



## Making the Biden-Harris Transition Plan for COVID-19 gender-responsive

The [Biden-Harris Transition Plan](#) is an important vision for change on COVID-19, economic recovery, racial equity, and climate change. It emphasizes the need for systemic change, instead of simply reconstructing and perpetuating economic, social, and health systems that have not been working for all Americans, nor for parts of the world directly and indirectly affected by American policies.

This pandemic has shed light on and exacerbated the many inequities that exist within American society. It has proven to be anything but the great equalizer – particularly for women, gender minorities, people of color, and other historically marginalized groups who have borne the brunt of COVID-19's worst impacts: e.g., increased COVID-related deaths and racialized attacks, job losses, and increased care work due to school closures.

History shows us that ruptures in models of 'business as usual' can provide an opportunity for wide-scale reform "[building back better](#)". Through our [work](#), we have found that times of crisis provide opportunities to develop new systems and institutions that take gender and inequity into account. The only path to sustainably building back better is one that addresses structural and systemic gender inequalities.

The refreshed response to COVID-19 under the new US Administration is a chance to reimagine and overhaul the status quo. The pandemic has already shown that we are able to adapt and embrace different ways of working, and that when push comes to shove, we should be able to make institutional change work for those who have historically been left behind.



***"The only path to sustainably building back better is one that addresses structural and systemic gender inequalities."***



We appreciate the Administration's pledge to listen to science and public health professionals on issues of gender, race and economic inequality – particularly given the violent rhetoric that has been used against leaders in the sector and the challenging and precarious environments that many women health care workers face at work. Noting that the health and social care workforce is predominantly women, we also believe the provision of Personal Protective Equipment and psycho-social support is essential. It is vital to build trusting relationships to protect our health systems and overcome issues such as vaccine hesitancy.

This brief is a starting point in highlighting the potential within the Biden-Harris Transition Plan for work on gender equity, using the economic recovery plan as an entry point. It is based on a recently published overview of best practices for feminist economic recovery from COVID-19. As such, the recommendations below primarily focus on the gendered impacts of the pandemic on women and redressing and mitigating the exacerbation of existing inequities through targeted support and gender-responsive policymaking. Intersectional analysis and policy action to support men and gender minorities are also integral to building back better.

### The pillars of the economic recovery plan

The [Biden-Harris Jobs and Economic Recovery Plan for Working Families](#) is constructed around four challenges which must be overcome to rebuild the nation. To ensure that these efforts are truly equitable, it is critical that they are not implemented in isolation and an intersectional gender lens is used in policy-making and interventions.



### **1. Mobilize American manufacturing and innovation to ensure that the future is made in America, and in all of America**

The US technology and manufacturing sectors have historically been male-dominated and failed to build pathways for the meaningful participation and leadership of women, particularly women of color. Multi-sectoral action should be taken to create opportunities in STEM education and training to facilitate employment all at levels of these industries. Gender-responsive support for small businesses should include minimum set-asides in public procurement spending towards businesses led by women, racialized people, and other equity-seeking groups. Targeted support to business owners from under-represented groups in the forms of emergency funds, skills, training and mentorship; and direct funding to businesses in women-majority sectors, including caregiving and social enterprises, should be a centerpiece of the policy.

### **2. Mobilize American ingenuity to build a modern infrastructure and an equitable, clean energy future**

Gender-responsive recovery measures and ‘green recovery’ measures – e.g. diversifying the economy, mitigating environmental impacts, and identifying opportunities for sustainable livelihoods – can be mutually supportive and should be considered in conjunction. Investment in care infrastructure is also green, as it supports jobs for women (in the care sector) and men (in the construction sector), and provides services communities need to thrive. Implementing stimulus programs focused on ‘green jobs’ should proactively plan for gender equity and include formal programming for women, with special emphasis on displaced workers, communities of color, and women who are in recovery from incarceration.

Similarly, investments should be made in structural support for food system workers and farmworkers in agricultural and food self-sufficiency programs, ensuring sustainable and equitable access to local food for low-income residents, many of whom are women. Further, social entrepreneurs – particularly women and women-led companies and organizations – should be stimulated as they seek to develop, fund, and implement solutions to social, cultural, and environmental issues.

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### **3. Mobilize American talent and heart to build a 21st century caregiving and education workforce**

To “make it far easier to afford childcare and to ensure aging relatives and people with disabilities have better access to home and community-based care,” the Biden-Harris Administration should prioritize universally accessible, free \*or highly subsidized childcare and long-term elder care as central to its economic recovery plan. Building a “21st century caregiving workforce” can in part be accomplished through the designation of direct public funds to existing regulated and licensed care services. Direct public funds should also be used to invest in measures to keep workers safe and expand the number of care spaces available. Importantly, many workers who provide the backbone of the care economy are informally employed, wherein they have limited or no access to social protection. As such, government assistance schemes should be expanded to include family and informal caregivers, and an expedited path to permanent resident status should be created for precarious immigrant care workers so that they can access those schemes. This has a much greater effect than simply creating employment in the care sector but facilitates women’s participation across the economy.

To oversee the execution of and provide accountability for these measures, the Biden-Harris Administration should develop a national framework for infrastructural and budgetary support for care work, including the creation of a national task force to track financial allocations across the country and coordinate intergovernmental action, monitoring, and evaluation.

### **4. Mobilize across the board to advance racial equity in America**

There can be no gender justice while there is racial injustice. Racial and gender inequities are inextricably linked to the economy. For example, Black, racialized, and immigrant women are disproportionately represented as personal support



workers, cleaners, and in other essential but low-paid occupations – many of which are in the informal economy – that do not provide paid sick leave or family leave. Further, businesses owned by underrepresented groups – including women, racialized people, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, immigrants, refugees, and LGBTQ people – are more vulnerable during times of crisis and economic downturn due to lower levels of capitalization, fewer investors, less social support, and an increase in the burden of care and domestic work.

As such, all pandemic response and recovery measures should be based on rigorous intersectional research that sheds light on how policies work for people of different social identities and experiences of oppression, based on but not limited to race, Indigenous status, age, gender identity, gender expression, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and immigration status. The collection, analysis, and publication of disaggregated data at the national and sub-national level should be used to determine whether economic recovery policies are having intended effects or if they are widening inequities and enable decision-makers to adjust programs and policies to more effectively reduce inequities.

Redressing racial inequities also necessitates including the voices of those impacted by systemic racism at all levels of decision-making. We commend the Biden-Harris Administration on its demonstrated commitment to diversity in tentative political appointments to date on the COVID-19 taskforce. We encourage it to also place racially diverse women-led organizations and women's experiences, ideas, and organizations at the center of recovery efforts, and to integrate the knowledge developed by marginalized people and communities. This can be accomplished in part through implementing innovative practices for public consultation in light of social distancing measures, including by addressing digital exclusion.



***“A human rights approach to both COVID-19 recovery and the predicted worldwide recession is necessary”***



## **International solidarity**

By its very nature, the Biden-Harris Transition plan looks inwardly and is focused on the national level. We would like it to also consider the global implications of this transition a priority. We are pleased that the Administration will immediately restore the U.S. relationship with the World Health Organization. However, it can and should go further. Poverty, insecurity, and precarity anywhere in the world should be a cause for concern for us all. A human rights approach to both COVID-19 recovery and the predicted worldwide recession is necessary. Gender-responsive development and global health assistance, as well as a coordinated pandemic preparedness and response, are crucial to building back better.

## **Acknowledgement**

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**Suggested citation:** Solomon A, Morgan R, Wenham C, Smith J, Nacif Pimenta D, Mueller V, Herten-Crabb A and Hawkins K (2020) Making the Biden-Harris Transition Plan for COVID-19 gender-responsive, Gender and COVID-19 project

## **Supporters**

