

International Women's Day 2021: A Demand for Justice

It has been nearly one year since [COVID-19](#) was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization.

One year since the virus locked down the world – and revealed countless truths about the [status of women and girls](#) today.

It's 2021; instead of attaining equality, women represent the majority of people living in poverty. They are less likely to have access to healthcare and education, most affected by climate change and food insecurity, and most likely to experience gender-based violence.

This must change. Individual governments and the multilateral institutions that claim to protect and advance human rights have to make that change if peace, justice, and equality are to be achieved for women and girls.

This International Women's Day, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) calls on governments to take immediate action on two of the most urgent threats facing women and girls in 2021: the deeply intertwined issues of economic injustice and environmental destruction.

Neoliberal economic policies drive inequality and destroy the environment

Neoliberal economic policies have one rationale: the crass pursuit of financial gain at whatever cost.

[The result](#) is an ever-growing gap between the rich and the poor, the denial of rights as people struggle to access healthcare, education, and community resources, and the destruction of natural resources – which, in turn, leads to pollution of soil, water, and air, contributing to the loss of biodiversity, devastating the planet, and accelerating the impacts of climate change on the poorest individuals and communities.

Meanwhile, governments and private companies continue to invest [billions of dollars](#) each year into militarism and fossil fuels to protect and grow their economic interests – all at the expense of people and the planet.

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted

For women and girls around the world – particularly [those from underrepresented communities](#) and those living in [countries affected by conflict](#) – the interconnected forces of economic

injustice and environmental degradation mean job insecurity, an increase in unpaid care work, growing poverty, worsening health, lack of access to livelihoods and education, and heightened risk of gender-based violence.

Women are disproportionately affected by destructive economic and environmental practices and policies, yet government responses to socioeconomic crises do not take gender into consideration – leaving women and girls without adequate resources.

These governmental failures are unsurprising given that women are vastly underrepresented in decision-making processes that directly impact their lives: worldwide, just [24 per cent of all national parliamentarians are women](#).

An urgent demand for change

WILPF demands that governments take immediate action to address the wide-ranging impacts of economic injustice and environmental destruction on women and girls, on humanity, and on our planet:

- Immediately reverse harmful economic policies that undermine public infrastructure, harm the environment, and drive the growing gap between the rich and the poor.
- Adopt gender-responsive redistributive economic and social recovery policies to the pandemic.
- Urgently regulate corporations to prevent and ensure accountability for harms to the environment and other human rights violations. Ensure access to justice for impacted communities.
- Ensure adequate representation of women in decision-making spaces and invest in the growth and resilience of local women's rights groups and organisations to ensure women's voices and needs are heard and represented.
- Recognise the devastating impacts of military activities on communities, the environment, and international security. Move money from military and defence budgets into core public services such as healthcare, education, and community resources, including public access to vaccination and emergency measures in response to COVID-19.

And we call on individuals to join us. Be part of the feminist peace movement by educating, advocating, organising, and acting together with WILPF! Start a WILPF National Section, become a member, or donate to help advance a future of justice and equality for all.

Additional reading

Read more about how economic policies, environmental destruction, and other critical areas of concern negatively impact human security, community resilience, and the future of our planet:

- [Feminist Principles for a Post-COVID-19 Settlement](#)

- [COVID-19 and Gender Justice: Feminists in MENA Defying Global Structural Failure](#)
- [WILPF's COVID-19 blog series](#)
- [A Feminist and Green Recovery to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#): WILPF's statement on COVID-19 and human rights delivered at the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council
- [UN Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Women](#)