

Changing the world  
with women and girls  
**act:onaid**

# Stand up for inclusive public services

An illustrated guide and case studies



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# Acronyms

<b>CCRT</b>	Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GRPS</b>	Gender-Responsive Public Services
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IFI</b>	International Financial Institution
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>LGBTQIA+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and all other non-binary and/or non-heterosexual identities
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NHIS</b>	National Health Insurance Scheme (Ghana)
<b>PPP</b>	Public Private Partnership
<b>RDB</b>	Regional Development Bank
<b>SRGBV</b>	School Related Gender-Based Violence
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>TB</b>	Tuberculosis
<b>VAT</b>	Value Added Tax
<b>WHRDs</b>	Women's Human Rights Defenders
<b>WROs</b>	Women's Rights Organisations



# Introduction

This illustrated guide on Gender-Responsive Public Services (GRPS) sets out how women and girls' rights are impacted when public services are poor quality, privatised or cut, particularly in situations such as the current intersecting crises – inequality, climate, health, education, conflict and debt – alongside the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes impacts as a result of the policies of International Financial Institutions (IFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. By GRPS we mean services that are publicly funded, free, accessible, equitable and appropriate for women and girls in all their diversity.<sup>1</sup> Through ActionAid's work with young women in urban communities across Ghana, Kenya, South Africa and Malawi, we have developed this guide to cover five critical public services: water, transport, education, services to address gender-based violence (GBV), and health. The guide begins by giving a brief overview of GRPS and some key IFIs, and highlights how their policies impact the rights of women and girls including their access to GRPS. Using a mix of storytelling, illustrated case studies and wider evidence, this guide presents women and girls in their diversity and the challenges they face due to the lack of adequate provision of GRPS. This guide is for anyone who is interested in and committed to making public services work for women and girls, including Women's Rights Organisations (WROs),<sup>2</sup> other non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), social justice activists, movements and policy makers. It seeks to build understanding of these issues through a set of scenarios and suggestions on possible actions that can be taken to address them, in order to protect and advance the rights of women and girls, and hold the state accountable in this regard.



<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document we refer to women and girls in all their diversity and throughout their different life stages, including trans women.

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this document WROs refer to women-led organisations working to advance women and girls' rights and gender justice, including girl-led groups.

# 1. What are Gender-Responsive Public Services (GRPS)?

GRPS are essential services that are universal, accessible, publicly funded and delivered, equitable, inclusive, focused on quality, and address both practical and strategic gender needs.<sup>3</sup> These are services that support efforts in policy and action to eliminate inequalities that come from gender-based discrimination. GRPS are services that should be available to everyone, adequately funded by public sector spending by governments, safe and easy to access, culturally acceptable, non-discriminatory and adaptable to the needs of the community, especially women and adolescent girls.<sup>4</sup> The concept of GRPS centres around essential services such as education, health, transport, water and sanitation, childcare, and agricultural extension.<sup>5</sup> Access to these is essential for the realisation of human rights.

## See more at:

Framework 2018, Gender Responsive Public Services, ActionAid International  
Available at: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2018/framework-2018-gender-responsive-public-services>.

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<sup>3</sup> ActionAid (2020) *Another World is Possible: Advancing feminist economic alternatives to secure rights, justice and autonomy for women and a fair, green, gender equal world*. See:

[https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/actionaid\\_feminist\\_economic\\_alternatives\\_vol\\_1.pdf](https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/actionaid_feminist_economic_alternatives_vol_1.pdf) (Accessed 16/02/2023)

<sup>4</sup> It is important to emphasise the reality of adolescent girls living in poverty as they grow up facing disadvantages because of both their age and gender. Their rights are regularly overlooked in policy, programming, and practice – often getting lost between women’s rights and children’s rights. Adolescent girls are not passive, or inherently vulnerable. They are challenging patriarchal norms and structures, and leading change in their communities globally.

<sup>5</sup> Agricultural extension provides services to boost agricultural productivity, increasing food security, improving rural livelihoods, and promoting agriculture as an engine of economic growth for low-income communities. For more information: <https://www.ifpri.org/topic/agricultural-extension>





QUALITY HOUSING

HEALTH INSURANCE

REPRESENTATION OF  
WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING

SHARING OF  
HOUSEWORK

QUALITY  
DAY CARE CENTRE

EQUAL  
POWER

EDUCATIONAL AND  
FINANCIAL  
SERVICES



## 2. Why is it important to know about GRPS?

The adequate provision of public services by the state (and therefore, the government) is crucial for the fulfilment of women and girls' rights, including education, healthcare, hygiene, sanitation, childcare, transport and many more. GRPS enable an environment to support the creation of more equal societies that could help reduce economic and other inequalities. But in reality, in many countries, these essential services are often neglected and inadequately provided by the state, which means inequalities are reproduced, amounting to violations of human rights. Knowing what these services are and why they need to be gender-responsive helps create awareness and enable people to demand adequate state provisions and strive towards equal societies in which girls and women can realise their rights.







POOR EDUCATION  
POOR CHILDCARE  
FACILITIES

POOR  
HEALTHCARE

ECONOMIC  
INEQUALITIES

POOR PUBLIC  
TRANSPORT

INADEQUATE  
ESSENTIAL  
SERVICES

HYGIENE  
AND SANITATION



### 3. International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and GRPs: How do they interact?

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)<sup>6</sup> play a vital role in shaping public services in countries, especially in low- and middle-income countries, which are mostly based in the Global South. They hold immense power to influence how essential public services are financed and delivered. With most low- and middle-income economies relying on grants and loans from IFIs for their development plans or to recover from economic crises, this support comes with its own set of conditionalities and restrictions.

IFIs determine and shape macroeconomic policies that affect each one of us, not just on collective levels in society but also at the individual level. For example, when a low-income country takes a loan from one of the IFIs to boost their economy, the loan/debt conditionality attached to this support may come in the form of reducing public spending on schools or hospitals, reducing workers' rights, or increases in regressive forms of taxation that impact low-income households and communities disproportionately, especially women, and can thereby increase gender inequality.

A recent study, *The Public Versus Austerity*<sup>7</sup> focused on why public sector wage bill constraints, notably restrictions on the salaries of public sector workers, must end. The research looked at the impact of austerity policies on public services and found that cuts and freezes on the public sector wage bill directly undermine efficient delivery of GRPs, such as healthcare and education.

The study found that IMF advice to cut government spending has wiped nearly 10 billion USD from public sector wage budgets in 15 countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This is equivalent to cutting the jobs of over three million essential public sector workers in these countries, such as teachers, nurses and doctors - despite the growing need for such workers, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This impacts women and girls, as they are more likely to be excluded from accessing essential public services like healthcare and education. Moreover, women make up the majority of frontline public sector health and education workers<sup>8</sup> and ineffective public services also contribute to the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work<sup>9</sup> undertaken by women

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<sup>6</sup> More information about key IFIs is presented below.

<sup>7</sup> ActionAid (2021) *The Public Versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end*. See: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/public-versus-austerity-why-public-sector-wage-bill-constraints-must-end#downloads>

<sup>8</sup> ActionAid (2022) *The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity*, page 7. See: <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/The%20Care%20Contradiction%20-%20The%20IMF%20G%20ender%20and%20Austerity.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The ILO defines unpaid care work as “non-remunerated work carried out to sustain the well-being, health and maintenance of other individuals in a household or the community”. The United Nations General Assembly report by Sepulveda in 2013 used a definition of unpaid care work that includes “domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities”. See glossary for the definition of unpaid care work.

and girls.<sup>10</sup> Unpaid care work subsidises collapsed public services and is usually not valued. It also impacts women's access to decent work, education, rest, among others.

For example, Ghana was advised to cut public sector spending for three consecutive years, by an estimated 6.9% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) between 2016-2021. A testimonial from an activist in Ghana suggested that, following the IMF advised cuts, more than 41,000 nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals who had completed their training, the majority of whom were women, could not be posted to health stations between 2017-2018.<sup>11</sup>



## What is a conditionality and how does it affect public services?

Conditionalities attached to loans borrowed by a country compromise its ability to make its own economic decisions. They are justified by IFIs as a means to ensure that the borrowing country repays them, and that the funds are used effectively by supporting economic growth. The IMF or World Bank only give loans or financial assistance to countries on the condition of implementing certain economic reforms or policies, giving these institutions enormous influence. Even where there are not direct conditions, the IMF offers very coercive policy advice, effectively forcing countries to follow policies such as reducing corporate tax rates or lowering public spending in the form of public sector wage bill cuts, privatising essential services, and reforming labour laws that reduce the protection of worker rights.

For example, a study conducted by Eurodad found that significant economic measures set as a loan condition by the IMF adopted by the governments of Chad and Gabon in 2016 and 2017 to reduce public expenditure had a serious impact on health service delivery and health personnel. Reduced access to healthcare services meant low-income households were not able to access these services, an adverse impact that particularly affected young girls and women.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> ActionAid (2022) *The Care Contradiction*, page 5 (see Footnote 8).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, page 16

<sup>12</sup> Eurodad (2018) *Unhealthy conditions: IMF loan conditionality and its impact on health financing*. See: <https://www.eurodad.org/unhealthy-conditions>



## 3.1 What are IFIs?

International Financial Institutions (IFIs), such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF),<sup>13</sup> are supposed to provide advice and technical support to countries on good governance by promoting measures to balance macroeconomic policies and public sector reforms for sustained economic growth.<sup>14</sup> This involves advice on how to fund and manage key sectors such as education, health and utilities, setting the direction for how these services will be provided and accessed by citizens. The IMF is primarily funded by country member quotas established according to their size and position in the world economy. Other funding sources are credit arrangements and bilateral borrowing arrangements.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, the World Bank is a dedicated international financial organisation that provides finances in the form of interest-free loans, grants, credit, and technical and research support to ‘developing nations’ for their economic advancement and efforts to reduce poverty. The World Bank claims that its primary goals by 2030 is to “end extreme poverty in the world by bringing down the number of people living on less than \$1.90 a day to 3% of the world population and to increase overall economic growth and prosperity by increasing income growth in the bottom 40% of every country in the world.”<sup>16</sup>

The World Bank consists of five institutions commonly known as the World Bank Group. These institutions are: The International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Development Assistance (IDA), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), and the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) (See Annex A).

Besides the global IFIs, there are various Regional Development Banks (RDBs). These are multilateral institutions that provide financial and technical development assistance to low- and middle-income countries in their respective regions. These institutions allocate support through low-interest loans and grants for various development sectors like health, education, infrastructure, public administration, agriculture, private sector development, and environment and natural resource management. The major RDBs are African Development Bank (AfDB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) (See Annex B).

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<sup>13</sup> For more information on what types of financing the IMF provides see: <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2020/10/art-320868/>

<sup>14</sup> IMF at a glance: <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/IMF-at-a-Glance>. (Accessed 23/01/2023)

<sup>15</sup> For more information on the IMF see: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/linking-local-global>

<sup>16</sup> World Bank Group (2020) *Reversals of fortune*, page 21. See: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/34496/9781464816024.pdf>

## 3.2 Covid-19 and IFIs recovery plans

Covid-19 and many other intersecting crises have wreaked havoc across the world, and low- and middle-income countries have suffered the most in terms of economic impacts, the challenges of recovery and lack of access to vaccines. The IMF and the World Bank have provided financial assistance and debt service relief to its member countries facing these economic impacts. However, civil society groups from around the world have highlighted that the IFIs have failed to respond adequately to the present crisis, whilst emergency loans issued during the Covid-19 pandemic have exacerbated levels of debt and further strengthened the power of the IMF.



In response to Covid-19, the IMF has made about \$250 billion (a quarter of its \$1 trillion lending capacity) available to member countries through its different lending facilities and the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT).<sup>17</sup> The World Bank provided the largest crisis response in their history with over \$200 billion to fight the impacts of the pandemic.<sup>18</sup> However, a study by Oxfam revealed that 76 out of 91 loans given by the IMF to 81 countries since March 2020 attached conditionalities on public sector expenditures, especially deep cuts to healthcare systems, social insurance and protection schemes for healthcare workers, teachers, as well as in relation to unemployment, sick pay and more.<sup>19</sup> In the following case studies we shall explore how the work of IFIs impacts women and adolescent girls' rights with respect to various essential services.

**Disclaimer:** The following case studies have been drawn from our work across urban areas (or urban communities) in Kenya, Ghana, Malawi and South Africa, as well as experiences in other country contexts such as Cameroon. The case studies use a mix of fact and fiction to contextualise each of the themes. Our years of work on these important issues and the lived realities of our sisters and communities over these years have contributed immensely to the following descriptions of these crucial issues.

<sup>17</sup> IMF's COVID-19 Financial Assistance and Debt Service Relief Tracker: <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/COVID-Lending-Tracker> (Accessed 18/01/2023)

<sup>18</sup> World Bank (2022) *Annual report 2022: Helping countries adapt to a changing world*, page 11. See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/annual-report#anchor-annual>

<sup>19</sup> Oxfam (2020) *IMF paves way for new era of austerity post-COVID-19*. See: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/imf-paves-way-new-era-austerity-post-covid-19> (Accessed 23/01/2023)



# Case study 1: Women and water

## Facts and Figures

- According to UNICEF, 2.3 billion people live without basic sanitation services and in ‘developing countries’, only 27% of people have adequate hand washing facilities at home.<sup>20</sup>
- Women and girls spend over 200 million hours every day collecting water.<sup>21</sup>
- Global water demand is increasing by approximately 1% per annum, whilst between 4.8 and 5.7 billion people are projected to live in areas that are potentially water scarce for one month per year by 2050. This is set to increase due to climate crisis.<sup>22</sup>

## Water: Still a woman’s job

Dalia, 14, lives in rural Cameroon with her mother, father and two brothers. She has to walk for two hours every day with her mum to an open water source to fetch drinking water for the family. Sometimes she misses school as she is too tired after walking for miles carrying heavy water on her shoulder. Her mum, Aissatou, often complains of her back pain due to carrying heavy water containers and walking long distances. The nearest health centre is closed due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. On days when her mum’s pain is severe, Dalia has to go alone to fetch water. If she fails to go, then Dalia and her brothers must dig the nearby dry riverbed for hours to obtain water which is often contaminated. The whole family must then drink the contaminated water. The extra labour means that Dalia and her brothers miss out on their studies, leisure and rest time or other household tasks.

Even though they manage to get water, it isn’t clean water fit for drinking. The storage facilities are inadequate, so the family often falls sick. Last year, both her brothers had severe dysentery. Their neighbour passed away the same year due to cholera, also because of drinking contaminated water. When Dalia gets her period every month, she never has enough water to clean herself. She feels embarrassed to go out of her house with stained clothing. She mostly stays at home when she gets her period. Her school also does not have access to proper hygiene and sanitation facilities or separate toilets for girls.

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF (2018) *FAST FACTS: Nine things you didn’t know about menstruation*. See: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/fast-facts-nine-things-you-didnt-know-about-menstruation> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF (2016) *UNICEF: Collecting water is often a colossal waste of time for women and girls*. See: <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-collecting-water-often-colossal-waste-time-women-and-girls> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>22</sup> Cooper, R. (2020) *Water Security beyond Covid-19*. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, page 2. See: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/water-security-beyond-covid-19>



Dalia walks for 2 hours with her mom to get drinking water



If they fail to get water, she and her brothers have to dig for hours at a riverbed for contaminated water

The nearest health center is closed due to Covid-19



She never has enough water to clean herself when she gets her period and is forced to stay at home



Dysentery and cholera often go untreated



Problems arose because of the PPP

Bottled water is sold at exorbitant prices



The burden caused by the lack of access to water falls on adolescent girls like Dalia



Backed by the World Bank in 2015, Cameroon has a public-private partnership (PPP) for water delivery that was formed as a part of the IMF's structural adjustment packages. However, there were many glitches with this partnership, leading to problems in service delivery and with the construction of the infrastructure for the capture, production, transport and storage of water, as well as control over water quality.<sup>23</sup> In addition to these inefficiencies, privatising this essential public service has shifted the focus from providing universal access to water to maximising profits for private investors. The service has not proved greater efficiency as it has not expanded access to drinking water, particularly in less profitable rural areas that are therefore not prioritised. This highlights the big divide between urban and rural areas of Cameroon in terms of equitable access to water. In addition to this, there were massive strikes led by the workers union due to non-payment of minimum wages, cancellation of retirement benefits, insurance and other forms of social protection by the newly formed PPP for water service delivery.

The municipal government, in their last elections, promised to improve and subsidise the public water tap in Dalia's village. The construction work did start but due to costs spiralling beyond the initial budget,<sup>24</sup> and Covid-19 lockdowns, it has now stopped completely. The community has never received adequate water from the public water source. Instead, they suffered constant water shortages and irregular supply, and high costs which made it difficult for the poor households in the community to access the public tap. This means Dalia and her mother had to walk long distances every day to fetch drinking water.

With the Covid-19 pandemic hitting the world very hard, the already crippled public water delivery system has been severely impacted. With large economic losses due to lockdowns, private investors have stopped the expansion of water infrastructure in Cameroon while promoting the selling of bottled water. The prices are exorbitant and inaccessible to most poor families. Since the virus is highly communicable, handwashing and general hygiene practice demand fresh clean water. However, lack of public investment and a shift to private sector provision means budgets to expand and maintain water systems have been cut, with the burden falling most acutely on adolescent girls like Dalia.

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<sup>23</sup> This case study draws from the real-life experiences of different countries that have endured experiences of water privatisation. For example, Cameroon with the IMF-backed efforts in the late 1990s and 2000s that led to the ten-year privatisation contract for water provision, followed by recurring issues of water shortages and irregular supply. As a result, the state decided not to renew the contract, and renationalised water services in 2018. See: <https://corporateaccountability.org/resources/report-africa-must-rise-resist-water-privatization/>. Other countries experiences have also been documented in other sources such as: [http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/documents/research/alternatives\\_to\\_privatization\\_en\\_booklet\\_w\\_eb\\_april.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/documents/research/alternatives_to_privatization_en_booklet_w_eb_april.pdf) & <https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/2015/08/02/water-privatization-facts-and-figures/#:~:text=Problems%20with%20Water%20and%20Sewer%20Privatization%201%20Higher,3%20Service%20Problems%20Privatization,%20can%20worsen%20service.%20>

<sup>24</sup> In many cases privatisation increases costs by 20-30%. This, together with a lack of competition and poor negotiation skills, can leave local government with expensive contracts and high levels of financial risk. Food & Water Watch (2022) *Briefing Paper: Public-Private Partnerships: Issues and difficulties with private water service*. See: [Brief\\_Public-Private-Partnerships-Issues-and-Difficulties-with-Private-Water-Service-April-2010.pdf](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/sites/default/files/2022/04/Brief_Public-Private-Partnerships-Issues-and-Difficulties-with-Private-Water-Service-April-2010.pdf) ([foodandwaterwatch.org](https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org))

## Recommendations

The right to water is a fundamental human right. We need to demand governments to stop and reverse the privatisation of water, which fully commodifies it and deprives many of equitable, affordable and adequate access, while also ensuring that states' ability to maintain their decision-making sovereignty on how water is funded and managed is not compromised. The following recommendations are offered in this regard:

### Recommendations for the general public:

- Speak or write to your political representative about what steps they are taking to ensure access to clean drinking water, hygiene and sanitation around the world.
- Ask questions and seek answers to how water provision is being financed by your local and national governments. Demand transparency around budget allocations and how budgets and water contracts are being decided.
- Ensure that your political representative understands the importance of access to water as a human right, particularly one that many women and girls are currently being denied and which increases their already disproportionate burden of unpaid and domestic care, during elections and other periods when public opinion has more influence.
- Join, support, and amplify campaigns at the national and global level, including those targeting IFIs such as the IMF and World Bank, that call for Gender-Responsive Public Services more broadly and demand an end to austerity measures which seek to reduce public investment in public services.<sup>25</sup>
- Conserve water in your everyday use as much as possible. Share household work with everyone living in your home.

### Recommendations for activists, NGOs and youth groups:

- Become familiar with your country context in relation to water service provision, including the role of IFIs in this.<sup>26</sup>
- Find synergies with existing campaigns on gender justice, social justice and climate justice to highlight how women are disproportionately impacted by lack of access to water. For example, contact WROs or Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) in your own country who could link you with existing campaigns.
- Develop calls to action for supporters to raise awareness about gender-responsive public water services, including for example calls to demand an end to the privatisation of water services.

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<sup>25</sup> For more information, see ActionAid (2021) *The Public Versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end* (see Footnote 7)

<sup>26</sup> For example, the IMF provides country profiles with relevant information: <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries>



## Case study 2: Women and transport

### Facts and Figures

- A 2020 worldwide study of 327,403 metro and bus passengers found that women are 10% more likely than men to feel unsafe on urban public transport.<sup>27</sup>
- In India, a Safe city Railway Audit report based on interviews with over 1,000 people at seven railway stations in Mumbai, showed that 54% had experienced sexual harassment. Out of which, 88% were women.<sup>28</sup>

In many countries, women use public transport more than men. For instance, in France, two-thirds of passengers on transport networks are women.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya revealed that women use public transport more than men for household and care-related trips.<sup>30</sup> Due to the nature of socially ascribed roles for women, their travel tends to consist of many shorter trips. For example, women may have to undertake multiple trips in a day, including shopping for food, and dropping off and picking up children from school.<sup>31</sup> Women frequently need to balance unpaid care responsibilities with paid work, most often in low-income, precarious part-time jobs in the informal economy. As such, public transport that is poor quality, inaccessible, unsafe and unreliable can have a bigger impact on women's time, health and wellbeing than it does on men's.

The main area of concern for women when using public transport is safety and security, which influences their mobility patterns and preferences.<sup>32</sup> Research in cities like Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, Mumbai in India, Bogota in Colombia and Mexico City in Mexico, shows that sexual harassment on public transport is a common occurrence.<sup>33</sup> This leads many women to avoid off-peak times and to use unregulated private transportation services, many of which also pose serious risks to women's safety.<sup>34</sup>

Public transport and public spaces in general are highly gendered. Public transport systems are largely regarded as a male domain in many countries, which means employment opportunities for women are extremely limited.<sup>35</sup> Women and

<sup>27</sup> See: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/news/196474/women-10-more-likely-than-report/> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>28</sup> ITF (2018) *Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority*, OECD Publishing, Paris, page 14. See: [https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/womens-safety-security\\_0.pdf](https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/womens-safety-security_0.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, page 17

<sup>30</sup> Agudo Arroyo, Y & Sanchez de Madariaga, I. (2019) *Report on mobility of care assessment of Nairobi's public minibus transport services*, Global Labour Institute, page 38. See: <http://floneinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Mobility-of-Care-Report.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Duchene, C. (2011) *Gender and Transport, International Transport Forum Discussion Papers*, No. 2011/11; OECD Publishing, Paris. See: [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/transport/gender-and-transport\\_5kg9mq47w59w-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/transport/gender-and-transport_5kg9mq47w59w-en); ITF (2018), *Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority*, OECD Publishing, Paris (see Footnote 28)

<sup>33</sup> ITF (2018) *Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority*, OECD Publishing, Paris, page 24 (see Footnote 28); CNN (2014) *The most dangerous countries for women on public transport revealed*, see: <https://www.news.com.au/travel/destinations/the-most-dangerous-countries-for-women-on-public-transport-revealed/news-story/341653e609f81293f8bfe4eec75cd7e1> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>34</sup> ITF (2018) *Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority*, OECD Publishing, Paris (see Footnote 28); Levin, S. (2018), *Uber to allow sexual assault and harassment victims to sue company*, The Guardian, see: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/may/15/uber-sexual-assault-harassment-victims-ride-hailing-arbitration> (Accessed 16/02/2023)

<sup>35</sup> Turnbull, P. (2013), *Promoting the employment of women in the transport sector – Obstacles and policy options*, Working Paper No. 298, International Labour Organisation, Geneva. See: [http://www.ilo.int/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS\\_234880/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.int/sector/Resources/publications/WCMS_234880/lang--en/index.htm) (Accessed 16/02/2023)

LGBTQIA+ people<sup>36</sup> are often employed in the lowest paid roles. For instance, in Kenya, women mainly engage in selling tickets on the streets for matatu (mini-buses), or hawking goods to passengers.<sup>37</sup> Women also have a limited voice in decision-making around transportation service design and delivery.<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, since women in the transport sector generally occupy more precarious jobs, including as low-level office staff, they were more likely to be laid off or asked to take unpaid leave during the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>39</sup> About 52% of women working in the public transport system in Kenya lost their jobs due to the pandemic, according to Women and Transport Africa.<sup>40</sup> Their earnings have been reduced by 88%, whilst 55% of working women in the transportation system are single mothers. This has severely impacted their health and wellbeing as they are unable to provide for their families' basic necessities.<sup>41</sup> Women also reported being asked for sexual favours in exchange for jobs in this male-dominated sector.<sup>42</sup>

It is imperative that public transport policy is understood through a gender lens at national and global levels. When countries borrow money from IFIs, loan conditionalities sometimes demand massive cuts to government public sector spending, including to public transport systems.<sup>43</sup> For example, due to the removal of fuel subsidies linked to IMF loans in Ghana in 2013, prices of petrol, kerosene, diesel and LP gas rose between 15% and 50%, resulting in higher transport costs (as well as increases to the costs of cooking, heating, lighting and other essential items).<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, the IMF, along with the World Bank, has advised governments to privatise public transport infrastructure and delivery in many countries, including through PPPs. This is despite the many documented failures of PPPs.<sup>45</sup> For instance, in numerous countries, services were dramatically reduced and prices increased, eventually resulting in processes of re-nationalisation. Examples include Japan, New Zealand (railways), Argentina (airlines and railways), United Kingdom (railways), and Pakistan (railways).<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, these risks are never transferred to the private sector and often generate unexpected public expenditures when companies need to be bailed out by the state. For instance, in the UK, the London Underground (metro) PPP failure and the collapse of the construction giant Carillion while they were in the process of building two large public hospitals, required government intervention in 2007 and 2010 respectively.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This includes trans women and non-binary people. Also commonly referred to as 'gender minorities'.

<sup>37</sup> Spooner, Dave & Manga, Erick. (2019). *Nairobi Bus Rapid Transit Labour Impact Assessment Research Report*, Global Labour Institute. See: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330398422\\_Nairobi\\_Bus\\_Rapid\\_Transit\\_Labour\\_Impact\\_Assessment\\_Research\\_Report](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330398422_Nairobi_Bus_Rapid_Transit_Labour_Impact_Assessment_Research_Report)

<sup>38</sup> ITF (2018), *Women's Safety and Security: A Public Transport Priority*, OECD Publishing, Paris, page 40 (see Footnote 28)

<sup>39</sup> ITF (2022), *Impact of covid-19 on women transport workers in west and central Africa*, ITF Global, page 18. See: <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/reports-publications/impact-covid-19-women-transport-workers-in-west-and-central-africa>

<sup>40</sup> Women & Transport Africa website: <https://womenandtransportafrica.org/about-us/> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander E. Kentikelenis, Thomas H. Stubbs & Lawrence P. King (2016) *IMF conditionality and development policy space, 1985–2014*, *Review of International Political Economy*, 23:4, pages 543-582. See: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303384764\\_IMF\\_conditionality\\_and\\_development\\_policy\\_space\\_1985-2014](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/303384764_IMF_conditionality_and_development_policy_space_1985-2014)

<sup>44</sup> Cummins, M. & Ortiz, S. (2022) *End of austerity: A global report on the budget cuts and harmful social reforms in 2022-25*, page 37. See: [https://www.eurodad.org/end\\_austerity\\_a\\_global\\_report](https://www.eurodad.org/end_austerity_a_global_report)

<sup>45</sup> For instance, Kenya is currently conducting public participation hearings on the Privatisation Bill 2023.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, page 41

<sup>47</sup> Gallop, P. & Lethbridge, J. (2020) *Why public-private partnerships (PPPs) are still not delivering*, page 13. See: <https://publicservices.international/resources/publications/why-public-private-partnerships-ppps-are-still-not-delivering?id=11458&lang=en>





Public funding cuts and privatisation further aggravate existing issues of poor quality or inaccessible transportation services and infrastructure. This negatively impacts the ability of women and adolescent girls to access such services, which they rely on to support their unpaid care and paid work, whilst potentially increasing their exposure to violence through unregulated taxi services. However, for women and adolescent girls from low-income families, even using private taxis is often too costly and they may be required to walk long distances instead.

## Never too safe out there

### Content warning: Gender-based violence

Chebet, 25, lives in Kahawa, a suburb in Nairobi, Kenya. She works as an assistant for an international NGO based in the neighbourhood of Kilimani. Chebet usually takes a public bus or matatu (an informal shared mini-bus) to commute from home to work. She often faces harassment whilst travelling. From random men staring at her to catcalling, she encounters many forms of violence while using public transport in Nairobi.

On one occasion, when Chebet had worked late, she took a private taxi using one of the popular ride-hailing services to her home. The driver kept adjusting the rear-view mirror to get a glimpse of her sitting inside his car. She felt uncomfortable at his gaze and distracted herself by pretending to call someone on her phone. After some time, the cab driver turned off the location device and switched to a different route. The road he took was dark and had no streetlights. He suddenly stopped his car in a deserted street, got down from his seat and went to the back of the car, pretending to repair something. Chebet was alarmed and immediately ran away from the car towards the main road. The driver ran after her, but eventually gave up.

There have been numerous cases of violence against women travelling on private online ride-hailing services in many cities around the world.<sup>48</sup> Though some of these companies have safety measures such as ‘panic buttons’ in place, these measures remain inadequate. Following the attempted assault, every time Chebet booked a private taxi, she immediately shared her ride details with her friends or family. It has become a normal thing for her to do.

<sup>48</sup>Levin, S. (2018) “Uber to allow sexual assault and harassment victims to sue company,” The Guardian (see Footnote 34)

Chebet's family doesn't want her to work so far from her home and are concerned for her safety. They keep telling her to look for a job closer to home. She did apply for a few jobs in her local area, but none of them would pay close to what she gets in her current role.

Women are under-represented in the public transport system in Kenya, both in operations and decision-making. Studies have shown women represent just 6.7% of the matatu workforce, although this number is thought to be growing.<sup>49</sup> Women's mobility needs and patterns are rarely taken into consideration while designing public transport infrastructure and services. This is despite women often enduring sexual harassment and assault. A 2018 UN Habitat study found that 88% of commuters in Kenya had heard of or witnessed violence against women in matatus, buses or taxis.<sup>50</sup> Another study found that, whilst more than 80% of the women surveyed in the capital city have experienced harassment on public transport, only 7% had reported incidents. The respondents also shared that very little or no action had been taken to hold perpetrators to account.<sup>51</sup>

The already failed public transport system in Kenya has been placed under further stress due to conditions attached to a 2.34 billion USD loan from the IMF in March 2021, to help the country recover from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>52</sup> As part of the fiscal consolidation measures established on the loan agreement, efforts aim to restrain recurrent expenditure, in particular through a gradual reduction in the wage bill and transfers to public entities.<sup>53</sup> This IMF-induced austerity in the country is likely to hamper opportunities for the urgently needed investments into public transportation systems and road infrastructure.<sup>54</sup> This could potentially force more women like Chebet to either leave their jobs or endure fear and violence as part of their everyday travel experiences.



## Recommendations

The provision of safe and effective transportation is a basic duty of care that governments must uphold for their citizens. Transport systems need to be gender-responsive, safe and accessible to women, so women can use them to support their paid and unpaid work, including unpaid care, as well as to engage in rest and leisure, or any other activities without fear of harassment and violence. The following recommendations are offered towards this end:

<sup>49</sup> Khayesi, 2015, cited in Spooner, Dave & Manga, Erick. (2019). *Nairobi Bus Rapid Transit Labour Impact Assessment Research Report*, Global Labour Institute, page 16 (see Footnote 37)

<sup>50</sup> UN-HABITAT (2018) *Report On Gender Equity Assessment Of Nairobi's Public Minibus Transport Services*. UN-Habitat, Nairobi. See: <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/GEA%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> UN Women (2021) *Women and public transport east Africa, Expanding available data and knowledge base about women and public transport in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar es Salaam*, Nairobi Report, East and Southern Africa Regional Office.

See: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/12/women-and-public-transport-in-east-africa>

<sup>52</sup> Ngugi, B. (2020) *Kenya: IMF Slaps Tough Terms on Loan Offer*, AllAfrica, see: <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011230440.html>

(Accessed 06/12/2022); IMF (2021) *IMF Executive Board Approves US\$2.34 Billion ECF and EFF Arrangements for Kenya*, see: IMF Executive Board Approves US\$2.34 Billion ECF and EFF Arrangements for Kenya (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>53</sup> IMF (2021) *Kenya: Requests for an Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility and an Arrangement Under the Extended Credit Facility-Press Release*; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for Kenya, page 13. See: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2021/04/06/Kenya-Requests-for-an-Extended-Arrangement-Under-the-Extended-Fund-Facility-and-an-50339>

<sup>54</sup> Particularly considering that in Kenya, there is currently no state-operated road passenger public transport service. Instead, transport is mainly dominated by the informal sector.





## Recommendations for the general public:

- Demand more public investment, public provision and strengthened regulations from your government to ensure safe and accessible transport services for women and girls. Likewise, reject the privatisation of public transport systems, including through PPPs.
- Engage with your parliamentary representative on issues around safe transportation for women and girls, including budget allocations for the sector and the provision and implementation of measures that can ensure women's safety as they travel.
- Question parliamentary representatives on cuts to the sector and on the efficiency of any partnerships between the government and the private sector (PPPs) for the financing and delivery of transportation services.
- Equip yourself with knowledge on the laws around gender-based harassment and violence in your country, including how to report incidents to the authorities.
- If you are confident to do so and without placing yourself at risk, do not just be a bystander if you witness sexual or GBV happening around you. Seek adequate training to support the person that is being targeted by making it clear that what is happening is not ok by following the 5Ds of bystander intervention: distract, delegate, delay, direct and document.<sup>55</sup> Take action if there is a threat to physical safety or to life by calling the police or authorities immediately, if it is safe to do so.



## Recommendations for activists, NGOs and youth groups:

- Demand adequate budgets for safety and security in public transport and become familiar with the macroeconomic policy frameworks and budgeting processes that impact those allocations.
- Become familiar with national contexts in relations to IFIs loans and their conditionalities, as well as PPPs in the transport sector, and how these have impacted transportation in the country. Develop advocacy campaigns to constructively highlight and challenge the deepening inequalities women and girls face as a result.
- Undertake advocacy and networking with youth groups and trade unions, including lobbying authorities and power holders to demand affirmative actions on safety and security for women and adolescent girls in public transport systems.
- Popularise campaigns on safety and security, making the general public aware of relevant laws, policies or helplines for reporting harassment and abuse.
- Organise training sessions on bystander intervention approaches that can be followed when witnessing harassment and violence against women. These should adhere to the 5 Ds of bystander intervention (see above). Hold stakeholder trainings on different laws, policies and tactics for raising public awareness on bystander actions, such as 'flash-mobs'.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> For more information on bystander intervention see: <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/GBV%20AoR%202022%20Bystander%20Intervention%20Approaches.pdf>; <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/what-to-do-if-you-see-sexual-violence/>

<sup>56</sup> A flash-mob is a large public gathering at which people perform an unusual act and then disperse among the crowd.

## Case study 3: Women and education

### Facts and Figures

- As of April 2021, it was estimated that 11 million girls may never return to school due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>57</sup>
- UNESCO estimates that 69 million more teachers are needed over the next ten years to achieve the goal of universal access to primary and secondary education by 2030.<sup>58</sup>
- The IMF's proposed freezes and cuts for 15 countries (Bangladesh, Nigeria, Nepal, Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia, Liberia, Vietnam and Brazil) add up to 10 billion USD, amounting to the loss of about 583,356 teachers.<sup>59</sup>

The UN estimates that about 16 million girls will never set foot in a classroom.<sup>60</sup> Five hundred million women globally are without basic literacy skills.<sup>61</sup> These aren't just numbers – they present the grim reality of how education systems across countries are grossly gender imbalanced. Girls face numerous barriers to education. These might take the form of systematic barriers (poverty, inequality, inadequate investments in schools and the education system), or societal barriers (disability, social norms on early marriage, lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SHRH), GBV, patriarchal norms that assign a lower status to women and adolescent girls and demand they undertake the majority of unpaid care and domestic work). A lack of access to education has major negative impacts for girls and the fulfilment of their human rights. It also impacts negatively upon their families, communities and society more broadly.

Many countries have severely under-resourced education systems, especially low-income countries in the Global South. This lack of resourcing leads to grossly inadequate infrastructure, and poor-quality teacher training and service delivery. IFIs, like the IMF, have played a key role in starving education systems of much needed funds. Countries that have borrowed money from IFIs are often forced to cut public spending on essential services like healthcare and education as a condition for receiving a loan. For example, in recent years, Nepal has been under pressure from the IMF to cut and/or freeze its public wage bill. Since Nepal's public wage bill, including for teachers, accounts for less than 4% of GDP, the push to cut this further is alarming. Current estimates suggests that Nepal needs about 67,000 permanent teachers to meet government plans, while in reality only around 40,000 teachers are employed on precarious, low-pay contracts.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Aicha Bah Diallo et al (2021) *COVID-19: Bringing Girls Back to School*, World Bank Blogs. See: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/covid-19-bringing-girls-back-school> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>58</sup> UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2016) *The World needs almost 69 million new teachers to reach the 2030 Education goals*. See: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246124> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>59</sup> Action Aid (2021) *The Public Versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end* (see Footnote 7)

<sup>60</sup> United Nations (2016) *Twice as many girls as boys will never start school – UNESCO report*, UN News. See: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2016/03/523432> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>61</sup> See UNESCO Institute for Statistics: <http://uis.unesco.org/> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>62</sup> Action Aid (2021) *The Public Versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end* (see Footnote 7)

Likewise, the privatisation of education services and the increasing introduction of fees (including ‘hidden fees’, such as charging for books, stationery and uniforms) have a disproportionate impact on girls and women.<sup>63</sup> Public Services International has highlighted how public funding cuts to education together with patriarchal cultures that prioritise boys’ education prevent many girls from accessing education.<sup>64</sup> These effects hit girls from lower income households particularly hard.<sup>65</sup>

Before Covid-19, there was already a long way to go to reach gender equality in and through education. In 10 countries around the world (Benin, Cameroon, Guinea, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Senegal and Timor- Leste), girls from the poorest communities on average spend less than two years in school.<sup>66</sup> But one of the biggest disruptions in the history of education has come in the form of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Many governments across the world had to close schools and learning spaces to avoid the risk of infections and contain the virus. Over 1.5 billion pupils in more than 190 countries faced disruptions to their studies at the peak of the pandemic in April 2020. In Nepal, many temporary teachers were laid off due to school closures. Women teachers, who are typically paid 30% less than their male counterparts and are more often in precarious, temporary, lower paid roles, were particularly hard hit. For the same reason, the burden of public sector wage cuts, compelled by the IMF and other IFIs, fall more heavily on women.<sup>67</sup> Public spending on education has taken a major hit due to the pandemic. A UNESCO study of 29 countries showed that two-thirds of low- and middle-income countries have cut their education sector spending since the onset of the pandemic. The Malala Fund estimates that about 20 million more secondary-aged schoolgirls could be out of school after the Covid-19 crisis.<sup>68</sup>

Moreover, where they were able to, women took on the vast majority of home-schooling during periods of lock-down.<sup>69</sup> In many countries where online learning was promoted as an alternative to in-person schooling, many from poorer households or communities did not have access to the internet, laptops or home computers, or lacked the skills to access online technologies even where they did. The digital divide is also highly gendered. In many countries, girls – particularly in rural areas – typically have less access to the internet and digital technologies than boys.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> CSW63 (2019) *Privatisation and Women’s Human Rights Factsheet for CSW63 advocacy*. See: [https://world-psi.org/uncsw/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FactSheetCSW63\\_Privatisation.pdf#:~:text=Privatisation%20of%20Education%20Cuts%20to%20public%20education%20funding,and%20women%20and%20in%20particular%20girls%20from%20lower](https://world-psi.org/uncsw/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FactSheetCSW63_Privatisation.pdf#:~:text=Privatisation%20of%20Education%20Cuts%20to%20public%20education%20funding,and%20women%20and%20in%20particular%20girls%20from%20lower) (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> UNESCO (2021) *#HerEducationOurFuture: keeping girls in the picture during and after the COVID-19 crisis*. See: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375707>

<sup>67</sup> Action Aid (2021) *The Public Versus Austerity: Why public sector wage bill constraints must end*, page 27 (see Footnote 7)  
<sup>68</sup> Malala Fund (2020) *Girls’ Education and Covid-19: What past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impact of pandemics*. See: <https://malala.org/newsroom/malala-fund-releases-report-girls-education-covid-19> (Accessed 16/02/2023)

<sup>69</sup> United Nations (2020) *Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women*. See: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women>

<sup>70</sup> ECA (2022) *CSW67: African countries agree on common position to harness technology and innovation for empowerment of women and girls*. See: <https://uneca.org/stories/csw67-african-countries-agree-on-common-position-to-harness-technology-and-innovation-for> (Accessed 16/02/2023)



Last but not least, according to a study by UNESCO, about 250 million children experience school-related violence every year,<sup>71</sup> much of which is gendered. For instance, school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), which includes physical, psychological and sexual violence, has an overall prevalence rate of 70% in primary schools in Malawi.<sup>72</sup> However, very little attention has been paid to strengthening systems to prevent it. Added to this, IFIs policies that compel governments to lay off teachers and cut spending on schools and vital services can cause children, and girls in particular, to drop out of school or suffer such violence in silence.

## Dreams of safe spaces

**Content warning: This case study contains reference to gender-based violence**

Chifuno, 10, lives with her mum, dad and two siblings in Chikwawa district of Southern Malawi. She is enrolled in the nearest government primary school, which is walking distance from her home. Both her parents work at a nearby tobacco farm. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and an ongoing drought, the tobacco farm owner has laid off many farmers. Both her parents have lost their jobs.

Malawi is known for its tobacco exports. However, despite large-scale tobacco exports, years of debt repayments compounded by prolonged drought and a drop in the global price of tobacco meant that the country had fallen into high levels of debt by the late 1990s. In 2006, Malawi was finally approved by the IMF and the World Bank to apply for a cancellation of \$2.3 billion of its debt. A primary condition for this was to privatise the state-owned agricultural marketing board,<sup>73</sup> which had played a key role storing crops and providing subsidised fertiliser to small farmers. This resulted in many former state-supported tobacco farms being privatised, and huge cuts to farmer subsidies. This trend has continued, including at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw very little support for poor, small-scale farmers. Many farmers and farm workers, like Chifuno's parents, lost their jobs and livelihoods as a result. Added to that, the IMF advised Malawi to increase value added taxes (VAT) for essential goods and services following emergency loans taken from the IMF to help the country recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>74</sup> This has resulted in an increase of prices for basic goods for households across the country.<sup>75</sup> The heightened financial burden generated by this is disproportionately felt by women. This is because as primary providers of unpaid care work, they typically spend a higher share of their income on household consumables compared to men.

<sup>71</sup> UNESCO (2017) *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, page 14. See: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000246970/PDF/246970eng.pdf.multi>

<sup>72</sup> Samati, M. (2021) *Gender-based violence in primary schools: Malawi*, The Brookings Institution, page 5. See: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/gender-based-violence-in-primary-schools-malawi/>

<sup>73</sup> See Malawi's country profile at the Deb Justice website: <https://debtjustice.org.uk/countries/malawi> (Accessed 06/12/2022)

<sup>74</sup> Oxfam International (2021) *Adding fuel to fire: How IMF demands for austerity will drive up inequality worldwide*, Oxfam International. See: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-covid-loans-imf-austerity-110821-en.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, page 12

The loss of income and increase in prices of basic food and services generated high levels of stress and frustration in Chifuno's home. Her parents were constantly arguing. Chifuno preferred to stay at school after hours and help the cleaners, rather than go home.

The school has recently opened after months of lockdown. However, Chifuno has been reluctant to return. Her mother noticed that every morning she wakes up and tells her that she is not feeling well.

On asking her repeatedly, Chifuno shared with her mother that she was constantly bullied by a group of older classmates, usually after school hours when she stays back to help the cleaners, as she doesn't want to come back home and see her parents fighting. She feels helpless and doesn't know what to do. Her old teacher, who she liked and trusted, along with the only school counsellor, have been laid off. Now Chifuno doesn't know who to speak to. She feels her parents will not understand and will rather blame her and do nothing about the bullies. What is more, due to the staff lay-offs, her class has greatly increased in size, so Chifuno is struggling to learn and make the most of her studies.

Chifuno's situation was also influenced by IMF plans to cut Malawi's public wage bill as part of its post-Covid 'recovery' plan. The IMF has suggested 31 countries, including Malawi, adopt various approaches to reduce the public sector wage bill, including wage cuts, freezes and caps, as well as the introduction of early retirement for public sector employees, such as teachers and healthcare workers.<sup>76</sup>



## Recommendations

Education is a fundamental right that governments have a duty to universally deliver. Structural inequalities have prevented women and girls from equitably and safely accessing and staying in education. Persistent under-resourcing of public education, which is driven significantly by IFI-advised cuts, coupled with inadequate education policy to deliver on the gendered educational needs of women and girls, must be addressed, particularly in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.



### Recommendations for the general public:

- Write to your local political representative or legislative council demanding a greater allocation of public funds for public education.
- Question and challenge the privatisation of education and/or the increasing introduction of fees within the education system (including hidden fees), that will further prevent many girls from accessing education.
- Support organisations that work on the issue of women and girls and education, and support campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of education for women and young girls.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.



## **Recommendations for activists, NGOs and youth groups:**

- Demand adequate budgets for gender-responsive education systems and become familiar with the macroeconomic policy frameworks and budgeting processes that impact those allocations.
- Become familiar with your national context in relations to IFIs loans and their conditionalities or coercive policy advice, and how these may have impacted education funding in your country. Develop advocacy campaigns to constructively highlight and challenge the deepening inequalities women and girls face as a result.
- Build networks, alliances and movements on gender, girls' rights and education, including working with teachers and other education-related unions.
- Raise awareness about girls' right to education through campaigns, workshops and other forms of social action.
- Join calls for action on tax justice, debt justice, ending austerity and public sector wage bill constraints. A bold call to action on financing education was agreed at the United Nations Transforming Education Summit of Heads of State in September 2022. Use this as a reference point to demand action from your government.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> For more information see: <https://www.un.org/en/transforming-education-summit/financing-education>



# Case study 4: Women and GBV services

## Facts and Figures

- UN Women estimates that 736 million women (1 out of 3 women) have been subjected to intimate partner violence, non-partner violence or both at least once in their life.<sup>78</sup>
- Most of the reported violence is intimate partner violence. Almost one third of women between the age of 15-49 years who have been in relationship report that they have faced some form of physical/sexual violence by their partners.<sup>79</sup>
- Covid-19 has intensified GBV according to reports from service use data in different countries that have seen increased numbers of reported cases to helplines, women's refuges/shelters and the police.<sup>80</sup>

GBV against women and girls is sadly pervasive across the world. According to UN estimates, about 1 in 3 women worldwide has experienced some form of sexual or other forms of violence in their lives. GBV crime rates are widely under-reported and have very low conviction rates. There are significant gaps and loopholes in justice systems across many countries in the world, along with social stigma and victim blaming and shaming, leading to more trauma faced by the survivors. The Covid-19 pandemic has placed a strain on already exploitative and under-resourced systems and harmful norms that women and adolescent girls face every day. Lockdowns and restrictions have led to a rise in cases of GBV and domestic violence as reported by many countries. It has further reduced access to essential police and GBV specialised support services for women due to the strain on the public health and justice systems.

### Shadow pandemic and more

#### Content warning: Domestic violence

Amara, 21, married Esemé, 27, in 2019 after dating for six months. They moved into Esemé's house in Maseru, Lesotho, after their marriage. Amara had to resign from her job in Maputso to start her new family. The first few months were spent trying to adjust to the city and new space. Slowly Amara started feeling lonely as Esemé had to work late night shifts to earn extra wages to sustain the family. Though Amara wanted to start work again, her in-laws did not approve. She was expected to take care of Esemé's aging parents and do household chores to support the family.

<sup>78</sup> UN Women Facts and figures: Ending violence against women. See: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>79</sup> WHO (2021) *Violence against women*. See: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/violence-against-women> (Accessed 09/02/2023)

<sup>80</sup> UN Women Facts and figures: Ending violence against women (see Footnote 78)

Both Eseme and Amara became frustrated and unhappy with their married life. They both had their own sets of social pressure. While Eseme had to work harder and felt a lot of pressure to bring more money home, Amara had to do a lot of unpaid care and domestic work, sacrificing her career and happiness. On top of that, her in-laws often told her to start planning for a baby, suggesting that having a baby would bring the couple together.



Amara felt lonely having to deal with all the social and gender norms on her own. They started having minor fights, but later these became more verbally and physically abusive. Eseme verbally abused her often, blaming her for things that went wrong in his life.

With Covid-19 spreading rapidly over southern Africa, most workplaces were shut down and the country went into a full lockdown. The economy took a massive hit and workers were dismissed by employers. The Lesotho Government took loans from the IMF to recover their economy on the condition that there would be wage cuts across public sector services, and VAT for goods and services would be increased.<sup>81</sup>

This came as a massive shock to the already strained essential services sector in Lesotho. There were massive layoffs of employees in the public sector. Eseme too was laid off from his job. Having to live in a small space with Amara and his parents, there was a constant feeling of frustration and angst in the house. Their fights became more regular. One evening, Eseme came home drunk, beat up Amara and dragged her out of the house. Their neighbours saw all of this and tried to intervene by calling the police. The police arrived late and instead of helping Amara, they tried to reconcile Eseme and Amara.

Amara was informed that due to the Covid-19 lockdown, the social services department was understaffed and could not take up a new case for a few weeks. They asked Amara if she wanted to move in with relatives until social services could rehouse her in one of the institutional centres. With Covid-19 being highly communicable, Amara did not want to pose a risk to anyone and agreed to stay in the house. The police warned Eseme of severe consequences if he caused harm to Amara.

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<sup>81</sup> Oxfam (2020) *IMF paves way for new era of austerity post-COVID-19*. (see Footnote 19)

It is worth mentioning here that most shelters and institutional homes in Lesotho are funded by big foreign organisations or are in a PPP model. Often, they close down for a significant length of time when their funding runs out. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Sports Recreation runs these shelters in a PPP model with support from organisations like the United States Agency for International Development.<sup>82</sup> The social service system is under-resourced or dependent on continuous funding from private partners, which impacts its service and delivery.



After many months, Amara is still waiting for social services to rehouse her. Every time she reaches out, they tell her that they are understaffed and overworked due to Covid-19. One of the major cuts under the IMF loan conditionality was to public spending across essential services sectors. The social welfare department took a significant hit because of this.<sup>83</sup> There are many more women like Amara who are living through the pandemic with their abusive partners or families.

## Recommendations

GBV is widespread and has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic all over the world. Structural inequalities reinforced by the lack of adequate state provisions hamper women and girls' access to effective GBV public services. The adequate resourcing and implementation of public services for GBV prevention and response is fundamental for the realisation of women and girls' rights.

### Recommendations for the general public:

- Demand accountability from service providers and your governments to ensure women's safety through the implementation and adequate resourcing of robust policies.
- Write to your local political representative or legislative council demanding more allocation of public funds for GBV prevention and response.
- Raise your own and community awareness on how social and gender norms restrict women and adolescent girls in their everyday lives.
- Support campaigns, organisations and movements that raise awareness about issues around GBV against women and girls.

<sup>82</sup> The Reporter (2021) *Abused women's shelter broke*. See: <http://www.thereporter.co.ls/2021/06/07/abused-womens-shelter-broke/> (Accessed 23/01/2023)

<sup>83</sup> Oxfam (2020) *IMF paves way for new era of austerity post-COVID-19* (see Footnote 19)



- If you are confident to do so and without placing yourself at risk, take action when you see GBV happening around you. Bear in mind the 5Ds of bystander intervention: distract, delegate, delay, direct and document.<sup>84</sup> Find training opportunities to support you.



### **Recommendations for activists, NGOs and youth groups:**

- Demand adequate gender budget allocations across all sectors, and become familiar with the national context in relation to IFIs loans and their conditionalities, and how these have impacted adequate funding for services in the country.
- Develop advocacy campaigns to constructively highlight and challenge the deepening inequalities women and girls face.
- Integrate calls to action from the public in general on what steps they can take themselves to prevent, reduce and curb incidents of GBV.
- Engage in networking and alliance building for movements aimed at ending GBV.
- Popularise campaigns on laws and policies, making the general public aware of available laws, rules, policies or helplines relating to GBV.
- Organise training sessions on support actions that bystanders can take when witnessing violence against women, as well as stakeholder trainings on different laws, policies, and flash mobs to raise awareness of bystander actions.

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<sup>84</sup> For more information on Bystander intervention see: <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-12/GBV%20AoR%202022%20Bystander%20Intervention%20Approaches.pdf>; <https://rapecrisis.org.uk/get-informed/what-to-do-if-you-see-sexual-violence/>

# Gender Based Violence Against Women

The Shadow Pandemic

UNEMPLOYMENT & LOCKDOWN RESTRICTIONS INCREASED GBV



RESTRICTIVE & REPRESSIVE GENDER NORMS



THE GLOBAL SOUTH HAS RELIED ON LOANS FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS FOR ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND RECOVERY

DECONSTRUCT OPPRESSIVE GENDER NORMS

The UN estimates, about 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced some form of sexual or other forms of violence in their lives

Properly Funded Gender Responsive Public Services Are Essential To Protect Women & Girls



THE IMF CONDITIONAL LOAN FOR GLOBAL SOUTH

- ↑ TAX
- ↓ PUBLIC SPENDING

COVID-19 RELIEF

UNDERFUNDED GENDER RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICES



UNDERSTAFFED SOCIAL SERVICES LEAVE WOMEN IN ABUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS



DEMAND ADEQUATE BUDGET ALLOCATION

BUDGET CUTS PUT WOMEN & GIRLS IN DANGER

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS THAT RAISE AWARENESS FOR GBV SERVICES



# Case study 5: Women and public health services

## Facts and Figures

- A rapid expansion of public, affordable health care infrastructure is particularly crucial in sub-Saharan Africa, where communicable diseases are the largest cause of death, infant mortality rates are above 5%, and lengthy journeys to health care facilities undermine the accessibility to basic health care for millions.<sup>85</sup>
- Currently, in sub-Saharan Africa, at least one-sixth of the population lives more than two hours away from a public hospital, and one in eight people is no less than one hour away from the nearest health centre.<sup>86</sup>
- Most countries in South-East Asia continue to face challenges to provide uninterrupted health services due to the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>87</sup> The region also continues to face the burden of major communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis and malaria.<sup>88</sup> Despite this, current health spending is small in comparison to GDP, and is the lowest of all WHO regions (4.4% lower than the 2016 global average of 6.6%).<sup>89</sup>

Gender and public health are closely linked. However, even today women and young girls do not enjoy the same access to healthcare services as men, even though access to universal healthcare is a basic human right. Research studies show us how gender inequalities affect women and adolescent girl's access to healthcare services and increase chances of spreading diseases due to women's specific health needs.<sup>90</sup> For instance, about 10,000 women and 200,000 infants die of malaria annually in Africa when mothers become infected during pregnancy. Of those adults 15 and over living with HIV globally, around 54% are women.<sup>91</sup> Globally, women make up 70% of frontline healthcare workers, and represent 90% of all nurses. Moreover, these jobs typically concentrate in lower-level, administrative positions, and temporary part-time positions that tend to be more precarious, irregular and lower paid.<sup>92</sup> This meant that women were on the frontline of dealing with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic at great personal risk to themselves, their families and communities. Studies also co-relate how traditional gender norms that position women as givers of unpaid care and men as breadwinners impact public health in general.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>85</sup>Falchetta, G. (2020) *Planning universal accessibility to public health care in sub-Saharan Africa*, PNAS, Vol. 117, No. 50. See: <http://www.pnas.org/content/117/50/31760>

<sup>86</sup> Ibid

<sup>87</sup> WHO (2021) *Monitoring progress on universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in the South-East Asia Region*, page 13. See: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789290228936>

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, page 17

<sup>89</sup> Bhatnagar, A. et al (2021) *Financing health care in the WHO South-East Asia Region: time for a reset*, Volume 10, Supplement 1, February 2021, S1-S99, page 64. See: <https://www.who-seajph.org/documents/seajph2021Feb-eng.pdf>

<sup>90</sup> Binder, G. (2020) *Gender inequalities in health and wellbeing across the first two decades of life: an analysis of 40 low-income and middle-income countries in the Asia-Pacific region*, The Lancet Global Health, Volume 8, Issue 12, E1473-E1488. See: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30354-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30354-5/fulltext)

<sup>91</sup>Data from AIDSinfo website: <https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/> (Accessed 23/01/2023)

<sup>92</sup> ActionAid (2022) *The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity*, page 20 (see Footnote 8)

<sup>93</sup> Langer A, Meleis A, Knaul FM, et al (2015) *Women and health: the key for sustainable development*, Lancet: 2015, 386:1165–210, see: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60497-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(15)60497-4/fulltext); Furuta M, Salway S. (2006) *Women's position within the household as a determinant of maternal health care use in Nepal*, see: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4147608>; Barros AJ, Ronsmans C, Axelson H, et al (2012) *Equity in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions in countdown to 2015: a retrospective review of survey data from 54 countries*. Lancet, 379:1225–33, see: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0140673612601135>



Covid-19 has brought to light the deep-rooted structural inequalities in access to healthcare across countries. From diverting resources to meet immediate demands on fragile public health systems, to women from marginalised and excluded groups facing racism and gendered cultural norms, including barriers and stigma, as well as specific legal barriers, women's access to healthcare has worsened. In addition, many low- and middle-income countries have weaker healthcare systems with inadequate numbers of doctors and healthcare professionals, due to IMF loan conditionalities requiring cuts to public spending.<sup>94</sup>

## **(Un)-Universal healthcare systems**

Afi is married to Kojo and they live in Salaga, East Gonja in Northern Ghana, a region that is poorer than its southern neighbours. They both work in a nearby farm and have three goats that were gifted by Afi's family when they got married. Kojo is in poor health, as he has been suffering from tuberculosis for the past few months. Afi has to take care of him, as well as working in the field. This has also affected her health. She complains of backache as she has a heavy workload in the field and carries out all the care work without having adequate time to rest. The nearest health centre only has a weekly visiting doctor, where she can take Kojo and get medicines.

Even though Ghana has a National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), which is supposed to provide universal equitable health and financial coverage to all Ghanaians, due to IMF loan conditionalities requiring cuts to public sector spending on health, there have been massive cuts in healthcare staff.

The Ghanaian Government health sector spending has decreased from 10% of the total budget to 7% in 2017.<sup>95</sup> This has meant fewer doctors and healthcare staff are available in public health centres that serve poor populations.

Kojo's nearest public health centre is closed due to the ongoing pandemic. Afi has to go to the closest private clinic in Kuto. She had to sell their goats at the Friday market to take Kojo to a private doctor. They managed to see a doctor who asked them to do some tests and gave some medicines for immediate relief. The test reports came in and it was found that Kojo's TB had worsened and he needed immediate hospitalisation. All government hospitals were over capacity with Covid-19 patients and they couldn't find a bed for Kojo. With financial help from Afi's and Kojo's parents, Kojo was admitted to a private hospital in Accra (323 miles from Salaga).

Afi struggled hard to navigate all the processes in the hospital. The fees were exorbitant and the private clinic suggested a number of expensive tests that Afi had limited knowledge about. They exhausted all their savings and had to borrow money from others to foot the hospital bill.

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<sup>94</sup> Kentikelenis, A. et al (2017) *The impact of IMF conditionality on government health expenditure: A cross-national analysis of 16 West African nations*, Science Direct, Volume 174, Pages 220-227. See : <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953616306876>

<sup>95</sup> Antwi-Atsu, G. (2019) *Universal health coverage in Ghana: how can we really make progress?*, Sightsavers. See : <https://www.sightsavers.org/blogs/2019/08/universal-health-coverage-ghana-how-can-we-really-make-progress/> (Accessed 16/02/2023)



Give us Equality for Universal Healthcare!!!

We need more adequate doctors and stronger Healthcare systems!

About 10,000 women and 200,000 infants (infected by their mothers during pregnancy) die annually of malaria

Tuberculosis is another leading cause of death amongst women

54% of women live with HIV globally

Mom, I don't feel so good.



Once home, Afi still had to take care of Kojo. She lost her wages from the farm because of the pandemic. She became severely ill with Covid-19 symptoms – she was weak and needed care, but she still had to undertake the care work in the house. She went to the open Covid-19 clinic and got some free medicines. Kojo too came down with Covid-19, so the couple needed support but were left without. Afi, with a fever and cough, still has to cook food and do all the care work. Kojo tries to help her every now and then, but with the heavy medicines and surgery, he can't move around a lot.



## Recommendations

The adequate state resourcing and provision of public health services is paramount for the realisation of women and girls' rights. Likewise, women represent the large majority of frontline health workers and have severely suffered the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic all over the world. Structural inequalities reinforce the lack of access and poor quality of health services for women and girls, as well as women's income and economic security as frontline health workers.



### Recommendations for the general public:

- Demand accountability from your governments to ensure that access to quality healthcare is recognised as a fundamental right.
- Write to your national and/or local government, parliamentary representative or legislative council demanding greater allocation of budgets for public health services. This can be done as an individual or through community organisations and neighbourhood associations.
- Support organisations that work on and with public health issues, health workers and their unions.
- Support campaigns that raise awareness of the importance of basic sanitation and hygiene, and public health services delivery.
- Support health workers and their unions in their fight for decent work conditions and pay, and any other issues that may arise in the sector.



### Recommendations for activists, NGOs and youth groups:

- Demand adequate budgets for gender-responsive health systems and become familiar with the macroeconomic policy frameworks and budgeting processes that impact those allocations.
- Become familiar with national contexts in relations to IFIs loans and their conditionalities, and how these have impacted adequate public health funding in the country. Develop advocacy campaigns to constructively highlight and challenge the deepening inequalities women and girls face as a result.
- Show how public health services impact upon gender equality in all policy advocacy.
- Raise awareness in communities around gender-responsive public health services.



# Overarching recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders<sup>96</sup>



<sup>96</sup> When referring to other stakeholders, this guide refers to anyone who is interested in and committed to making public services work for women and girls.



- Increase the funds available to finance quality, GRPS through progressive taxation and clamping down on illicit financial flows, including tax avoidance and evasion by wealthy individuals and multinational corporations.
- Allocate adequate public funds:
  - To provide publicly delivered clean, accessible and appropriate drinking water and sanitation services to all.
  - To allow for the implementation of safe, equitable and efficient public transportation services, including strengthened regulations and human and technical resources to implement initiatives to curb incidences of GBV on public transport and to hold perpetrators to account.
  - To dramatically increase investments in teacher recruitment, training and retention, as well as good quality, free, accessible and appropriate early childhood care and education services.
  - To invest in policies and initiatives to advance the rights of women and girls, and especially for GBV against prevention and response.
  - To significantly scale-up investments in good quality, universally accessible gender-responsive public health services. This includes investments in decent work conditions and pay for frontline health workers.
- Protect national policy-making sovereignty and challenge and reject IFIs policy advice and conditionalities that lead to cuts in budget allocations and reductions to the public sector wage-bill that undermine the equitable provision of quality, GPRS, which are so vital to protecting and advancing the rights of women and girls. These include water and sanitation, safe transportation, education and early childcare, GBV prevention and response, and health services.<sup>97</sup>
- Keep public services public by resisting pressure to privatise. Interrogate IFIs and other propositions for private sector engagement and PPPs with respect to the supply and delivery of water and sanitation services, transportation services, education and healthcare.
- Consult with WROs (including girl-led groups) on all aspects of economic policymaking, and in particular on macroeconomic policy decisions that impact the provision of public services.
- Establish robust, transparent and participatory systems of accountability, monitoring and evaluation of public services accessible to all.

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<sup>97</sup> For further information, the following document contains more than 800 examples of reclaiming public services in 45 countries: <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/reclaiming-public-services>

## **Specific recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders with respect to women and water:**

- Recognise the vastly unequal share of unpaid care work done by women and help to redistribute this through the equitable and accessible provision of gender-responsive water and sanitation infrastructure and services.
- Recognise the impacts of wider macroeconomic policy-making on access to water, such as the detrimental role of extractive industries on community water access, and enact policies to protect and advance the right to clean, potable water.

## **Specific recommendations for policymakers and other stakeholders with respect to women and public transport:**

- Redesign public transportation systems ensuring a framework that responds to the needs of women and girls, particularly in terms of safety and security. Where transportation systems are still dominated by private actors, it is important to enhance regulation.
- Better safety and security infrastructure should include short distances between bus stops, bus stops located in places with high visibility, increased lighting, as well as disability- and pushchair-friendly infrastructure and facilities.
- Implement awareness-raising and information campaigns on public transport services, stations and platforms to inform passengers about dedicated helpline services in case of sexual or gender-based harassment and violence.
- Ensure adequate staff training on issues related to gender equality and public transportation, including GBV. Training plans should respond to needs identified through regular surveys and checks organised and implemented with women and girls.

## **Specific recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders with respect to women and education:**

- Cuts to the education budget and the public sector wage bill can disproportionately impact girls' education, compounding existing issues of interrupted learning and early drop-out rates. This, together with lack of early childcare facilities, shifts the burden of care to women in the community. Governments should challenge and reject IFIs demands for austerity measures to ensure equitable, adequate public funding for girls' education and early childcare and development facilities.



- Ensure decent work and living wages and conditions for teachers, the majority of whom are women.
- Meaningfully consult with relevant civil society organisations, schools and teacher unions and associations (including girls' groups) while planning education budgets, to ensure they are gender responsive, equitable and appropriate.

### **Specific recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders with respect to women and GBV services:**

- Ensure adequately resourced, gender-responsive, time-sensitive public services that prevent and respond to GBV, including access to justice and adequate shelters or refuges.
- Have accountability, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms in place to track compliance and monitor the progress of GBV service delivery.
- Ensure full and meaningful consultation with WROs especially those providing frontline services to women survivors on the design and delivery of policies, strategies and services to prevent and respond to violence.

### **Specific recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders on women and public health services:**

- Recognise and redress the gendered impacts of poor quality, inaccessible and inappropriate health services on women, including their SRHR, and how women's vastly unequal share of unpaid care work is exacerbated when health services are cut.
- Ensure decent work and living wages for nurses and healthcare workers, the majority of whom are women.
- Redress these gendered impacts by resisting austerity and privatisation to massively scale-up investments in public health services, including SRHR, and ensure their gender-sensitivity.

# Annexe A - World Bank Institutions



## The International Finance Corporation (IFC):

This organisation oversees private sector financing and provides low- and middle-income countries with private sector loans, loan guarantees and equity financing and advisory services. Private sector financing includes finances granted to large corporations or multinational companies to create economic opportunities in these countries.<sup>99</sup>



## International Development Assistance (IDA):

This institution is a group that gives long-term interest-free loans, grants, technical assistance, and policy advice to governments of low-income countries.<sup>100</sup>



## The International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD):

The primary objective of this institution is to provide debt financing to governments of middle-income countries. Debt financing in simple terms means lending money to a country to be paid back in future with interest accumulated on the money borrowed.<sup>101</sup>



## The International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID):

This organisation settles investment disputes that may occur between countries and investors, who often claim loss of future profits following new environmental and labour regulations, without having to go to court. Civil society around the world has criticised ICSID for alleged corporate bias, secrecy and lack of democratic accountability. Fears of corporations suing governments for efforts to control the Covid pandemic harms recovery. For example, in 2013, ICSID helped in a case between Interocean Oil Exploration Company (US) and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.<sup>102</sup>



## The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA):

This organisation oversees private sector financing and provides low- and middle-income countries with private sector loans, loan guarantees and equity financing and advisory services. Private sector financing includes finances granted to large corporations or multinational companies to create economic opportunities in these countries.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>99</sup> For more information on the IFC: [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/corp\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_corporate\\_site/home](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/corp_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/home)

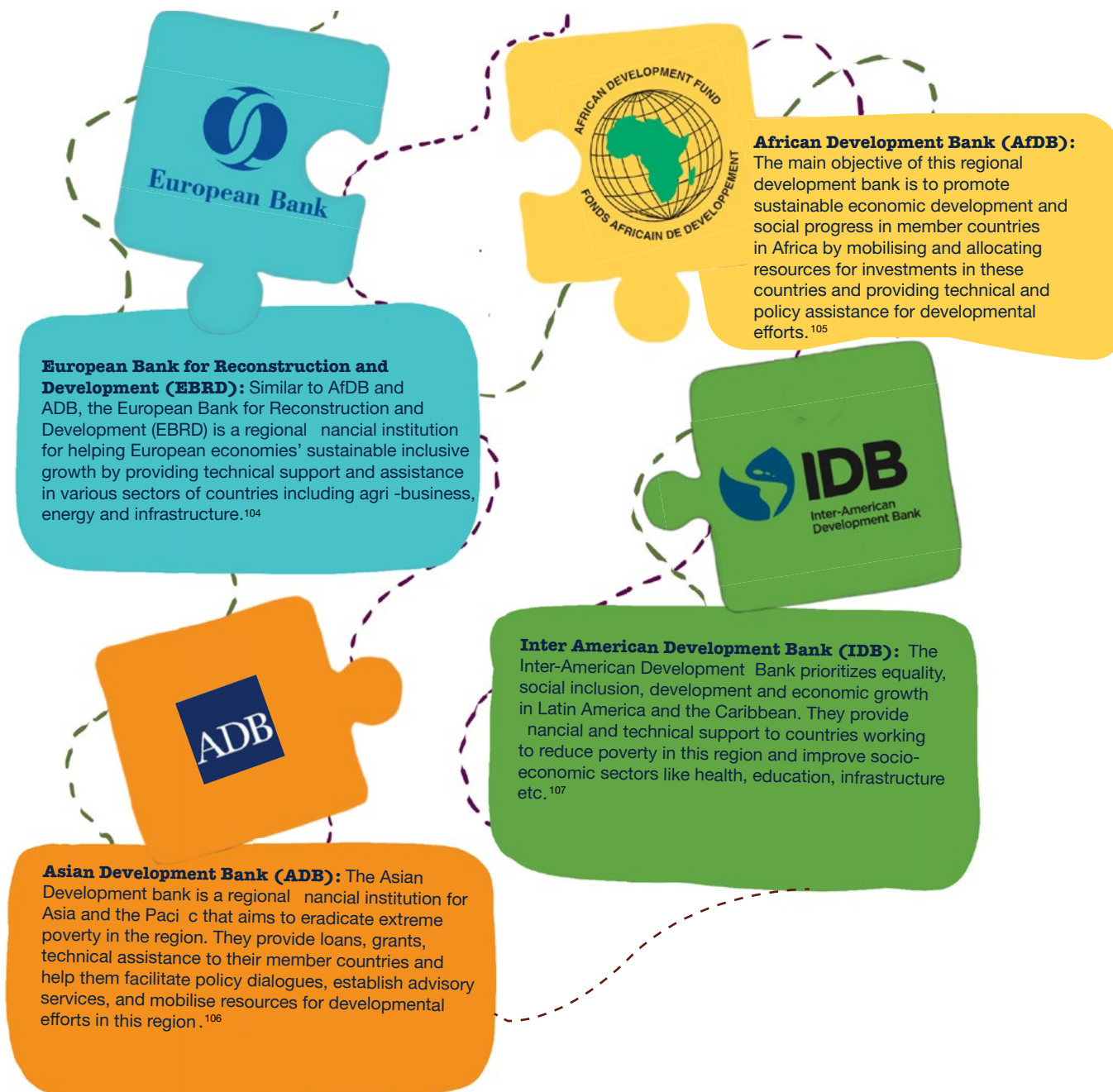
<sup>100</sup> For more information on IDA: <https://ida.worldbank.org/>

<sup>101</sup> For more information on IBRD: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/who-we-are/ibrd>

<sup>102</sup> For more information on ICSID: <https://icsid.worldbank.org/cases/case-database/case-detail?CaseNo=ARB/13/20>

<sup>103</sup> For more information on MIGA: <https://www.miga.org/asia-and-pacific>

# Annexe B – Regional Development Banks



<sup>104</sup> For more information on ADB: <https://www.adb.org/who-we-are/main>

<sup>105</sup> For more information on AfDB: <https://www.afdb.org/en/about/mission-strategy>

<sup>106</sup> For more information on EBRD: <https://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/sectors-and-topics.html>

<sup>107</sup> For more information on IDB: <https://www.iadb.org/en/about-us/overview>



# Glossary

**Austerity** refers to government policies that are implemented to reduce gaps between money coming into the government (revenue) and money going out (spending). Austerity policies typically cut government spending and increase taxes. Although it is the government who ultimately decides whether to implement austerity policies, they can feel compelled to follow IMF advice to implement austerity to access IMF loans.

**Conditionalities** are the conditions that countries must abide by to access an IMF loan. Conditionalities specify economic reforms (usually encompassing austerity measures such as public spending cuts). The IMF expects that these rules will help countries reduce debt and pay back their loans faster.

**Fiscal consolidation** is the IMF's official term for 'austerity.' Fiscal consolidation can include cuts to government spending and increased taxes, as well as privatisation of public assets and services like hospitals and transport.

**Decent work** is paid work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. It involves opportunities for work, earning a living wage, rights at work such as freedom from violence, access to social protection (such as paid parental leave and pensions) and safeguards the right to engage in collective bargaining.

**Gender-based violence (GBV)** is violence that is directed at an individual based on their biological sex or gender identity. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether in public or private life.

**Global North** refers to the societies of Europe and North America, which are largely characterised by wealth, technological advancement, relative political stability, aging population, zero population growth and dominance of world trade and politics. Not strictly geographical, the definition can also include Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea.

**Global South** is a political term that does not necessarily consider geo-spatial locations of countries. Global South countries are nation states that have developmental imbalances in comparison to countries that have reached certain development thresholds. Countries from Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America are generally known as Global South.

**Patriarchy** is a system of power which influences everything that we do. Within this universal system, men dominate women physically, socially, culturally and economically. Patriarchy plays out in the economy, society, government, community and family. It is apparent in every sphere of life, giving rise to accepted discriminatory behaviours, attitudes and practices also known as ‘patriarchal norms.’ The way patriarchy manifests itself in relationships, the family, community and society changes over time and “by location and cultural context.”<sup>98</sup>

**Privatisation** is when a public asset (such as land) or service (such as health or education) is transferred from public (government) ownership to a private company to own and manage for a profit. Privatisation often means that services that were formally provided by the government and were free or very low cost can increase in cost or not be provided at all to the poorest communities because they are not as profitable. Any profit made on the fees charged is given to those who own the company instead of being put back into the government.

**Public-private partnerships (PPPs)** are (often) long-term contracts between a private party and a government agency for providing a public service or asset.

**Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** means the right for everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, HIV status or other identities, to make informed choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction and have access to quality, accessible healthcare (including services to materialise their choices).

**Taxes** are a compulsory contribution to the state revenue levied by the government on various forms of economic activity. When we buy everyday products such as milk or fuel, or when we earn over a certain amount from paid work, we often have to pay tax to the government. Companies and businesses also pay taxes. Tax is the main way the government receives money that it needs to pay for public goods and services.

**Unpaid care & domestic work** is non-remunerated work carried out to sustain the well-being, health and maintenance of other individuals in a household or the community, including domestic work (meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, water and fuel collection) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities, as well as able-bodied adults) carried out in homes and communities.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> ActionAid (2022) *The Care Contradiction*, page 9 (see Footnote 8).

# More resources

## Gender-responsive public services

- Action Aid (2018) *Framework 2018: Gender-Responsive Public Services*: <https://actionaid.org/publications/2018/framework-2018-gender-responsive-public-services>
- Public Services International (2020) *Thinking a gender-responsive approach to COVID-19*: <https://publicservices.international/resources/news/thinking-a-gender-responsive-%20approach-to-covid-19-?id=10720&lang=en>
- Our future is public: Santiago Declaration for Public Services (2022): <https://peopleoverprof.it/resources/news/our-future-is-public-santiago-declaration-on-public-services?id=13578&lang=en>

## Women's access to decent work

- ActionAid (2021) *“Black girls resist”: fighting for decent work*: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/black-girl-resists-fighting-decent-work>

## Feminist economy

- Womankind (2019) *Working towards a just feminist economy*: <https://www.womankind.org.uk/resource/towards-a-just-feminist-economy/>
- ActionAid (2020) *Another world is possible: Advancing feminist economic alternatives*: <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/another-world-possible-a-dvancing-feminist-economic-alternatives>
- Women's Unpaid Care Work tools by Reflection Action: <https://www.reflectionaction.org/show/11/>

## Gender-just macroeconomics

- Bretton Woods Project (2016) *Gender-Just Macroeconomics*: <https://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/2016/10/gender-just-macroeconomics/gender-just-macroeconomics-final/>
- FEMNET (2020) *The Audacity to Disrupt: An Introduction to Feminist Macro-level Economics*: <https://femnet.org/2021/03/the-audacity-to-disrupt-2020/>

## Gender-just trade

- ActionAid (2018): <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/from-rhetoric-to-rights-towards-gender-just-trade>

## Feminist taxation

- Akina Mama wa Afrika (2022) *A feminist tax justice handbook for women in the informal economy*: <https://www.akinamamawaafrika.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/18627.pdf>



- Global Tax Justice Alliance (2021) *'Framing Feminist Taxation': Making Taxes Work for Women*: <https://globaltaxjustice.org/news/framing-feminist-taxation-making-taxes-work-for-women/>
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