedoms. Global Citizen will directly defend advocacy by lifting small-scale civil society voices, particularly from the Global South and youth-led movements, and amplifying their efforts through our platforms. We will empower our own Global Citizens as individual advocates, and weave a defense of civic space across all our campaigns and partnerships.

As an advocacy organization, Global Citizen recognizes that we can no longer stand by as our world falls deeper into crises. We ourselves need to be driving the agenda, mobilizing concrete action across these key areas, and it is our sincere hope that you will join us in delivering real change. **The time to act is NOW.**



# Foreword

## His Excellency Abdulla Shahid

While COVID-19 has been devastating globally, it has been especially cruel to the already marginalized and vulnerable communities residing in least developed countries. From rising poverty levels to vaccine inequity to debt burdens, least developed countries are enduring a litany of challenges that must be addressed if they are to truly recover better from the pandemic.

As of 2021, 1.3 billion people in 109 countries live in poverty. Half of them are children. The pandemic has reversed much of the progress made in the past seven years to alleviate poor socioeconomic conditions worldwide. If we fail to act now, we will leave millions more vulnerable to poverty and abject conditions.

For the 2030 Agenda to be successful, its targets must be met everywhere, among all communities. It is our responsibility to protect our most vulnerable communities and leave no one behind. A task of this scale requires collective action that enlists everyone: young and old; leaders and citizens; and all stakeholders, public and private alike.

As we endeavor to rebuild our economies, protect our planet, and implement sustainable modes of production and consumption, let us put the needs and priorities of our most vulnerable communities at the forefront of our decision-making. That is how we will restore hope to our weary world.

Let us now act in the spirit of compassion and solidarity.

I urge members of civil society, businesses, philanthropic organizations, academia, as well as the scientific community, to scale up their efforts in the fight to end poverty.

I fully embrace the United Nations' commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the Global Goal of ending poverty in all its forms and everywhere, which lies at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals.

And I stand united with Global Citizen in their efforts to defeat poverty, demand equity, and defend the planet.

### **Abdulla Shahid**

President of the 76th Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
Republic of the Maldives

# Foreword

Ms. Aya Chebbi

My generation began protesting a decade ago, in 2011, in my country of Tunisia with a simple slogan — “Jobs, Freedom, Dignity.” We protested because the future our leaders are talking about is related to monetary value, but the future we need must be about freedom. The freedom as a girl to be safe, to make choices, to access reproductive and sexual health services, to have an education and meals in school, to enjoy financial independence. To just be, to become, and to belong — as an equal human being.

Yet we continue to live in a violent world, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, where violence is used by the patriarchy as a weapon to keep women trapped in inequality. I have been on the frontlines unafraid to die for freedom because I am the daughter of women warriors, thinkers, scientists, queens, and governors. It is unthinkable for me to end the pandemic, defend the planet, or defeat poverty without investing and tapping into the power of girls. Leaving this unresolved today will increase tomorrow’s challenges.

We are the youngest generation in human history. In Africa, 65% of the population is under 30, which means we have superpowers: demographic power, voting power, and mobilization power. We take to the streets when no one listens because our struggle is a struggle to be heard.

We deserve peace, vaccine equity, climate justice, and jobs with dignity. I do believe we can achieve all of it, and overcome the pandemic with intergenerational co-leadership. Your wisdom and our innovation, your political will and our fintech.

We wasted lots of time. But we can still catch up now and get her back to school, protect her from child marriage, female genital mutilation, and teen pregnancy, and support her to occupy her rightful place in society. Let’s do so while defending activists and feminists on the frontlines, online and offline, and raising the voices of millions of girls in Africa and around the world. We know that sustainable change will come from organizing citizens, youth, and the most marginalized yet the most resilient communities.

In 2022, with Global Citizen, we can support 50 million adolescent girls’ lives and livelihoods to build a world that is collaborative and emotionally intelligent, and centered on Jobs, Freedom, and Dignity.

We are ready, are you?

## **Aya Chebbi**

First African Union Envoy on Youth (2018-2021)

Tunisia

# Introduction

Over the last two years, humanity has undergone one of the biggest shared tests of our lifetimes, a test that has shown us that the world is neither willing to deliver on the promise to end extreme poverty, nor is it willing to do what is needed to protect the progress made so far.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has undone much of the progress of the last two decades, the truth is that even before the pandemic, poverty was increasing in many parts of the world, at a global scale. Inaction and complacency by the world — corporate, and local leaders alike — has left a legacy of rising poverty, and has widened inequalities.

And at a time of crisis when we should have been united, our world stands more divided than ever. We continue to see the compounded impact of poor global governance, decades of conflict, and inability of the poorest to access the financial system. The last years have been characterized by a dramatic and long-standing neglect of those living in extreme poverty while governments, economists, and even our international institutions downplay the problem.

The war against Ukraine — in addition to causing untold suffering and devastation — will only aggravate this situation further. For example, instead of accelerating the transition to renewable energy, the limited progress on climate action could be undermined as countries rush to replace Russian gas with other fossil fuel sources. Additionally, as of March 10, 2022, estimates show that 500 million people could face acute hunger because of the war. Compounding this problem, global food prices are spiking, and since Ukraine supplies significant amounts of wheat to the World Food Programme, global food relief is now in jeopardy. Lastly, the resulting humanitarian and refugee crisis will cost billions, and comes at a time when aid organizations and development budgets are already under strain. The world must avoid a situation in which people in need are pitted against others in need.

This crisis and its repercussions are only a stark and violent reminder that we need more action NOW to establish the conditions for a shared future. Rather than serving as an excuse not to end poverty or take action against climate change, the crisis should instead be the starting point for more urgent action. The situation in Ukraine reinforces the urgency behind many of the policy recommendations outlined in this paper, including supporting farmers around the world, dismantling systems that perpetuate financial inequity, and providing education and health services for the primarily women and girl refugees leaving Ukraine.

Without action, the cycle of poverty will only continue. We must break down the systemic barriers that keep people in poverty — the rising cost of food and essential services; increasing unemployment coupled with lower wages; and a lack of basic healthcare and social protection. We can no longer go about business as usual. Complacency is not, and has never been, the answer. The time for action is NOW.

For years, the narrative has been to “end extreme poverty by 2030,” but the truth is that we can no longer delay or postpone this agenda any further — we must work to end extreme poverty NOW. The pandemic and climate change have demonstrated more than ever how vulnerable progress is to setbacks. The time to act is NOW.

Global Citizen will focus on work in several transformative areas for investment and policy change. Taken together, we believe that these areas can have the biggest impact on ending extreme poverty — they are force multipliers, and will set us on track towards unlocking the other Sustainable Development Goals.

**Break Systemic Barriers NOW:** beginning with the need to end the COVID-19 pandemic and provide urgent aid, the system must ensure health and economic justice at large, by achieving financial equity to fund essential needs and global challenges — including humanitarian needs in times of war.

**Take Climate Action NOW:** wealthy countries must keep their promises to help those already suffering from the impacts of climate change and growing food insecurity, while governments and the private sector need to take measures to keep global warming below 1.5°C.

**Empower Girls NOW:** the G7 and other countries must uplift teenage girls with investments in education, nutrition, healthcare — including sexual and reproductive health and rights — and address the global childcare crisis. In particular, girls in crisis situations need our support.

**Defend Advocacy NOW:** Global Citizen will elevate citizens' voices, especially from the Global South, and defend the right of anyone to speak freely, dissent, and organize, without fear of reprisals or violence.

Additionally, because of the interconnections between conflict and poverty, Global Citizen will work to support people where the pressures of conflict have made daily life a struggle for survival. Poverty is fueled by war, which disrupts food supplies, destroys infrastructure, fragments communities, and undermines the economy and provision of social services. Therefore, Global Citizen will throughout the year call on governments and businesses to support the UN's relief fund for Ukraine, and for everyone seeking asylum to be granted safe and secure passage. We believe peace is the only path for stability, development, and equity for all.

Despite the urgency, there is still hope for progress, as long as there is a pathway forward. We know what needs to be done. Yet, progress, like justice, is never given; it is only ever won. And this is where citizens are more critical now than ever as major agents of change. Woven throughout the following chapters, you will read stories from those who are on the frontlines of delivering change to their communities: from a teacher in Nigeria educating thousands of children using just her phone, to the German activist committed to ensuring equitable vaccine access at all costs, as well as an activist working at the intersection between climate change, food security, and Indigenous guardianship of biodiversity in Indonesia.

We cannot let our progress falter, and we must continue our efforts to make the structural changes we, alongside activists around the world, advocate for. This year marks only the first step of many on our path towards ending extreme poverty NOW. We hope that you, too, will join us, to take action, and to inspire change.





"The problem is we are leaving huge swathes of the world behind. . . . But vaccines are absolutely central. There is no way out of the pandemic right now without vaccines as the central strategic pillar."

**Dr. John Nkengasong**, Director, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

**Photo by US Army National Guard**



# Break Systemic Barriers NOW

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed [nearly 100 million more](#) people into extreme poverty,<sup>1</sup> and for the first time in two decades, the [gap between rich and poor countries is widening](#).<sup>2</sup> As World Bank President David Malpass has [put it](#), "I'm very worried about a permanent scar on development."<sup>3</sup>

The global vaccine rollout has been grossly unequal, with production, ownership, and distribution largely restricted to a few wealthy countries and companies. Poorer nations have also struggled to access affordable financing to help their citizens with the effects of the pandemic, while wealthy countries were able to mobilize trillions in stimulus and social protection.

The pandemic has both made visible and exacerbated these existing inequalities in healthcare and global finance that have undermined the fight against extreme poverty. While the causes of poverty are ultimately many and varied, we can achieve real change right now by first breaking the two systemic barriers that unnecessarily prolonged the pandemic and undermined the recovery of lower-income countries: the twin evils of healthcare injustice and financial inequity.

## ***Annemarie Botzki – Vaccine Justice Campaigner***

Annemarie Botzki firmly believes that COVID-19 vaccines should belong to everybody. As a senior campaign manager at WeMove Europe, she has been putting public pressure on the German government to support a waiver of intellectual property rights on the vaccines so they may be considered a public good. That way, low- and middle-income countries could manufacture vaccines directly, overcoming the systemic barriers currently keeping them from doing so.

Partnering with the People's Vaccine coalition, Botzki helped launch a strongly worded petition demanding that Germany ensure vaccines and treatments are accessible to everyone, everywhere – and it ultimately garnered an impressive 2.7 million signatures. But when Chancellor Angela Merkel said she would not back an IP waiver, Botzki did not give up. She organized a rally outside the German Chancellery and wrote a letter to BioNTech, the German company that developed the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

"They call this vaccine 'the project for humanity,'" Botzki says. "In this letter that we wrote to them, [we said] ... then act accordingly. Support a waiver of the patents so you can share this knowledge."

In February 2022, she and WeMove Europe handed the People's Vaccine petition to the German Foreign Office. Hopeful for a policy shift now that a new chancellor, Olaf Schulz, is in power, Botzki is keeping pressure on officials and pharmaceutical companies alike to put aside economic gain for the greater good.

"This is a massive test for humanity," she says. "How do we deal with these global problems? Are we thinking as global citizens, or do we think [about ourselves]?"

## BEAT COVID-19 AND ACHIEVE HEALTH JUSTICE NOW

Throughout the pandemic, world leaders have consistently [emphasized vaccine equity](#),<sup>4</sup> but in practice have hoarded vaccines, afforded too much power to the pharmaceutical industry, and refused to sufficiently fund multilateral response mechanisms. Without widespread global vaccination, [new variants like omicron emerge](#), threatening more lives.<sup>5</sup> Vaccination rates are also directly tied to economic recovery, with the [International Labour Organization](#) reporting that "for each 14 persons receiving primary vaccination (typically two doses) in the second quarter of 2021, one full-time equivalent job was added to the global labor market."<sup>6</sup>

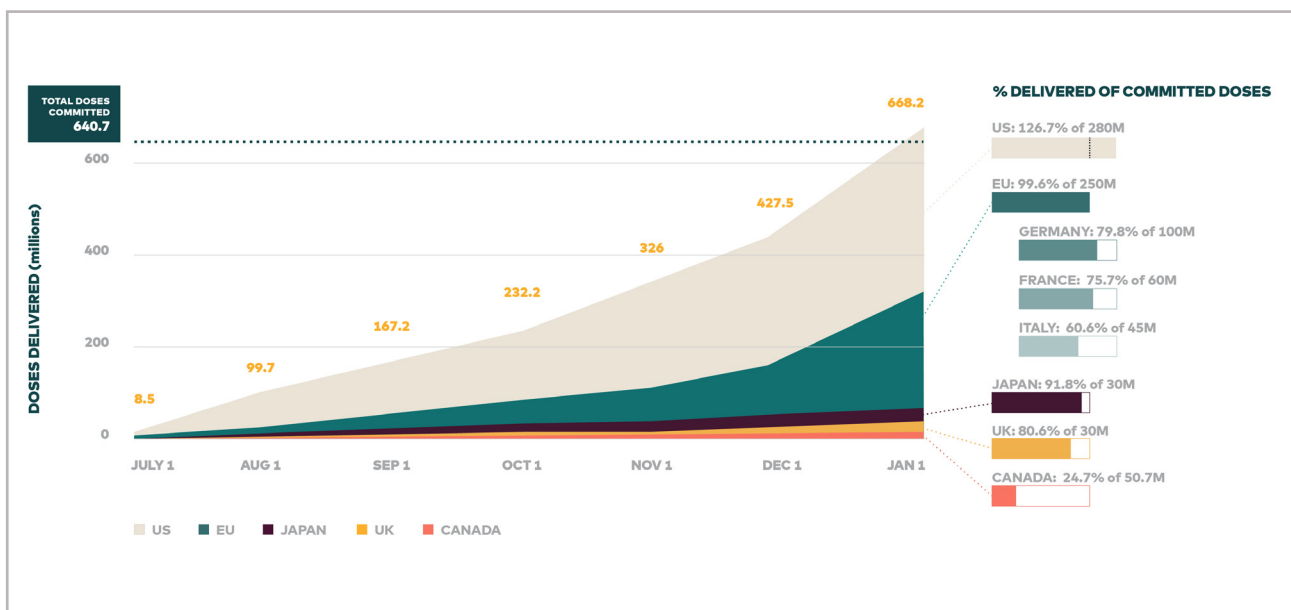
As of February 7, 2022, 72% of people in high-income countries had received primary vaccinations, as compared to 35% in lower-middle-income countries (excluding India) and 5.8% in low-income countries.<sup>7,8</sup> Worse, [high-income](#) countries, weighted by population, have already given out over 2.5 times as many booster shots as [low-income countries](#) have administered in total.<sup>9,10</sup>

While world leaders have pledged to meet the World Health Organization's (WHO) target of at least 70% of people in every country receiving primary vaccination by mid-2022, they have yet to offer a comprehensive plan backed by tangible commitments. As of January 2022, [118 countries were not on track](#) to meet this goal.<sup>11</sup> Omicron, booster shots, and additional doses required to make up for the less effective vaccines initially used, all highlight the need for sustainable protection against COVID-19 and equitable access to more than just two doses per person.

In 2021, [COVAX](#),<sup>12</sup> the global COVID-19 vaccine initiative, struggled to access its directly contracted doses due to a range of road blocks, including export controls and supply hoarding by wealthy countries. That forced COVAX to rely heavily on dose donations, which is a less efficient and more complex way to provide doses. Additionally, dose-sharing pledges from governments have not been fulfilled with sufficient timeliness (see Figure 1).

### Figure 1. Last-Minute Delivery? Dose sharing by the G7 and EU in 2021.

Doses shared with low-income, lower-middle-income, and upper-middle-income countries, either through COVAX or bilaterally. Over one-third of the 668.2 million total doses delivered were not delivered until the last minute, in December 2021. The EU, including Germany, France, and Italy, delivered 141.2 million doses that month — over half of what it promised for the whole year. The U.S. over delivered, which made up for other G7 nations falling short. Source: Airfinity.<sup>13</sup>



Meanwhile, companies like Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech have limited global supply and prevented local ownership and distribution by refusing to share intellectual property (IP). Governments like the EU (in particular Germany), the U.K., and U.S. — where COVID-19 vaccine makers are based — have blocked or not acted to advance India and South Africa's proposal, backed by over 100 countries, for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to temporarily waive IP on COVID-19 vaccines and other medical tools.

"Ending the pandemic can't just be a charity operation," Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, said at Global Citizen Live on September 25, 2021, referring to the need for solutions that empower developing countries.

### **Unlock Regional Self-Sufficiency**

Attempts at equitable distribution of vaccines through traditional market-based measures have failed. In order to increase vaccine access now and increase self-sufficiency in preparation for future pandemics, we need to unlock local production, ownership, and distribution authority in every region of the world. Over [100 manufacturers across the Global South](#) have been identified as having the capacity to take up this challenge, if given the opportunity.<sup>14</sup> This would also build expertise beyond the COVID-19 response and help avoid pandemic-driven surges in poverty.

### **Ensure Accountability and Transparency**

The G7 and EU have pledged to share an additional over 1.5 billion doses by mid-2022, after having shared 668 million doses (see Figure 1) with low- and middle-income countries in 2021.

Unfortunately, the sharing process in 2021 was slow and ineffective. For instance, [doses near their expiration date were often dumped on poorer nations](#), who then did not have a realistic chance of distributing them.<sup>15</sup> Instead donated doses should be delivered in a predictable manner, and in close coordination with receiving countries so they can maximize their use.

However, donations were always meant to be a stop-gap measure, intended to redistribute the initial overbuying by wealthy countries. That is why it is crucial that concrete steps be taken to address the underlying systemic barriers to access.

Furthermore, pharmaceutical companies have claimed to be producing enough vaccine doses without transparently sharing information needed to achieve vaccination targets. This secrecy surrounding vaccine production, contracts, distribution, and dose-sharing has undermined the capacity of governments to plan an effective pandemic response.

### **Increase Country Readiness**

Due to already weak health systems and dose donations often arriving on short notice and near expiration, lower-income countries have struggled to get doses into arms and promote vaccine demand. This has unfairly opened them to criticism that, if they were afforded a predictable, sustainable supply like the rich world, they would not be able to use doses effectively anyway.

Poorer nations require support to implement mass vaccination campaigns and respond to COVID-19 in a way that strengthens health systems in the long-term, as well as to ensure that vaccines, tests, and treatments can reach remote communities.



## UNLOCK FINANCING AND ENSURE FAIR TAXATION NOW

For years, world leaders have failed to make the global investments necessary to end extreme poverty and improve the lives of the world's poorest. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the financing gap to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was estimated to be [\\$2.5 trillion](#).<sup>16</sup> Now, developing countries are estimated to need \$3.5 trillion, as the [COVID-19 recovery spending gap](#) in these countries has been estimated at \$1 trillion (see Figure 2).<sup>17</sup>

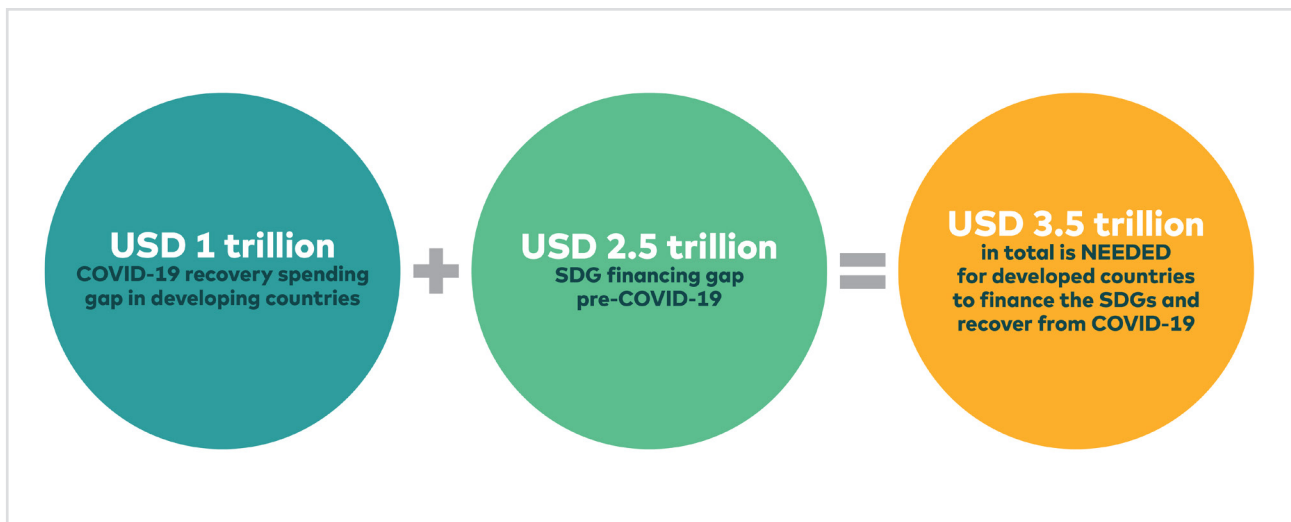
Mobilizing trillions is not a question of budget, but one of political will. Since the pandemic began, wealthier countries led by the G20 have accessed at least [\\$16 trillion in stimulus](#) to support their populations and economies.<sup>19</sup>

Poorer nations did not have such access or only at very high rates, contrary to some wealthy nations that were able to borrow even at negative rates. [Sub-Saharan African countries' stimulus packages](#) were on average less than 3% of their (much smaller) GDPs as compared to 22% for the G20.<sup>20</sup>

The pandemic and climate change prove that leveraging the financing needed for poorer countries is not an act of charity but of self-interest. Leaders can enact changes that would allow poorer nations to raise more revenues on their own and create stable streams of global financing for challenges such as a pandemic. While we do need support for immediate relief, we also need to make progress on broader, systemic change.

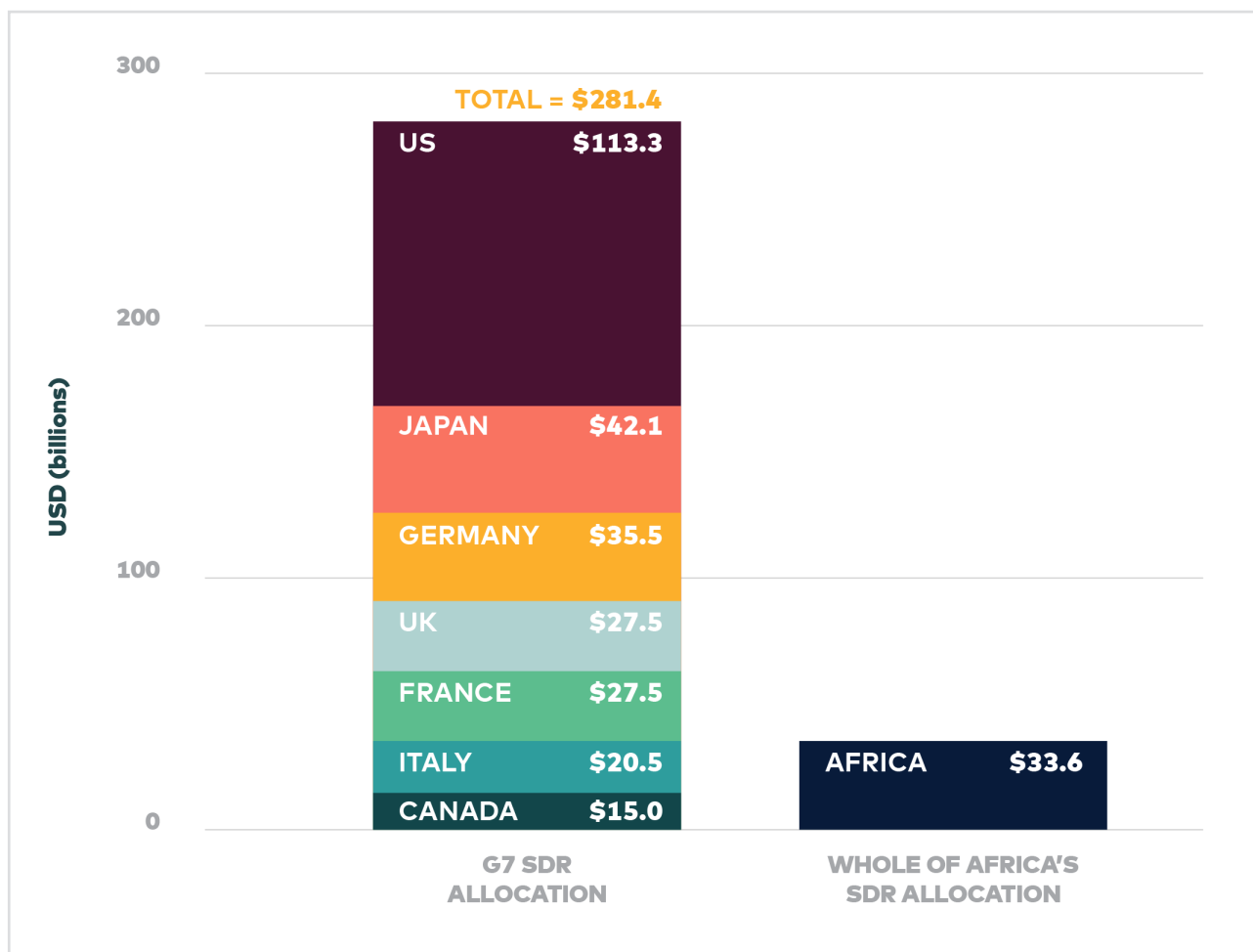
### Figure 2. Developing Country Financing Needs

*The current financing needed to meet the SDGs and COVID-19 recovery spending gaps.*<sup>18</sup>



### Figure 3. SDR Allocation Between the G7 and All of Africa

The majority of SDRs go to wealthy countries, as seen by the allocation between the G7 countries and all the countries in Africa.<sup>24</sup>



#### Reallocate \$100 Billion in Special Drawing Rights to the Poorest Countries

In a historic move, in August 2021, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued \$650 billion worth of reserve funds to support the world's recovery from COVID-19.<sup>21</sup> These special drawing rights (SDRs) can be traded between countries or with the IMF — essentially, they are emergency global stimulus funding. This additional financing source gives low-income nations more power to address immediate as well as long-term needs arising from the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the [IMF distributes SDRs](#) based on member shareholdings, with advanced economies receiving 68% of the new SDRs (\$442.8 billion), while the world's 44 poorest countries will only receive 7% (\$45.5 billion)

(see Figure 3).<sup>22</sup> Encouragingly, the G20 have committed to collectively re-allocate \$100 billion of their SDRs to countries that lack financial reserves.<sup>23</sup>

However, according to the IMF, about "60% of low-income countries are at high-risk or are already in debt distress," paying more to service their debt than at any other time in the past two decades.<sup>25</sup> While the G20 agreed on the so-called Common Debt Framework back in 2020, no country has yet been able to receive full debt restructuring for both its private and public debt.<sup>26</sup> Countries in debt distress need urgent support that does not weigh them down further. The SDRs should be that support.

## Increase ODA Now

High-quality, catalytic official development assistance (ODA) must continue to be a vital bridge that enables the poorest countries to provide basic needs, opportunities, and empowerment for their citizens while efforts for systemic change continue. But with poverty levels rising, global ODA levels as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) have [stagnated for 15 years](#).<sup>27</sup>

In 2020, [ODA totaled \\$161.2 billion, or 0.32% of GNI](#).<sup>28</sup> If all donors had met their 0.7% commitment, it would have unlocked an additional \$249 billion in ODA in a single year. Unfortunately, [only six donors met or exceeded that target](#).<sup>29</sup> Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. But since then the U.K. has cut its aid budget by £4-5 billion, to 0.5% of GNI.<sup>30</sup>

We need significant increases in ODA now, including for humanitarian assistance and support for refugees abroad. One way of doing this is to identify and redirect other sources of funding. For example, the billions spent annually on the recently ended Afghanistan military engagement should go towards supporting humanitarian relief in Afghanistan and other crisis situations. Ending fossil fuel subsidies could also free up billions for development.

Governments, and multilateral development banks like the World Bank and the IMF, should also work together to maximize this funding. There are ways to increase their capacity to lend more on highly preferential terms and crowd in private capital, while ensuring that poorer countries can access the resources needed for their development, without going into further debt distress. This could yield an [additional \\$100 billion by 2025](#) for development.<sup>31</sup>

## Enact Global Solidarity Taxation

ODA is an essential form of development funding, but it was never enough to completely end extreme poverty. Additional financial resources are needed to close the \$3.5 trillion gap to respond to COVID-19 and meet the SDGs. The pandemic has been a stark reminder of this, and shown a major limitation of ODA: it can be significantly cut from one year to another, as in the U.K. This risk is particularly high in crisis situations when it is actually needed most.

New revenue sources outside of existing ODA budgets must be found, which can be mobilized with scale and speed. This would also allow us to move beyond the South-North dichotomy towards financing mechanisms that can be established by all countries, not just donor countries. New taxes should ensure that sectors that have traditionally benefited from globalization actually contribute to tackling shared challenges caused by it.

One such proposal for a financial transaction tax (FTT) was already made [back in 2011](#)<sup>32</sup> by Bill Gates in his report to the G20. In general, financial transactions go mostly untaxed, contrary to other types of commercial transactions like buying bread. At the same time, the financing sector benefits through globalization.

Multiple FTTs already exist in the world and show that taxing the finance sector is doable and can yield billions. Generally, the proceeds go into the general budget, but in France, they are partly earmarked for development. Even with minimal tax rates, the further adoption of such a tax could mobilize billions. For example, the EU Commission estimated that a tax established by 11 countries alone could [raise €60 billion per year](#).<sup>33</sup> A group of vanguard countries should introduce an FTT to fund development and provide a continued source of funding, not subject to budget negotiations and political considerations.

“Let’s tell it like it is:  
the global financial system  
is morally bankrupt. It favors  
the rich and punishes the poor.  
One of the main functions  
of the global financial system  
is to ensure stability,  
by supporting economies  
through financial shocks.  
Yet faced with precisely such  
a shock — a global pandemic —  
it has failed the Global South.”

**António Guterres**, Secretary-General  
of the United Nations

### **Make the Global Tax System Work for All**

Multilateral rules to increase transparency on questionable practices like the use of shell companies and trusts, profit shifting, and tax evasion would uncover resources that if recovered and taxed, could help fill financing gaps for the benefit of developing countries. In Africa alone, [illicit financial flows](#) rob the continent of an estimated \$88.6 billion annually. This is equivalent to 3.7% of Africa’s GDP, and is nearly as much as its combined total annual inflows of ODA.<sup>34</sup>

We call on the G20 to ensure that the [global tax reforms](#) agreed upon by the G20 at the end of 2021 work for all countries, including the poorest, and to increase transparency around the tax behavior of multinational corporations and other entities to eventually make it virtually impossible to use tax havens and trusts to avoid tax payments.<sup>35</sup> All governments should ensure a transparent and accountable management of financial resources to make efficient use of domestic revenue.

The pandemic has set the world back years in terms of development progress, exacerbating global challenges such as hunger, unjust health systems, inequality, and economic instability. It has highlighted the urgency for leaders to proactively invest in effective global responses to transnational challenges, and break systemic barriers to ending extreme poverty now.

## **TO BREAK SYSTEMIC BARRIERS NOW, GLOBAL CITIZEN CALLS FOR:**

### **Vaccine Equity**

- At least 70% of people in every country to receive primary vaccination (typically two doses) against COVID-19 by mid-2022.
- Sustainable vaccine supply and access in low- and middle-income countries to prevent and protect against COVID-19 variants and future disease threats. This should be driven by local production (with enough capacity to produce at least 16 billion doses globally within a single year) and strengthened health systems.
- Governments to support IP sharing, including through the WTO and by compelling pharmaceutical companies to cooperate. The U.S. government in particular must drive action by defining its support for an IP waiver and by insisting that Moderna (which co-developed its vaccine technology with the U.S. National Institutes of Health) shares data and know-how.
- Governments to provide financial and technical assistance to develop mRNA technology transfer hubs and increase local and regional production capacity. Governments should also help develop a post-pandemic, sustainable business model for these initiatives, in coordination with relevant institutions such as Gavi and UNICEF.
- The G7 and EU to fulfill their existing dose-sharing pledges as early as possible in 2022, working in coordination with countries and COVAX, and avoiding sending doses close to expiration.
- Governments and pharmaceutical companies to publish vaccine production projections (actual production and potential capacity), contracts (including pricing), distribution, and dose-sharing. This is critical to ensure the world is on track to provide primary vaccination to at least 70% of the population of every country and to identify any gaps in vaccine supply.

### **Finance Equity**

- Governments and private donors to commit at least \$2.34 billion to UNICEF and \$1.15 billion to Gavi, to meet the need to fully fund the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A) including COVAX. This funding will support in-country delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, tests, treatments, and PPE, as well as community engagement to promote uptake.
- Governments to commit at least \$6.8 billion in additional financing needed for in-country delivery of COVID-19 medical tools, which will enable low- and middle-income countries to make investments in supply chain infrastructure, health workforce, and more.
- G20 and EU countries to not only meet, but exceed the \$100 billion target by reallocating at least 25% of their new SDRs, or an equivalent amount of financing, this year. All SDR reallocations must be additional to ODA budgets, and be highly concessional, or below market rate. The G20 and EU working with the IMF and development banks should put in place the needed mechanisms so that countries can quickly access the funding at fair conditions.
- Governments to meet or exceed the UN goal of committing 0.7% of GNI to ODA, including non-traditional or new governmental donors, and report their ODA transparently and regularly.
- Governments to introduce new taxes to provide new, stable sources of financing for global public goods. Several options exist — most notably an FTT — that could raise billions while providing other benefits (taxing undertaxed groups or sectors, or having an impact on behavior). Other possibilities we will explore — and which could be introduced by a group of vanguard countries with revenues earmarked for global health and climate change — include a wealth tax, carbon tax, or other energy taxes such as on aviation and maritime transport.

- G20 governments to support the poorest countries to improve their tax administration by increasing staff, revising tax treaties and tax holiday schemes, and through technical assistance such as that provided by [Tax Inspectors Without Borders](#).<sup>36</sup>
- The G20 to ensure that the global tax reforms underway serve all countries by simplifying the rules and reallocating taxing rights of multinationals' full profits (not just the residual ones) to so-called market jurisdictions, including the poorest countries. This way we can ensure that multinationals pay the taxes they should and not only to their country of residence, but also to all the countries they have clients in — the market jurisdictions that otherwise would lose out in this potentially historic reform.

#### **What can the private sector do?**

- Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech must share technology, data, and know-how for scaling up production with other manufacturers and regional production hubs in the Global South. This could, for example, reduce the time it will take the WHO's mRNA hub based in South Africa to produce an approved COVID-19 vaccine from three years to one year.<sup>37</sup>





"If we pollute the air, water, and soil that keep us alive and well, and destroy the biodiversity that allows natural systems to function, no amount of money will save us."

**David Suzuki**, environmental activist and academic, Canada

# Take Climate Action NOW

To end extreme poverty now, it is essential to halt climate change and ensure everyone is protected from its life-threatening consequences. Fortunately, transitioning to low-carbon energy systems will both reap economic benefits, and help defeat poverty — if done right.

People living in poverty and those in the Global South are disproportionately impacted by climate change and lack the resources to overcome climate change-related shocks to their lives. Climate change has already increased economic inequality between developed and developing nations by 25% since 1961,<sup>38</sup> and could push 132 million more people into extreme poverty by 2030.<sup>39</sup>

Although the poorest countries are bearing the brunt of climate change, they have historically contributed the least to the destruction of our planet. For instance, [African countries are accountable for only 4%](#) of global carbon emissions,<sup>40</sup> but the continent is suffering increasingly severe droughts, desertification, and extreme weather tied to climate change.

One of the consequences of a changing climate is global hunger (see Figure 4), which has reached record levels with [45 million on the edge of starvation](#) as of late 2021.<sup>41</sup> An additional [189 million people](#) are expected to go hungry if average global temperatures rise by 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and if temperatures climb by 4°C, a shocking [1.8 billion people could experience hunger](#).<sup>42</sup>

## *Laetania Belai Djandam — Youth Climate Activist*

For Indigenous peoples on the island of Borneo, climate change is an immediate threat to their very existence. That's why Laetania Belai Djandam, a youth climate activist with the Climate Reality Project, is advocating on behalf of communities in West Borneo to have full stewardship rights over their ancestral lands including the soil, rivers, and forests.

"We grow all of our own food, including rice," Djandam says. "Because of the changing of the weather patterns, a lot of the harvests are smaller than they once were. And there's often not enough food for the entire community."

Djandam first volunteered on a river clean-up project when she was seven. At 17, she observed the Dayak Iban people of Sungai Utik resist illegal logging and palm oil production. She became part of the team that brought international awareness to their campaign for land rights, helping them win the UN's Equator Prize and Indonesia's Kalpataru Award. In 2020, after 40 years of struggle, these rights were secured.

"How can we turn these rights into long lasting change that benefits the community?" she said.

Since then, she's collaborated on forest management plans that allow communities to protect natural resources, while generating income.

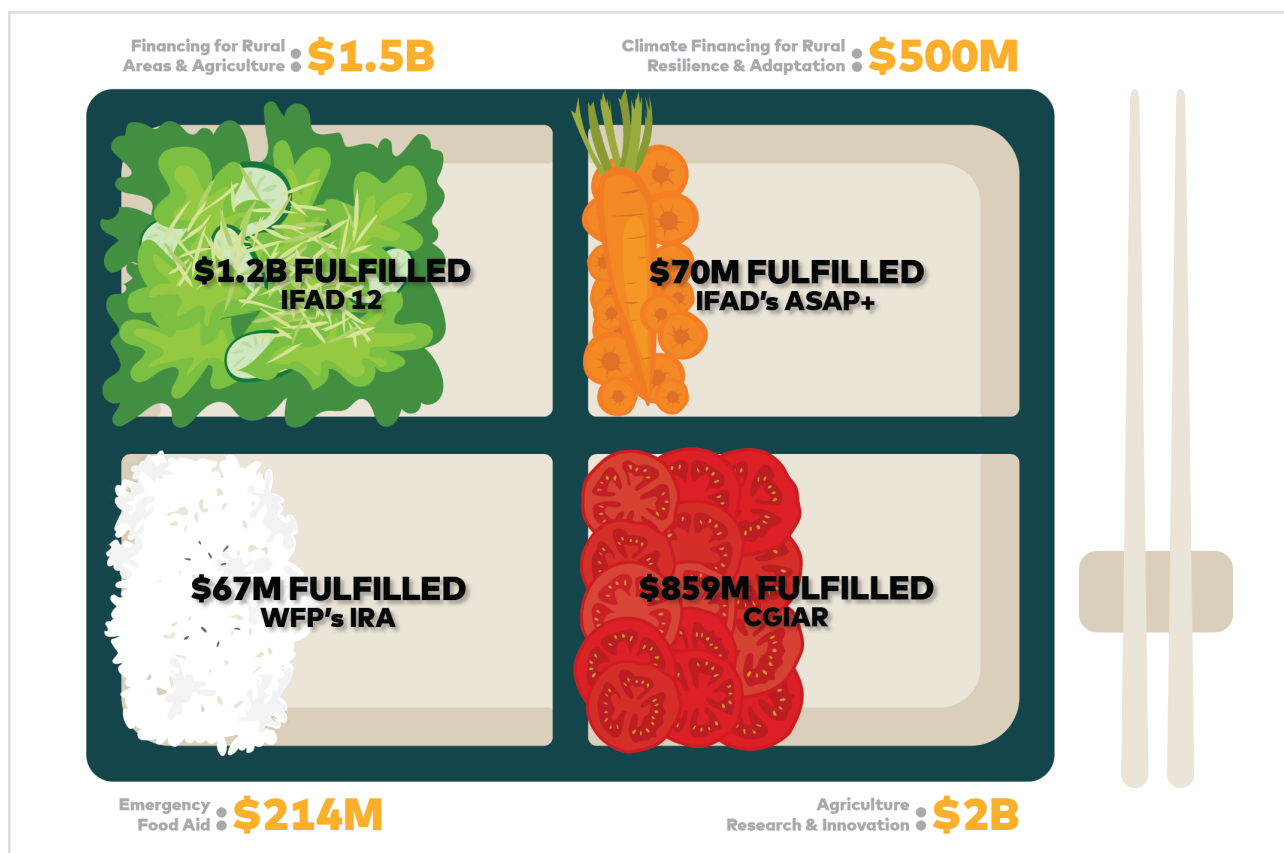
The ability of forests to store carbon dioxide makes them key to mitigating the climate crisis. Yet they're being depleted worldwide.

"In Indonesia, we have so many assets," Djandam says. "Between tropical forests and peatlands, we're one of the most diverse countries. The government needs to be prioritizing the protection, restoration, and conservation of this diversity."



## Figure 4. What is the Goal? Transforming Food Systems in 2022.

Fulfilling financing mechanisms will result in lives saved and more resilient food systems: IFAD's twelfth replenishment to double their impact for rural areas and agriculture; IFAD's ASAP+ program for rural resilience and adaptation to reach 10 million people; WFP's Immediate Response Account (IRA) for crises; and CGIAR agricultural research and innovation to reach 500 million farmers.<sup>43,44,45,46,47</sup>



Unfortunately, local solutions grounded in justice have not been sufficiently included in efforts to address the climate crisis and related problems, such as food insecurity and water scarcity. Smallholder farmers and rural communities that rely on agriculture are custodians of the environment. The world requires a [new consensus](#)<sup>48</sup> with them that is concentrated on their nutrition and livelihood, ensures adaptation to a changing climate, and reverses rising hunger trends.<sup>49,50</sup>

Developed countries must take much more ambitious action now to halt climate change but also to meet the needs of people on the frontlines of the climate crisis. Leaders must protect the planet by keeping warming to 1.5°C, allocating financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and saving nature so nature can save all of us.

Critically, those on the frontlines and from the most vulnerable communities must be consulted, and their needs placed first in all decisions affecting them.

### Halt Climate Change Beyond 1.5°C of Warming

To avoid irreversible damage to the planet and disasters such as mass population displacement and global famine, we must keep global temperature rise to no more than 1.5°C. Even with new commitments made at COP26 in 2021, we are expected to exceed 1.5°C by 2030, and [hit +2.4°C](#)<sup>51</sup> by the end of the century.

To prevent this, urgent action is required now. Governments must immediately agree to do their fair share to reduce emissions by strengthening their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and translate those into concrete national climate action plans.

The largest emitters have the biggest responsibility to act, especially the largest historic emitters of greenhouse gases. Just 23 rich countries make up 50% of global historical emissions.<sup>52</sup> These countries have almost completely exhausted the world’s carbon budget — the threshold of carbon dioxide emissions beyond which it will be impossible to contain global warming to 1.5°C.

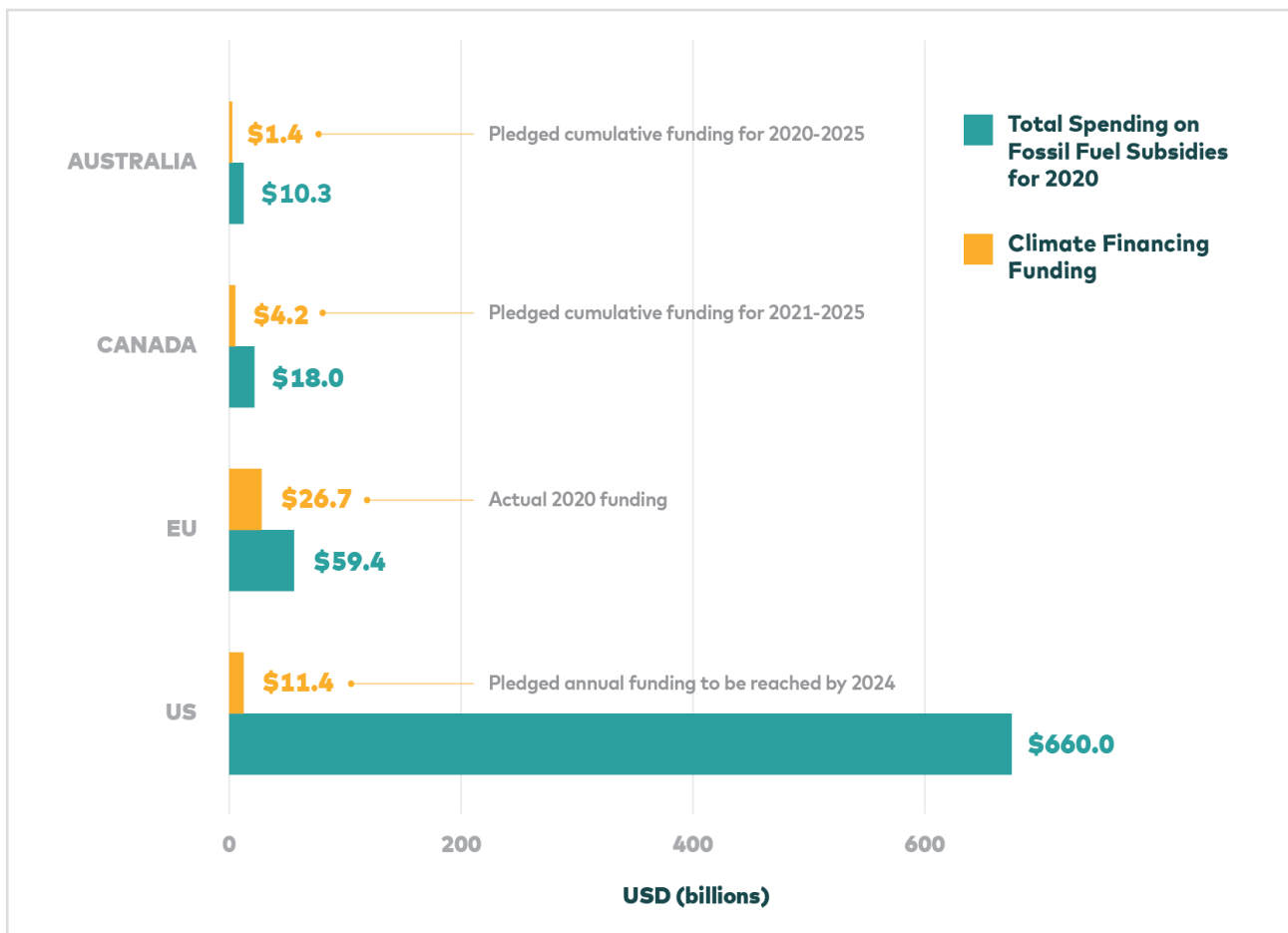
To increase government ambition on climate among all high emitters, collective G20 action is needed — starting with ending fossil fuel subsidies and stopping the construction of new coal plants. Unconscionably, several big emitters such as the U.S., Australia, Canada, and the EU spent more on fossil fuel subsidies than on international climate finance in 2020 (see Figure 5).<sup>53,54,55,56,57,58,59,60</sup> Economic subsidies for fossil fuel exploration, production,

and consumption must be reinvested in clean energy systems and green recoveries. Moving away from fossil fuels must come with plans for a just transition, in order to ensure everyday people who currently rely on the fossil fuel industry for their livelihoods are provided with resources to transition to sustainable professions and goods.

In addition, a group of vanguard countries should set an adequate price on carbon, in line with the 1.5°C target. This would force companies to include the cost of environmental damage in production decisions,<sup>69</sup> which in turn will lead to reduced emissions. Any carbon pricing mechanism must be designed to treat developing countries fairly, and revenues should be channeled towards international climate finance.

### Figure 5. Fossil Fuel Subsidies and International Climate Financing

Comparison of spending on fossil fuel subsidies (2020) versus spending on climate finance for the U.S., Australia, Canada, and European Union (institutions and member states).<sup>61,62,63,64,65,66,67,68</sup>



However, national government action is not enough. Cities, subnational governments, and corporations have the responsibility to adopt [science-based targets](#)<sup>70</sup> aligned with 1.5°C. Globally, cities account for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions<sup>71</sup> and the world's 10,000 publicly listed companies alone are responsible for [40% of emissions](#).<sup>72</sup>

### **Allocate Climate Financing Properly to Help Developing Countries**

Climate change is already ravaging the planet. People who are living in poverty can least withstand shocks caused by climate change, and need assistance through climate finance to help adapt to the changing world. However, adaptation costs in developing countries, especially the poorest ones and small island states, are 5-10 times greater than current public adaptation funding.<sup>73</sup>

The world's wealthiest nations pledged over a decade ago to mobilize \$100 billion per year to support poorer countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change.<sup>74</sup> As of the end of 2021, wealthy nations still fell \$10-15 billion short in delivering on that promise. To put this in perspective, \$15 billion is just 2% of the U.S. Department of Defense budget.<sup>75</sup>

Wealthy countries must immediately deliver on their \$100 billion per year promise — not from 2023, or even later, as currently planned.<sup>76</sup> Their contributions must match their economic power and be in addition to their current official development assistance (ODA) spending.<sup>77</sup> The additional funding should go primarily to adaptation because the effects of climate change are happening now.<sup>78</sup> However, in 2019, only 25% of climate finance supported adaptation efforts,<sup>79</sup> way below the 50% target. Another concern for the poorest countries, which are often under debt distress, is that only about 27% of climate financing came in the form of grants<sup>80</sup> as opposed to loans that could increase their debt burden.

Adaptation funding is particularly needed by rural communities and smallholder farmers, who are suffering from crop failures and livestock losses that jeopardize their food security, although they are among those who have contributed the least to climate change.

Farmers and fishermen are guardians of natural resources, and in an era of climate change, pandemic, and biodiversity loss, they can play a critical role in combating environmental degradation and climate change if they receive appropriate support.

Support for smallholder farmers and agricultural innovation through climate financing is crucial to poverty reduction, for example, through the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).<sup>81</sup> IFAD is the only global International Financial Institution of the UN, and aims to support developing countries struggling with poverty and hunger in rural areas with a direct focus on smallholder farmers. Climate financing should also be targeted for agricultural innovation, such as for [CGIAR research](#)<sup>82</sup> that was directly responsible for transforming agriculture through the Green Revolution — saving countless people from hunger.

Climate financing can also help retire coal plants, deploy renewable energy, and support a just transition, ensuring everyone has access to clean energy. A financing package recently developed in conjunction with South Africa (the Just Energy Transition Partnership<sup>83</sup>) could serve as a model for similar programs in Nigeria, Indonesia, India, Senegal, and other countries.

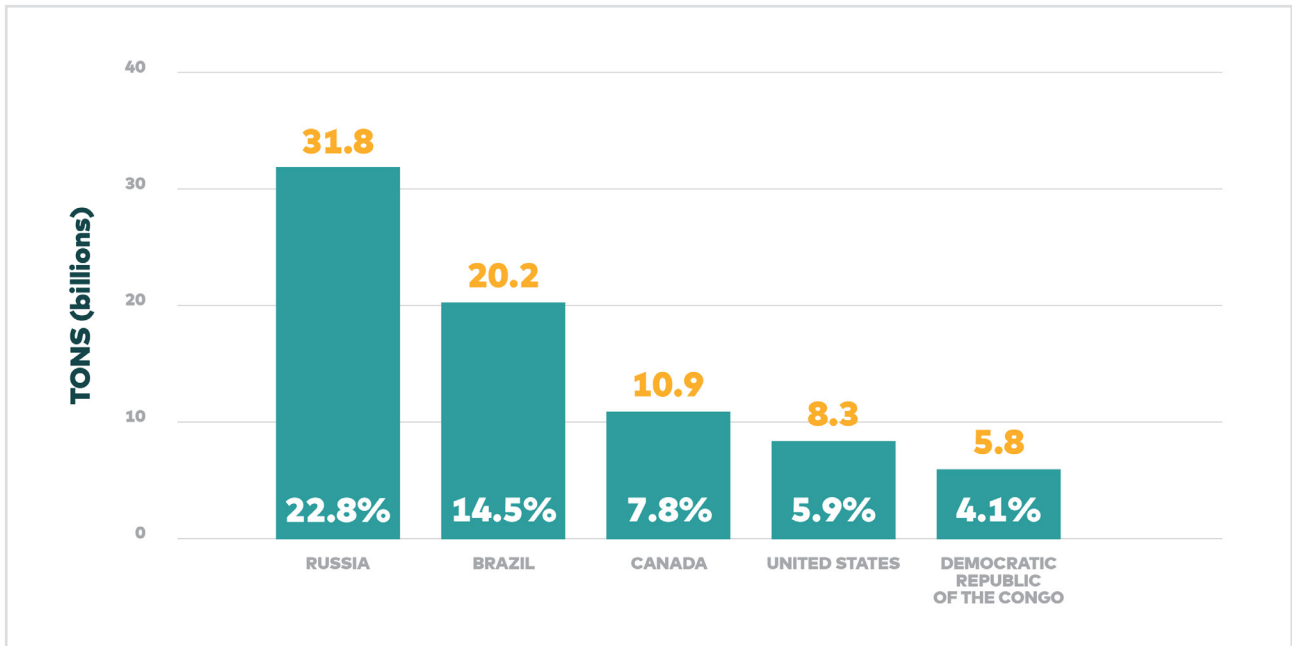
In addition to the \$100 billion per year wealthy countries have promised for mitigation and adaptation, governments should begin to provide resources to address “loss and damages,” which will go to communities for harms they have already suffered from climate change. By 2030, the economic cost of loss and damage for developing countries is estimated to be \$290-580 billion.<sup>84</sup> These climate change impacts are causing a loss of lives and irreversible ecosystem damage in addition to catastrophic economic costs. More research is needed to measure the costs of loss and damage, and then establish a long-term financing plan to help the Global South.<sup>85</sup>

### **Save Nature**

It is not sufficient to cut emissions and adapt to climate change. We also need to invest in carbon storage by nature, because marine and terrestrial ecosystems absorb 60% of global human-caused carbon emissions per year.<sup>86</sup>

**Figure 6. Location of Earth’s Irrecoverable Carbon**

Top five countries with the greatest percentage of irrecoverable carbon.<sup>90</sup>

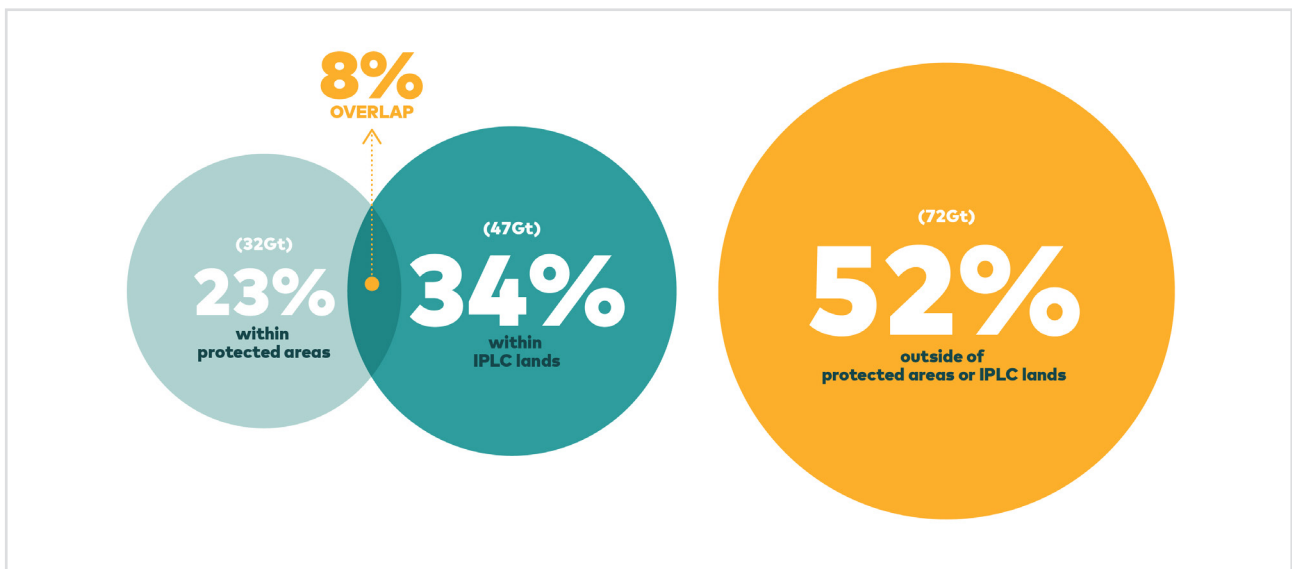


Reversing nature loss can fulfill 30% of the global action needed to address climate change.<sup>87</sup> However, less than 3% of global climate funding goes toward natural climate solutions, like preserving biodiversity.<sup>88</sup> It is especially important to protect areas that contain irrecoverable carbon, which are areas of carbon<sup>89</sup> that if released and lost due to human activity, cannot be restored in time to prevent more than 1.5°C of warming (see Figure 6).

The destruction of natural ecosystems, which leads to increased risk of zoonotic diseases (like COVID-19),<sup>91</sup> polluted water and air, and a loss of biodiversity that is crucial to halting climate change, has far reaching impacts — but most acutely affects marginalized people. Globally, about 67% of people in extreme poverty live in rural communities, and rely on nature for their livelihoods and well-being.<sup>92</sup>

**Figure 7. Current Conservation Status of Earth’s Irrecoverable Carbon**

Protection of the Earth’s irrecoverable carbon by Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC).<sup>95</sup>



“Do some leaders in this world believe that they can survive and thrive on their own? Have they not learned from the pandemic? Can there be peace and prosperity if one-third of the world literally prospers, and the other two-thirds of the world live under siege and face calamitous threats to our well-being?”

**Mia Mottley**, Prime Minister of Barbados

Indigenous peoples alone inhabit and conserve 32% of the Earth, protecting 80% of the Earth’s biodiversity through community-led conservation (see Figure 7). By supporting Indigenous communities, the world can preserve biodiversity and defend marginalized populations.<sup>93,94</sup>

While we need urgent action to protect and restore nature, this cannot be used as a “license to pollute” but must instead be a complimentary and necessary step in climate action leadership from governments, and other actors, such as businesses and sub-national governments.

In particular, sub-national governments can be the only real option in countries or regions where the national government has not taken sufficient climate action, and can offer tailored responses to more local needs. For example, in 2021 at Global Citizen Live, six Brazilian states announced plans to reduce emissions, increase the number of protected forest areas, and commit additional resources to help populations adapt to climate change<sup>26</sup> — all efforts to protect nature and people that were not happening at the national level.

“You cannot adapt to extinction.”

**Vanessa Nakate**,  
climate activist, Uganda

To end extreme poverty now, we need action now that responds to the needs of people on the frontlines of climate change and that especially comes from the wealthiest countries that are historically the biggest polluters. Countries that contributed the least to climate change must be given the resources to help stop climate change and adapt to the changing world, while simultaneously leading on how those resources are utilized. They must receive urgent support, and co-create the path forward to make the necessary transitions to protect nature so that it can in turn protect us.

At Global Citizen Live in 2021, 13 major multinational companies committed to set science-based targets and join the UN’s [Race to Zero Campaign](#).<sup>97</sup> In 2022, more companies, especially from high-emitting sectors, must join the Race to Zero and align with the 1.5°C target.

As of October 2021, [40% of the Fortune 500 companies](#) did not have any climate goals.<sup>98</sup> And of the 60% that have goals set, [only 25% contain science-based targets](#).<sup>99</sup>

Companies that have already set science-based targets should implement and publicly report on these targets, while encouraging others to follow their example.

## TO TAKE CLIMATE ACTION NOW, GLOBAL CITIZEN CALLS FOR:

### Halt Climate Change

- Key major emitting countries to increase their NDCs towards achieving the 1.5°C goal, as well as pass domestic legislation to deliver on mitigation plans. Other actors, especially subnational governments, to implement 1.5°C-aligned emission reduction targets.
- The G20 to adopt ambitious timelines to end fossil fuel subsidies and the construction and use of coal-fired power plants, and move away from fossil fuels through a just transition to green energy systems.
- The G20 to support policies that will disincentivize the use of fossil fuels and cut down emissions, such as putting an adequate price on carbon, limiting mass carbon credit purchasing, and other tax measures.

### Climate Finance

- The G7 and EU to close the financing gap this year to reach the \$100 billion per year promised through 2025, to support poorer countries in mitigating and adapting to climate change.
  - » Additional funding should come primarily from grants. Any loans must be concessional.
  - » All finance should be evenly split between adaptation and mitigation.
  - » At COP27, governments, in consultation with climate vulnerable communities, should set a new, ambitious finance goal beyond 2025.
- Prioritizing food security, nutrition, and livelihoods by directing significant climate adaptation resources to rural communities and smallholder farmers through:
  - » Mobilizing an additional \$300 million to IFAD to ensure it can double its impact by 2030 and maintain a strong focus on neediest countries at risk of debt default.
  - » Supporting IFAD's Enhanced Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+),<sup>100</sup> which is envisioned to be the largest fund dedicated to channeling climate finance to small-scale producers by mobilizing \$500 million to increase resilience of 10 million vulnerable rural people.

- » Doubling investment in CGIAR through direct allocation of climate finance to increase the adoption of innovative agricultural research to advance a sustainable, climate-resilient world free from hunger and malnutrition (target \$2 billion).
- G20 countries to make initial bilateral pledges for loss and damage, such as to the Climate Justice and Resilience Fund,<sup>101</sup> and support research on this topic to establish a long-term financing plan.

### Save Nature

- The G20 to protect 30% of land and 30% of oceans and seas by 2030, in order to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. In close consultation with Indigenous people and frontline communities, they must prioritize the protection of the most critical areas such as regions of irrecoverable carbon<sup>102</sup> and Key Biodiversity Areas<sup>103</sup> (as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, or IUCN).
- Subnational governments in countries with irrevocable carbon or Key Biodiversity Areas to protect these regions in collaboration with local and Indigenous communities.

### What can the private sector do?

- Companies, especially those in high-emitting industries (such as steel and cement, which combined contribute 15% of global annual carbon emissions<sup>104</sup>), should set science-based targets for all facets of their operations, in line with the Science-Based Target initiative's Net-Zero Standard.<sup>105</sup> They should also focus on creating a plan for reaching zero emissions without delaying reductions and relying on unproven future technology or through poor quality offsets.
- The private sector must invest their carbon credits responsibly in legitimate community-based nature climate solutions that provide permanent storage for atmospheric carbon, in addition to setting a dedicated nature protection and carbon sequestration target. This should be complementary to their plans to cut emissions in line with science-based targets.





"To rebuild our global economy and improve the lives of all people, governments must prioritize gender equality in their economic recovery strategies. In particular, we must put in place childcare policies that better support both genders and ensure women do not disappear from workplaces. Supporting women and girls will not only aid those most affected by this crisis, it will build stability and opportunity for all."

**Kristalina Georgieva**, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund; **Christine Lagarde**, President, European Central Bank; **Ursula von der Leyen**, President, European Commission; **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, Director-General, World Trade Organization; **Baroness Minouche Shafik**, Director, London School of Economics; and **Vera Songwe**, Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary, Economic Commission on Africa — **Statement on Gender Equality, 2021**

# Empower Girls NOW

The COVID-19 pandemic has not been gender blind. Across nearly every metric, [women have fared worse from the pandemic](#) — losing jobs at a higher rate, facing greater barriers to accessing assistance, and suffering an increase in vulnerability to gender-based violence.<sup>106</sup>

Perhaps no demographic is more vulnerable to the impacts of the social and economic dislocation of the last two years than adolescent girls and young women. Although poverty rates between [boys and girls in childhood are similar](#), this changes during adolescence when girls begin to feel the [impacts of poverty](#) more than boys.<sup>107</sup> This disempowerment can be passed down between generations<sup>108</sup> and creates a vicious cycle of poverty that is near impossible to escape without direct intervention.

In addition, girls and gender non-conforming youth are [particularly vulnerable](#) to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization based on their race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity, disability status, and a host of other characteristics that continue to undermine progress towards gender equality.<sup>109</sup>

To break the cycle of extreme poverty for good, we must address it with a gendered lens. Investing in girls is both morally right and an economically smart way to maximize impact.

## ***Basirat Ajayi — Virtual Educator***

At a time when more than 11 million girls might not return to school due to the COVID-19 crisis, Nigerian mathematics teacher Basirat Ajayi is taking an innovative approach to remote learning to stay connected with her students.

As the pandemic disrupted education globally, Ajayi started a WhatsApp group that soon grew into a virtual classroom, which, at its peak, reached 3,000 girls and boys around the world. Sometimes creating lesson plans and grading papers until 3 a.m., she uses her phone to film short clips explaining concepts, assign classwork, and send voice notes when students need extra help — all fueled by her belief that quality education should be accessible to all.

Ajayi understands the educational barriers girls face every day, even beyond the pandemic. Through her school's gender program, a new initiative in which female teachers are given time and space to engage, support, and counsel girls, they opened up to her about their experiences, with some dropping out of school because of child labor, unplanned pregnancy, and gender-based violence.

Despite these challenges, she remains hopeful, and is advocating for more collaboration among parents, educators, and world leaders to ensure no girls are left behind.

"Education is the most powerful weapon to fight poverty," Ajayi says. "Educating girls is very important because it is the most powerful force to transform society and break the cycles of poverty in that society."



Emerging evidence points to the strong [cost-effectiveness](#) and positive impact of interventions that target adolescents.<sup>110</sup> A meta-analysis of studies evaluating adolescents' well-being in several areas — health and nutrition, connectedness, a safe and supportive environment, learning and employability, and resilience — found that, generally, interventions in these areas generate approximately [\\$5 to \\$10 in benefits](#) for every dollar spent.<sup>111</sup> Crucially, when interventions were intersectional between these key areas, the cost-to-benefit ratio was [multiple times higher](#) and particularly beneficial for girls.<sup>112</sup>

We know that more than \$400 million is needed now to fund the key international mechanisms identified below to address girls' poverty and reach millions of young women in immediate need. But the long term challenge of sustainable financing for these development interventions is in the tens of billions. G7 leaders should commit to a package addressing immediate needs of \$400 million, while agreeing to a multiyear investment plan that will reach 50 million adolescent girls, with measurable milestones and objectives. This should include delivering on commitments to girls' education made in 2021, new investments in girls' health, including sexual and reproductive health, and new commitments to valuing the care economy.

### **Reclaiming Gains in Girls' Education**

Education is the single most pivotal solution for empowering girls. In 2021, the G7 stated: "12 years of safe and quality education for all children, and specifically girls, is one of the most cost-effective and impactful social and economic investments governments and donors can make."<sup>113</sup> Education equips girls with the knowledge and skills needed to break free from systemic oppression and the cycle of poverty.

Access to education has dramatically improved for girls. The number of girls not in school globally dropped from 57 million to 32 million — a decrease of 44% — in just 18 years between 2000 and 2018,<sup>114</sup> while female enrollment in tertiary education tripled between 1995 and 2000.<sup>115</sup> Yet, still a third of

the world's poorest girls, aged between 10 and 19, have never attended school,<sup>116</sup> and in rural areas across the globe, 61% of girls do not go to secondary school.<sup>117</sup> Conflict exacerbates the educational disparity for girls, and girls in conflict zones are twice as likely to not be in school as compared to girls in non-affected countries.<sup>118</sup> In low-income countries, just 2% of the poorest rural female students will finish upper secondary school.<sup>119</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted up to 1.6 billion students' education.<sup>120</sup> UNICEF Director of Education, Robert Jenkins, acknowledged that "disruptions in education led to [greater learning losses for girls](#) than for boys, as well as an increased risk of facing child labor, gender-based violence, early marriage, and pregnancy."<sup>121</sup>

One in four of the world's school-aged children live in crisis zones,<sup>122</sup> where the effects of the pandemic's disruption to education are even worse. However, education still receives only 2-4% of humanitarian aid.<sup>123</sup> In these situations girls are faced with multi-dimensional barriers to education, such as gender discrimination, or trauma from their forced displacement.

Despite setbacks from COVID-19, crisis, and conflict, the right tools exist to help children, and in particular girls, to receive an education. [Education Cannot Wait](#)<sup>124</sup> (ECW) is a global fund dedicated to addressing education in emergencies. They aim to reach at least 60% girls throughout their projects, and since their inception in 2016, have helped more than 2.2 million girls to continue to learn during times of crisis.<sup>125</sup>

ECW addresses the root causes that prevent girls in crisis from attending school, and ensures the integration of gender-awareness and gender-inclusion in education policies and practices.<sup>126</sup> In addition, ECW provides students, and especially girls, with access to nutritious meals, clean water, and sanitation and hygiene facilities — all to facilitate learning and remove barriers to education.<sup>127</sup>

ECW is seeking new funding for 2023-2026, which could allow at least 10 million more children and youth in at least 25 crisis-affected countries to learn.

### **Ensuring Nutrition and Food Security**

Investing in nutrition and food security is key to reducing poverty.<sup>128</sup> This is especially true for young people, because consistent and quality nutrition improves school attendance and performance, bolsters cognitive development and health outcomes, and underpins future outcomes in the world of work.<sup>129</sup> Nearly 60% of those struggling with food insecurity are women and girls.<sup>130</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the global hunger crisis. The World Food Programme estimates that to [avert famine](#) it will take \$7 billion to reach the 45 million people in need of assistance,<sup>131</sup> and international development experts fear "[girls will be hit hardest](#)."<sup>132</sup> In 2021, the [United Nations Food Systems Summit](#)<sup>133</sup> and the [Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit](#)<sup>134</sup> led to critical policy and financial pledges by governments and stakeholders to tackle global hunger and improve nutrition.<sup>135,136</sup> Leaders now must deliver these promises, working with international organizations, so that funding reaches adolescent girls and other children most in need.

The pandemic also impacted school feeding programs around the world. In early 2020 these programs were providing at least one meal a day to more than 388 million children, but they were largely halted in the wake of pandemic-related school closures.<sup>137</sup> School meal programs are crucial for children's success in school, since they are frequently the only nutritional meal children have access to.<sup>138</sup> School meals have the potential to improve learning outcomes, while also bolstering local agriculture and economies.<sup>139</sup> To ensure that every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive, the [School Meals Coalition](#)<sup>140</sup> was launched by a coalition of governments and stakeholders to strengthen school meal systems around the world.<sup>141</sup>

A fully funded and coordinated effort to address famine paired with investments in nutrition-specific interventions, as well as investments in sustainable school food programs, is critical for ending extreme poverty now.

### **Enhancing Girls' Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

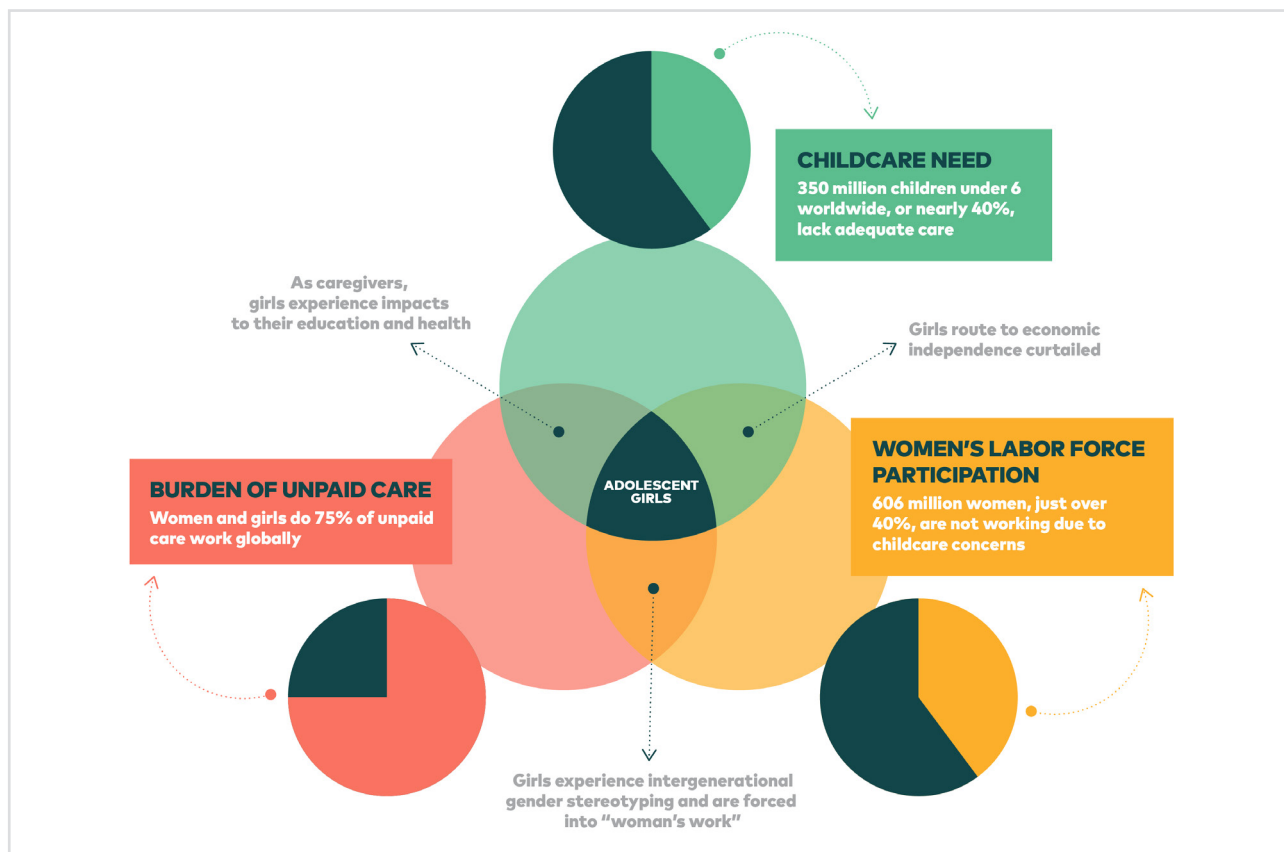
The COVID-19 pandemic created a global public health care crisis that is disproportionately affecting girls and women. Losing access to family planning services in 2020 led to 1.4 million more [unintended pregnancies](#) in 115 low- and middle-income countries.<sup>142</sup> In 2020-2021, [women](#) faced [significant barriers](#) in accessing menstrual products, contraceptives, obstetric and gynecological services, and even soap.<sup>143</sup>

Investing in access to modern contraception methods is an essential pathway to gender equality and ending poverty.<sup>144</sup> It helps girls stay in school, delay marriage, or avoid unwanted pregnancy, and increases lifetime economic earnings.<sup>145</sup> And when done right, investment in adolescent girls' health can have impressive economic dividends.<sup>146</sup>

[The UNFPA Supplies Partnership](#),<sup>147</sup> the UN's flagship sexual and reproductive health commodities program, provides a year of family planning services for only \$12 per person.<sup>148</sup> Estimates project that investing an additional \$1 for women's family planning needs in low- and middle- income countries generates an immediate savings of \$3 in health costs,<sup>149</sup> and up to \$120 in overall healthcare costs across a lifetime.<sup>150</sup>

## Figure 8. The Impact of the Global Childcare Crisis on Adolescent Girls

How intersecting factors around unpaid care work negatively impact adolescent girls.<sup>153,154,155</sup>



### Addressing the Global Childcare Crisis

The burden of childcare falls largely on women and girls, and prevents them from economic or educational activity which can contribute to their escape from poverty (see Figure 8). Before the pandemic, 606 million women worldwide cited [childcare concerns](#) as their reason for not seeking work, compared to only 41 million men.<sup>151</sup> At the same time, more than 40% of the world's children under school age did not have regular access to [quality care](#), though this is an essential factor for their future development.<sup>152</sup>

Girls often have to undertake an unfair share of unpaid domestic responsibilities, which includes childcare and household chores, rather than completing their education or having the childhood they deserve. Before the pandemic, girls aged 10-14 did on average [50% more unpaid work](#) as compared to boys.<sup>156</sup> And women and girls were overall more likely than men and boys to face [negative socioeconomic impacts](#) from the pandemic, including an increased burden of unpaid care work.<sup>157</sup>

But this crisis of care can become an opportunity. [Proper investment](#) in the care economy could result in the addition of trillions of dollars to the global economy, and the creation of more than 43 million jobs worldwide that are resistant to replacement through automation.<sup>158</sup>

New models of investment must be encouraged. The World Bank's forthcoming investments in childcare will be the first of its kind to work with low- and middle-income countries to develop new policies and programs to address the childcare crisis and empower women and girls in the care economy. Additionally, the private sector can play a unique role by putting into place policies that identify and address the unequal burden of unpaid care.

In July 2021, [the G7 renewed their commitment](#) to "placing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at the heart of our work to build back better."<sup>159</sup> 2022 is the year to accomplish this through intentional leadership and investment.

## TO EMPOWER GIRLS NOW, GLOBAL CITIZEN CALLS FOR:

- Governments to contribute to the success of the Education Cannot Wait funding goal of \$1 billion for 2023-2026 by helping secure initial pledges in 2022.
- Governments and relevant organizations to join and enact policies to support the School Meals Coalition, to improve the quality of school meals, strengthen the program globally, and reach 73 million of the most vulnerable youth.<sup>160</sup>
- Governments and other stakeholders to fulfill pledges made at the United Nations Food Systems Summit and Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit.
- Governments, the private sector, and foundations to increase funding to fully support the UNFPA Supplies Partnership for 2021-22 with \$232 million in new commitments.
- Governments to commit \$100 million in new funding to the World Bank's investments in childcare.

### What can the private sector do?

- Companies need to establish and publicize policies that support employees with care responsibilities such as subsidizing childcare costs, providing paid parental leave, and endorsing working patterns that are compatible with care responsibilities.
- Companies should conduct an internal audit throughout the company value chain to assess gaps in unpaid care and commit to engaging first and second tier suppliers on the cost effectiveness and cost benefit of investment in the care agenda.
- The private sector should ensure brands create advertisements and messaging that challenges the gender stereotypes that exacerbate the problem of unequal care work.





"Activism is  
my rent for living  
on the planet."

Alice Walker

Photo by Thomas de Luze



# Defend Advocacy NOW

In a perfect world, there would be no need for galvanizing public support around specific solutions to eliminate extreme poverty and its underlying causes, because basic needs and fundamental rights of all people would be met and respected. Unfortunately however, we live in a world in which, in many countries, it is not politically popular to address the causes of extreme poverty.<sup>161</sup>

Defeating extreme poverty is impossible without sustained pressure through effective advocacy. To create policy that serves everyone, representatives of vulnerable communities must be able to access information, engage in dialogue, express disagreement, and join together to express their views without fear of intimidation or reprisals.

An open civic space enables people to organize collectively, and allows voices to be heard that are critical in holding leaders accountable and ensuring they deliver on their promises — especially to the world's marginalized peoples. A healthy civic space is an antidote to authoritarianism, and an absolute prerequisite for inclusive democracies, good governance, and sustainable development.

From the U.S. civil rights and Stonewall movements to the Color Revolutions; from Black Lives Matter to #MeToo; from voting rights to labor rights; from ending apartheid to the Fridays for Future mobilizations; from protests against Royal Dutch Shell and corporate boycotts — throughout history, social change has been brought about by individuals speaking out and people coming together to assert their rights.

However, both physical and virtual civic space is shrinking everywhere and the right to advocate as a legitimate means of social change is being attacked — in developed and developing countries alike. Although new technologies have helped activist networks to grow, they have also given some governments excuses to pass repressive laws that impose funding restrictions, as well as control civil society movements and media freedoms — often under security and state of emergency pretexts.

**"The difference is that a vitalist mass movement, because it depends not on billionaires or technology, but on the proven resources of the human spirit, may actually be magical enough to change hearts and minds across the world."**

**Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse***

## **Defending the Right to Advocate: Protection, Promotion, and Participation**

To defend advocacy, attacks against civil society must stop. This intimidation also deters others from speaking out and protesting, which silences voices and ultimately shrinks civic freedoms and human rights. [In 2020](#), 331 human rights defenders were killed in 25 separate countries,<sup>162</sup> [while in 2021](#), 358 defenders were reported murdered in 35 countries.<sup>163</sup> These numbers are often considered to be lower than the reality, because many deaths go [unreported](#).<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, deaths are only the most extreme form of attack. Advocates also suffer from threats, physical and online attacks, intimidation, defamation, criminalization, and other forms of harassment including prohibitive restrictions on fundraising and the use of funds to participate in public debate.

Such violence or restrictions not only harms defenders and their families, but can also have a chilling effect on the activities of other civil society actors and people in general, and leads to their self-imposed censorship and disengagement from public affairs. Violence and impunity normalizes the idea that people who speak up suffer consequences. Global public awareness of these crimes and prohibitions must be increased, and public and private decision-makers called on to respect and uphold their obligations under different global agreements, in order to avert further attacks and intimidation.

In addition, the promotion of a healthy civic space occurs through building networks between civil society groups, movements, and citizens that allow for a free exchange of ideas. It also happens through strengthening legal and political frameworks that facilitate the exchange of information, as well as reinforcing the legitimacy of the right to debate, dissent, organize, and protest.

Lastly, meaningful civil society participation must be ensured in all decision-making, as well as during policy implementation. As a minimum, charities should have the same opportunity to participate in the policymaking process as highly paid corporate lobbyists. This leads to collective ownership of decisions by all stakeholders, which increases the chances of success.

In response to growing threats and shrinking of civic space, Global Citizen will directly act to promote advocacy by lifting up small-scale civil society voices, particularly from the Global South and youth-led movements, and come to their defense when their legitimacy is undermined or attacked. We will also empower our Global Citizens as individual advocacy defenders, and weave a defense of advocacy throughout all of our campaigns and partnerships.

Throughout 2022, Global Citizen will further promote and defend the right to advocate through our events and festivals. Our annual awards ceremony, Global Citizen Prize, will shine a light on youth activists who work to end extreme poverty in their own communities and foster social change across the world. Defending civic space will also feature as a key issue area during the Global Citizen Festival in September 2022, through the broadcast of stories of civil society leaders from around the globe and commitments from government and business leaders.

Ending extreme poverty now and attacking its structural causes and risk factors in a sustainable way needs more than securing the announcement and delivery of impactful policy and financial commitments. Funders must also see advocacy as a legitimate area of support, and complementary to efforts by governments and the private sector.

Ensuring the existence of a healthy civic space both globally and locally, both in-person and online, is essential for trust in institutions to be regained and for global citizens to fully participate in the decision-making that shapes their lives.

## TO DEFEND ADVOCACY NOW, GLOBAL CITIZEN WILL:

- Utilize existing editorial franchises, and develop new ones, to spotlight different local organizations and highlight the voices of activists and human rights defenders, particularly from the Global South.
- Launch a social media campaign to encourage activists and NGOs to share why they advocate for others. Global Citizen will actively monitor the hashtag, and engage and amplify the stories appearing on it.
- Create an audio discussion series on Clubhouse or Twitter Spaces for conversations with activists, meant to spotlight frontline voices and highlight best practices for everyone, everywhere to nurture a healthy civic space.
- Develop a series of digital actions on our platforms that will increase awareness of global agreements and give individual Global Citizens an opportunity to take action to protect civic space.
- Obtain specific commitments by heads of state and governments to uphold or adhere to commitments to respect and promote civil liberties, including support of the implementation of the [UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders](#)<sup>165</sup> and other international and regional frameworks.

### What can the private sector do?

- Private companies should embed the [UN Guiding Principles on Businesses and Human Rights](#)<sup>166</sup> across all company operations, commit to not engaging in [SLAPPS](#) (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation),<sup>167</sup> and create non-retaliation policies against human rights defenders.



# Conclusion

Our work is only just beginning. While the past few years have had their setbacks, history has shown us that progress is possible. From the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to the formation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, it is clear that where there is will and cooperation, humanity has the potential to advance towards a more just and equitable society. We created and mass produced a life-saving vaccine in a year — something that had never been done before. This proved that when we work together, we have the potential to deliver meaningful change and have a lasting impact on the communities that need it the most.

Throughout this year, Global Citizen will engage governments, philanthropists, the private sector, activists, and, most importantly, **you**, to work together to defeat extreme poverty NOW.

Global Citizen NOW will take place in New York City in May. This gathering of 200 world leaders, community and business leaders, artists, and champions from the non-profit space will facilitate discussions on ways to solve our biggest challenges to defend the planet and defeat poverty. Then, in September, we will convene in New York City's Central Park for the 10th anniversary of the Global Citizen Festival with the world's top artists and leaders, to create a platform for commitments to help us end extreme poverty NOW. We will also engage world leaders and grassroots activists at global events, such as the G7 in Germany, the G20 in Indonesia, and COP27 in Egypt.

Additionally, a key element of our campaigning will also involve mobilizing innovative sources of financing towards ending extreme poverty NOW. With the rich getting richer throughout the pandemic, Global Citizen will disrupt philanthropy with the launch of the Global Citizen Impact Funds. This is a pioneering model of giving that unlocks capital towards organizations achieving high-impact outcomes on the ground, and accelerates ready-to-scale results in a new, transparent way, improving the lives of millions of people worldwide.

Throughout all our work, we will defend advocacy and elevate citizens' voices, especially by sharing our platform with small-scale civil society voices from the Global South. Citizen-led advocacy must be at the core of defeating poverty — be it globally, regionally, or locally.

The time to act is NOW.

Our planet, our girls, and our future are worth investing in.

# Acknowledgements

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