

## Preface

The scourge of COVID-19 struck an already stark reality of multiple inequalities – in households, across communities, in national context, and among countries. Its waves of devastation have exacerbated pre-existing conditions and disparities as well as creating new ones.

This reality can be seen in the health numbers, the job numbers, in education, in hunger and in so many sectors. Attention to the debt burden unequally borne by countries has come to the fore but is being addressed with piecemeal relief measures for debt servicing not with the restructuring that a debt workout mechanism would bring. Furthermore, the over-reliance on a few pharmaceutical giants, their disproportionate benefits, financial and reputational, and the prevailing just-in-time business model have been ignored. While the exposure of inequalities in fiscal space has spurred measures such as the new allocation of Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), these too are inadequate to the task of a just recovery and function within flawed global financial architecture. Ignoring the multiple warnings and manifestations over decades of the ecological and climate crises has scientists from around the world and the United Nations issuing a Code Red for humanity.

Few governments and agencies have been willing to address the structural and institutional inadequacies and correct the biases baked into many governance arrangements. Advocates and observers alike have learned that this accumulation of disappointing outcomes often reflect unfair governance systems, many rooted in the post-colonial global restructuring, as well as in inadequate policy prescriptions.

Post-COVID-19 society and economy need national policies that reduce inequalities manifest in multiple ways, such as through income, gender, disability, religion and race. Policies are needed to revalue care work, reorient global value chains towards domestic priorities and jobs, both in developing and developed countries, while limiting in equitable ways fossil fuel and material consumption to planetary boundaries.

In all regions of the world new visions and policies for a sustainable transformation post COVID-19 are called for, but the actual decision-making continues to be heavily focused on fora like the G7, the G20 and the OECD, which lack a functioning people-centred and human rights accountability framework, and where the global South is often only an invited guest and sometimes excluded entirely.

Addressing these injustices and insecurities requires political will and policy space. Political will is (or should be) domestically generated by democratic processes, supported by universal standards of human rights and the ‘right sharing of the world’s resources’. The current structure and dynamics of global decision-making do not support this, and their outcomes often fall short failing to extend beyond reactive or short-term responses.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis have reminded the global community of the essentials of reviewing and in many cases rewriting international rules and the urgency of Just Transition strategies to move in this direction.

This Spotlight Report describes the highly uneven socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis and analyses the policy responses to it. It explores beyond the rhetoric, highlighting deepening inequalities, self-serving and hypocritical policies and governance failures at national and international level. Addressing the imbalance in global vaccine production and distribution, the report also examines a few key areas where political and structural changes are necessary to correct the limited and asymmetric recovery.

The CSOs that have contributed to this and previous Spotlight Reports have extensive experience in bringing voices, realities and analyses from countries and communities to local, national, regional and diverse global decision-making processes and fora. The contributions in this report provide a snapshot of the wealth of knowledge and commitment of independent CSOs, trade unions and social movements. They have brought many reports to the attention of the decision-making processes and have learned that equally important as their analysis and findings are *participation rights* in the shaping of sustainable just outcomes.

BARBARA ADAMS AND JENS MARTENS, GLOBAL POLICY FORUM (GPF)

ROBERTO BISSIO, SOCIAL WATCH

DAVID BOYS, PUBLIC SERVICES INTERNATIONAL (PSI)

CHEE YOKE LING, THIRD WORLD NETWORK (TWN)

KATE DONALD, CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS (CESR)

STEFANO PRATO, SOCIETY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (SID)

ZIAD ABDEL SAMAD, ARAB NGO NETWORK FOR DEVELOPMENT (ANND)

GITA SEN AND MARÍA GRACIELA CUERVO, DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES WITH WOMEN FOR A NEW ERA (DAWN)