

**Synthesis Report  
Narratives and Strategies for the Future:  
Stakeholder Conversations to Build Back Better**

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## INTRODUCTION

The impact of the pandemic has played out differently across countries and regions. It is unevenly distributed for businesses, workers, and communities, further exacerbating unequal and exploitative relations, which are a manifestation of the failure of our current economic system. The pandemic and the pace with which it is spreading have left the less powerful and more vulnerable groups, including workers unprepared to deal with the economic implications arising from the crisis and responses instituted by governments.

While there are some quick and positive responses in the right direction, there is also oppressive silence to address the needs of vulnerable sectors around the world. Unlike the garment sector, agriculture and fishery, the care economy, and the gig economy, which have also been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, are receiving less attention than they deserve when it comes to the protection of workers' rights. In many countries in Asia and the Pacific, migrant workers, who have been the engine of critical sectors such as agriculture and fishery, have been left out of government or business' response to the pandemic.

In the span of two months, between July and August 2020, the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre together with its partners in Asia and the Pacific, co-organised a series of virtual stakeholders' conversations on the narratives and strategies that are needed to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The convenings aimed at reflecting on the vital narratives that workers and their allies want to advance and thinking through strategies that workers will pursue to create and maintain a space for participation within the decision-making processes towards efforts to build a just recovery.

The virtual discussions were founded on the sectors aforementioned – agriculture and fishery, the care economy, and the gig economy. These topics generated the discussions reported in this report.

More than 65 people participated in the convenings, representing workers' organisations, civil society, academia, think tanks, and donors.

The synthesis report presents a summary of the main points articulated in the discussions and offers reflections on strategies for protecting individual and collective rights of workers that may be ignored or violated. The report concludes with a set of recommendations directed at governments and businesses.

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## CONVERSATIONS AND QUESTIONS DISCUSSED

### CONVERSATION 1: Agriculture & Fishery

In Asia & Pacific, movement restrictions are limiting farmers' ability to access inputs and sell their products. Labour shortages are prevalent because in farms where migrant workers constitute a bulk of the workforce, travel restrictions have prevented them from travelling. In many communities, farmers and fisherfolks are effectively excluded in various types of emergency/ stimulus/subsidy packages for various reasons like the informal nature of their contracts or their inability to claim them because they cannot travel back to the farms where these packages are distributed. In areas where agriculture production and processes have resumed operating in full capacity, farmers are experiencing lack of basic workplace safety to protect them from infection.

Fisherfolks have difficulty returning to their vessels because of quarantine and travel restrictions. Many are held on-board, stranded in various ports without any certainty on whether they can be allowed to return to their homes or if they will be paid despite the cessation of many fishing operations. If infected, many find themselves without access to basic health care packages and other social protection schemes.

Marine spaces and resources are historically, culturally and economically of great importance for Fijian communities. Traditionally and historically, fishing beyond the reef was the domain of men, while women concentrated their activities on fishing and collecting invertebrates within lagoons and inshore areas. For women, ownership and access to marine resources and to land, as well as traditional norms, influences their participation in the fisheries sector. At the onset of the pandemic, the distribution of unpaid care work in these communities is uneven, being heavier for women, which create time burdens in the context of economic activities.

The following questions helped participants to plan for long-term reforms in the agriculture and fishing industries:

- For the most serious challenges faced by farmers and fisherfolks as a result of the pandemic, what short and long term solutions are critical in ensuring the security of their livelihoods and fundamental rights?
- How can governments & businesses support farmers and fisherfolks so that they are able participate and contribute to critical reforms in the industry?
- What strategies and initiatives are needed to support the solutions being advanced by farmers and fisherfolks, and the organisations that support them?

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## CONVERSATION 2: Care Economy

In Asia, as elsewhere in the world, the crisis of care work existed before the pandemic, was deepened during it, and appears poised to continue post-COVID-19 unless transformative measures are taken to dismantle both the exploitative capitalist relations that dominate our economies and the entrenched patriarchal norms that allow the value and importance of care work to continue unrecognised and underpaid or unpaid.

COVID-19 has spotlighted the extent to which paid and unpaid care work, overwhelming performed by women, has propped up underfunded public, health, and social services, leaving these systems ill-equipped to manage large-scale crises and communities without the social security nets needed to ensure their safety and well-being in times of emergency.

These inequalities exist not only along gender lines but are also exacerbated by class. As public, universal care systems were (and continue to be) dismantled and privatised, relief from the burden of care work became accessible only to those who could afford it. In some circumstances, this means paying for private services, in others it means hiring domestic care workers, some of whom may migrate from other countries, leaving behind their own families and care responsibilities, to care for the families of wealthier women. Thus, rather than redistribution of care work between men and women, or between individuals and a fully funded public sector, we witness a double burdening of women migrant care workers and their women family members who must take on the care of those left behind.

The following questions led to discussion of critical issues such as the concept of “work”, advancement of workers’ rights, policy making and other institutional structures, and key demands from across feminist and worker-led movements to advance a transformative vision of the care economy:

- What are the key demands from across feminist and worker-led movements to address the rights and realities of women in the care economy?
- How do we make these demands a reality? What support will we need? (e.g. resources, alliances)
- Are there any other recommendations or measures that governments, business and other actors should take to address the rights and realities of women in the care economy?

### CONVERSATION 3: Gig Economy

As economies become more and more dependent on technology and online platforms, another group of workers share the burden of being left out in many traditional social protection systems – the gig workers who are dependent on digital platforms for work that is mostly part-time, temporary, often casual in nature, and deviates from standard employment.<sup>1</sup>

Gig economy workers are often deprived of remedies available only to employees – for example in the Philippines, they cannot go through dispute settlement mechanisms of the labour ministry (free of charge) and have to assert for their rights by filing a civil case for breach of contract, for example (with payments to file, requires counsel).

COVID-19 has only highlighted the vulnerabilities of these workers even as they continue to sustain the operation of many industries that are or have become absolutely critical for Asian and other economies.

The following questions attempted to strengthen the conversations and strategies on gig workers' primary calls and demands:

- What have been the greatest challenges for gig economy workers in terms of security of tenure, social protection, and access to remedies and what are the key recommendations to address these challenges?
- How should technology platforms and the companies that operate them, support your rights at work?
- What emerging strategies have worked best for traditionally unorganised workers in the gig economy in advancing their rights and what other strategies are being contemplated?

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<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organisation, "Extension of social security to workers in informal employment in the ASEAN region", 2019, <https://asean.org/storage/2020/01/Regional-Study-on-Extension-of-Social-Security-to-Informal-Workers-in-ASEAN.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2020.

## SUMMARY OF THE CONVERSATIONS

### Conversation 1 – Agriculture & Fishery

**Co-organisers** || Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC)  
|| People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (PCFS)  
|| Women in Fisheries-Network Fiji (WIF-Network Fiji)

#### *Pre-existing challenges, the root causes, and efforts by governments and businesses*

While urban areas are most hit by COVID-19 pandemic, rural peoples, especially the landless farmers, agricultural workers, fisherfolk, rural women, and indigenous peoples are the most at-risk to its impacts and the measures that governments take.

In Fiji, for example, the first phase of the government's COVID-19 agricultural assistance saw the distribution of more than 2,000 packages for home gardening and 200 packages for the farm support initiative. However, as noted by the Pacific Organic & Ethical Trade Community, while welcoming backyard farming initiative, concerns for commercial farmers in terms of compliance arise. Additionally, there are occupational health and safety concerns. Stranded seafarers are vulnerable due to their access to safety nets in place. Unscrupulous agencies in the fishing industry has resulted in exploitation of labour.

Long-term problems of human trafficking in fishing vessels and supply chains continue despite the pandemic. Language and cultural barriers often make them more isolated from their co-workers whilst being away from the support and the safety nets of family and friends. Confiscation of identity documents is also very common in this sector. There is an inherent vulnerability of the workers because they are either migrant workers or they are informal in nature. Workers in the fishing sector are notoriously unionised. They are more likely to have various legal status, which increases their potential for exploitation by unscrupulous patterns.

Lockdowns and flight restrictions have caused not only production suspension, but also post-harvest production losses due to the cut-off of distribution channels of agricultural and fishery products for processing and packaging. The Pacific Islands Farmers Organisation Network noted that since there are no markets and no buyers, there has been a massive wastage of products. The tourism industry, which delivers supplementary income both to individual farmers and fisherfolks and the local community, has been brought to a standstill.

The pandemic has also exacerbated the already dire conditions of rural peoples. Poverty is a rural phenomenon in Asia and the Pacific, with about 90% of the poor living in rural areas. The World Bank estimates that as many as 20 million people will be pushed into poverty as a result of the crisis.

Countries dependent on agricultural and fishery export are exposed to the increasingly fragile supply chains. Disruptions in the agricultural and fishing supply chains have forced farmers and fisherfolks to sell their products at losses. Input-intensive for export products are becoming a liability to farmers and fisherfolks. Around 1.5 million agricultural workers and famers in Cambodia, for example, are deep in microloan debt, at around US\$3,800 on average. In Fiji, the agility of supply chains is less monitored or scrutinised by regulators.

The People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty noted that while new threats emerge due to COVID-19 pandemic, old threats resurface and take on new characters. The inability of farmers, communities, and indigenous peoples to tend to their lands due to movement restrictions has enabled companies to encroach their lands and move ahead with their large-scale operations in different sectors, including mining, agribusiness, mega infrastructure, and real estate.

*“There remains a huge gap in data collection and parsing of information on the actual impacts of the pandemic, supply chain disruptions, and government interventions to the sectors.”*

The informality of labour and lack of protection for sectors and actors within agriculture and fisheries is one of the major obstacles in developing the sector and livelihood of rightsholders. Inadequate health protection and standards in plantations, farms, ports, and fishing villages has made workers in these two sectors more vulnerable to the pandemic. Informality excludes them from some of the government-led relief programmes such as cash transfers and direct subsidies.

### *Strategies for a just, equitable and sustainable food system*

- Food sovereignty through **people’s actions and initiatives** from local, national, and regional levels is key to developing policies that favour the people’s right to food and people-led rural development.
- **Local people’s movement** is key to safeguarding against COVID-19. Food banks and farmer-to-farmer relief programmes are continuously being implemented by network members in Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand.
- **Engaging the private sector and national governments**, including at the policy level for food and rights is vital. National consultations and creating national rural demands will help shape the policy agenda of “new normal” proposals as well as block substantially harmful proposals.
- **Building people-to-people regional and international partnership** is important to share information and best practices. Engagement with regional and international mechanisms will add pressure towards pro-people proposals.
- **Investing in local problem solving and empowerment and sponsorship of people** from remote or rural communities and informal parts of fisheries and agricultural sectors and linking informal peoples to high level policy decision makers.
- **Using technology and innovation** can help strengthen traceability and transparency of the agriculture and fishery sectors, making them more sustainable and reliable.

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### **Conversation 2 – Care Economy**

**Co-organisers** | Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC)  
International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific  
Weaving Women's Voices in Southeast Asia (WEAVE)

### *Challenges and key demands from feminist and worker-led movements*

The rapid spread of COVID-19 has shed light on the critical role of care work, which has been consistently undervalued and ignored as a substantial contributor to the economy and society. It is not considered as economic work because it only creates use-value and exchange-value.

Care work predominantly affects women and girls across the globe regardless of their level of education or income. The pandemic has exposed the systemic failure of the economic system that is unable to respond to or acknowledge women's contribution. While the market economy has been disrupted by the pandemic, economic activity in the paid and unpaid care work has significantly intensified. The way work has been defined is very problematic and it is not that women are not working, but what they are doing is not counted as work. The work done by women is always less valued even if the work is very important. We need to redefine and expand the concept of work and give value to the work that women are performing.

Organising and outreach around unpaid care work is particularly challenging because they are unregulated and the constituencies are isolated in individual households. It is critical to

*“Expanding social safety nets and recognising the value of invisible and unpaid care work [...] will address the vulnerabilities women experience, ensure women’s central role in economic life, and in the long term, contribute to sustainable development and more inclusive and resilient economies.”*

**--UN Secretary-General António Guterres--**

challenge the unequal distribution of unpaid care work and demand for recognition, reduction, and redistribution of unpaid care work by households, communities, the private sector, and states.

Women and marginalised women face more stress over the survival and multiple burdens. Another challenge

that was documented by Weaving Women's Voices in Southeast Asia (WEAVE) was that on top of the problem with multiple burdens, stress, and mental health, discrimination is increasing. Cases of domestic violence remain unaddressed. Some Asian Governments' responses to COVID-19 remain gender neutral and gender blind.

In Asia, the double burdening of women migrant care workers is evident through the experiences of women domestic workers who migrate from lower income countries, like Indonesia, and the Philippines, to higher income countries, like Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore, to fill the care needs of other families. However, some of these host countries exclude migrant domestic workers from their national labour law regulations making it challenging for workers to organise and mobilise.

This is happening within a broader context of neoliberal economic policies that have pushed for private sector incentives and investment over a well-funded public sector and collective services, supported by international trade and foreign investment regimes that transformed economies throughout Asia into export-oriented systems that undermine local livelihoods and community structures, eliminating jobs in some countries while creating them in others, and driving women to move under precarious and exploitative of conditions in search of work that, under the watch of patriarchy, has already been defined and undervalued for them in advance. Many workers also remain trapped in debt bondage for many months because of the high recruitment fees.

### ***Strategies for addressing the rights and realities of women in the care economy***

- **Using taxation to incentivise** by looking at ways that taxation can be used to change attitudes and behaviour through schemes like tax credits. This aims at incentivising those who render care work and want to change patriarchal attitudes.
- **Building alliances with employers**, for example, through “My Fair Home” Campaign, the International Domestic Workers Federation aims to elicit attitudinal and behavioural change among employers of domestic workers to ensure decent work.
- **Strategic campaigns:** Key issues under spotlight include: investment in the care economy, the rights of care workers to organise themselves in defence of their rights, and recognition of the work that they do. Campaigns were also suggested as a strategy

to shift cultural attitudes and beliefs and engage both men and women to show they have equal roles in care.

- **Engagement with international human rights mechanisms, particularly using treaty bodies to push for better standards and practices.** For example, the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific is undertaking a study on a decision of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concerning a woman denied retired pension because of a small part in social security contribution she was doing unpaid care work which denied her claim to pension fund. The Committee found the government had violated the treaty standards on discrimination based on gender. This decision can be used in advocacy at the national and global levels.

### Conversation 3 – Gig Economy

**Co-organisers** || Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC)  
|| Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL)

#### *Challenges for gig economy workers in terms of security of tenure, social protection, and access to remedies*

Gig work becomes an attractive option as it offers greater flexibility and autonomy. This is simply an illusion as not all gig work is created equal. Like in other sectors, the pandemic has reinforced pre-existing vulnerabilities for gig workers and increased scrutiny of the gig economy. The lack of social safety net for gig workers has excluded them from accessing statutory benefits such as a minimum wage, medical insurance, sick leave, and other benefits provided in formal jobs.

Gig workers also cannot unionise to offset imbalances in power relationships between them and the platform companies because of their status as 'independent or self-employed contractors'. As a consequence, many important realities tied to gig work may remain invisible and untouched.

Although women, who are often excluded from labour markets, can increase their participation in the labour force through digital platforms, what the gig economy actually paints is a picture of precarity and uncertainty for women and not meaningful economic empowerment. The first condition to ensure women participation in the digital economy is access to data. In addition to access to data, governments need to step up their regulatory efforts to protect unorganised workers.

While playing a crucial role in creating new income generating opportunities, online platforms are said to do more harm than good to workers. In a data-driven economy, labour and workers' rights are extracted. Information asymmetry and opacity around data raises serious questions about the culture these platforms create and urges us to reckon whether technology is efficient to lever up opportunity for workers as we think or just a reflection of forced global capital that continue to marginalise vulnerable populations, including workers. This information asymmetry also perpetuates existing stereotype discrimination and marginalisation.

*"Labour rights and data privacy cannot be seen in isolation, but rather holistically together. The transparency in decision-making of the platform companies and access to personal data that these companies collect are crucial issues."*

**--IT for Change--**



In many countries in Asia such as in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, the absence of robust labour regulation in the gig economy that provides specific protection for workers' rights has resulted in platform companies being let off the hook and not being held accountable for unilateral algorithmic practices. All too often, gig workers end up in a precarious situation.

For example, while contributing 7.4% to Indonesia's GDP and being projected as the new economic driver for the country, creative industry in Indonesia has yet to provide protection to workers, where the majority is employed on an informal or freelance basis. Trade Union Rights Centre noted that the flexibility offered by the gig economy has transformed into a new form of exploitation. Creative workers tend to work longer hours, which is deleterious to health and well-being.

Relief for gig workers during the pandemic has been spontaneous and inconsistent. They tend to fall between the cracks of government's bailout schemes. The stringent conditions of these schemes have prevented gig workers from getting relief aid.

### *Strategies for advancing the rights of gig workers*

- **Legal challenges to the misclassification** of gig workers as 'independent or self-employed contractors'.
- **Developing alternative models** that are centred around cooperative terms and principles that strengthen workers' voices and give them a seat at the table to engage with technology on their own terms. This can improve women's participation and give them meaningful empowerment.
- Encouraging governments to establish **income support scheme** for gig workers and facilitate workers in the gig economy to **match them with diverse platform providers** and provide alternative job options.
- Advocating for **a portable benefit system** for workers engaged in temporary work, which can offset the disincentives to employment.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

Since there is a current shift to new markets closer to home, it is imperative that international players coming into developing countries understand the need to support in-country "home grown" solutions. There is strong need to push against narrow sector approaches, we need forums that facilitate work across sectors and particularly work across ministries and engagement with industry, government, and private sector.

Informality of labour relations has been one of the most persistent challenges in the economies of many Asian countries. High informality in three sectors discussed in this report – agriculture and fishery, the care economy, and the gig economy – increases vulnerabilities of workers. Informal and self-employed workers are likely trapped in a precarious situation and more exposed to various risks such as job loss, unsafe working conditions, and lack of protection of their labour rights. Many informal workers, who lost their job due to the pandemic, are very likely to fall back into poverty. Governments need to step up their efforts to build universal and gender responsive social protection systems, including floors and ensure their expansion to facilitate the inclusion of all workers.

Engaging national governments and the private sector, including at the policy level will help shape the policy agenda of “new normal” proposals. Building people-to-people regional and international partnership will add pressure towards pro-people proposals.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Agriculture & Fishery	Care Economy	Gig Economy
<p><b>Governments should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Recognise farmers, fishers, and other workers in the food value chain as ‘frontliners’ and ensure their involvement in food security.</li> <li>  Provide incentives and temporary alternative job opportunities, especially for small-scale farmers and fisherfolks.</li> <li>  Review national land use policies to reflect the increasing need for domestic food production.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Governments should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Change narratives of ‘work’ for a broader definition of what constitutes work.</li> <li>  Dismantle gender stereotypes by taking concrete steps to unburden women from the stereotype of care work. Community-based childcare can help do this.</li> <li>  Recognise domestic workers in national labour rights frameworks and ensure domestic workers have equal rights and social security, and this includes migrant domestic workers.</li> <li>  Invest in care public policy and infrastructure using a modelling of investment of 2% of GDP in care services and implement gender responsive budgeting for social services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Governments should:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>  Establish a regulatory framework on the gig economy and strengthen and expand the existing social protection system to include all workers. This process should take into account workers’ views to ensure such a framework responds to their specific needs.</li> <li>  Collaborate with platform companies to income support scheme for gig workers to contribute to their employment injury.</li> <li>  Clarify the rights and obligations of platform companies and the so-called partnerships that they impose on workers.</li> </ul>

### **Businesses should:**

- | Honour transactional commitments already made and provide support to the workforce to continue their work safely.
- | Collaborate with NGOs and governments to identify sustainable business models that promote and display fair and equity in the agriculture and fishing sector.
- | Enable agri-based Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to transition into a better new normal while ensuring adequate social protection of workers.
- | Create innovations that can minimise 'middle-man' interventions in terms of distribution.

### **Businesses should:**

- | Provide masks and sanitizers for free for domestic workers during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- | Ensure decent working and living conditions for domestic workers and increase their wages to living wages.
- | Eliminate the stereotypes on gender roles and provide accessible and qualified facilities for the fulfilment of reproductive health rights of women workers by providing childcare.
- | Adopt family-friendly employment and flexible working arrangement policies.

### **Businesses should:**

- | Collaborate with platform companies to income support scheme for gig workers to contribute to their employment injury
- | Create governance structures that give gig workers a voice in the design of the platforms they work for.
- | Provide greater transparency with respect to workers' personal data to prevent discriminative practices. This can also improve women's participation and give them meaningful empowerment.

## ANNEX

### SURVEY RESULTS Narratives and Strategies for the Future

#### AGRICULTURE & FISHERY

Q1

*In agriculture or fishery, what challenges are you seeing in terms of Covid-19's impact on the rights of workers?*

- | In export-driven agri plantations, the biggest challenge is the decrease in international demand which translates to decreased livelihood and earnings for the workers and farmers which plunge them deeper into poverty especially those that do not have any social protections.
- | Less emphasis on lower income parts of the agriculture and fisheries sectors, diversion of health funding and effort to Covid-19, less time and effort spent on assisting marginalised groups on the coal face dealing with non-Covid-19 issues. Unemployment in other sectors like tourism increases the pressure on woman to work hard to produce alternative incomes and this impacts on to their health and ability to look after children and other family members.
- | In coastal fisheries in Fiji, the biggest challenge is having any formal recognition of fisherfolks in the sector. Most people are employed with no contracts, no superannuation contribution and therefore miss out on any government assistance and support from donors/partners.
- | The loss of livelihood and income of informal workers most of whom are in the agri-fish sector.
- | Covid-19 movement restrictions and curfews affect fishers' ability to conduct fishing activities (for subsistence and livelihood) when they deem appropriate or necessary.
- | Constrained access to markets, including transportation difficulty for shipping goods and the presence of border restrictions. As a result, the lives of fishers, fish cultivators, and fisheries workers who work in the fishing, processing, and marketing sectors, experience difficulties, particularly related with food security to meet the nutritional needs for their families.
- | Wrong perception related to Covid-19 also has an impact in reducing seafood consumption and ultimately lowering the fish price.
- | Generally, women in the households of fishermen, fish farmers, and other fisheries workers take more initiatives and roles to survive amid the Covid-19 pandemic.
- | Lack of recognition of unpaid care work (by women especially).
- | Changes in consumer demand for seafood products.
- | Common shared facilities onboard vessels.
- | Migrant workers being laid off.
- | No regular jobs and disparity in pay.
- | Hunger and poverty due to lock down, their produce was bought as a very low price, very limited subsidy from government displacement from their livelihood because of the continuing implementation of neo liberal policies of the government.
- | In fisheries, the main challenges are decreasing fishing activities in certain areas (due to 'high level' buyers suspending their operations, disruption in fuel delivery, government policy to stay at home) and the increasing threats of illegal fishing by foreign vessels, especially around border areas).

Some of the migrant workers were forced to quit their jobs and they are unable to go back to their home countries as the borders are closed. In term of fishery industry in Thailand. fishing boats are still in operation but in fewer numbers. They do not get payments according to their contracts. There is still exploitation of their rights that we still see, termination of employment still happens and will continue to happen if Covid-19 continues. These migrant workers are stuck in Thailand or at sea for longer period, resulting in their work permit being expired. Those who are stuck at sea have higher risks of being exploited.

***What is the most imaginative response or idea you have come across that addresses the opportunities or challenges you have identified?***

In the Philippines, we have seen social media and youth play a key role in connecting displaced and severely affected workers directly to consumers so that their goods/services are accessible. Example, helping farmers sell their harvest via Facebook (harvests that failed to secure transport to the city via regular means, social media users circulate their plight and work together to collectively find ways to transport and market the goods at a lower price because there are no traders involved).

Change in tax policies in ASEAN. See [here](#).

Diversity and inclusion of physically challenged individuals - either shore-based or seafaring (i.e. being out at sea).

Remember the past and remember science needs to be woven together with different ways of knowing and working together.

Provide support to small scale farmers who have been affected by Covid-19.

Recently, New World IGA partnering with Women in Fisheries Network and women community groups to sell fresh sea grapes (*nama*) in their shops.

Bartering is now mainstream. Before Covid-19, bartering existed mainly in rural communities. It is now commonplace once again, with countries like Fiji and Vanuatu using social media as the platform.

Building and strengthening peasant associations/organisations to fight and lobby their demands.

If businesses, with the supports from the government, are able to come up with innovations that can adapt to the changes due to this pandemic, fisheries in Indonesia can be shifted into a better and more modern business sector. For example, (1) innovations that minimise intervention of middlemen in distribution (to enable contactless deliveries), can help maintaining the price of fish (that is now very fluctuating); (2) better storage capacity and improved ability to transform/process fisheries products will result in better sales; (3) pre-payment of crews wages scheme can better ensure the rights of the crews, making fisheries sector a better employment sector.

LPN provides immediate response to the crisis by initiating the "Hand to Hand" project providing survival kits to migrant communities that are affected by Covid-19 and by doing that LPN is able to reach communities. Secondly, we conduct advocacy to the government to let them know about the problem and to use this opportunity for find solutions.

***What are your recommendations for governments and businesses to address the impact of Covid-19? You can provide links if you have made public recommendations already.***

### **For Governments**

- | Provide the enabling policy environment for the agri-fish sector to build back better and adapt to the new normal.
- | Change legislative policies to safeguard and protect women employed as seafarers and fishers.
- | Implement agrarian and aquatic reform.
- | Maintain current fisheries management rules, and if investigating the need to change regulations or policy, ensure it is done with a fully inclusive consultative process.
- | Work together cross ministries and remember the vulnerable.
- | Carry out social and economic protection programmes for fisheries workers and their families.
- | Create job opportunities for farmers family members who had worked overseas as migrant worker and had to return due to Covid-19.
- | Prioritise medical and health responses over economic responses.
- | Disseminate information regarding Covid-19 impacts and the health protocols needed as a preventive measure.
- | Conduct health checks on fisheries workers regularly, including Covid-19 rapid-test.
- | Provide easy access to export and support businesses.
- | Work with NGO partners and conduct rapid needs assessments in the fisheries sector, thereby directing and providing critical support to vulnerable fisher communities/individuals.
- | Cash assistance and direct subsidy for farmers and fisherfolks, agricultural workers specially women.
- | Provide incentives, provide temporary job alternatives to small-scale fishermen, increase monitoring and surveillance efforts to detect illegal fishing operations.
- | They should relax the fee for the expired work permit for workers and provide emergency survival kits as they have been neglected. For the governments of the country of origin as well as destination countries, there should be discussions on the migrant safety in term of how to protect them from Covid-19 and if they were to return to their home country and to come back to work. There should be some policies to support them (i.e., quarantine, monetary support on Covid-19 check, as well as supporting of their families).

### **For Businesses**

- | Implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
- | Collaborate with NGOs and governments to identify sustainable business models that would promote and display fair and equity in the seafood sector.
- | Honour transactional commitments already made, provide support for the workforce to continue to safely carry out their business (provide transportation/ shuttles, provide face masks, provide alternative work arrangements).
- | Remember family and community values are the foundation of healthy societies not just profit for profits sake.
- | Work with governments to disseminate information regarding Covid-19 impacts and the health protocols needed as a preventive measures and conduct health checks on fisheries workers regularly, including Covid-19 rapid-test.

- | Perform economic innovation to minimise the worst impacts on fisheries workers that include layoffs.
- | Carry out social and economic protection programmes for fisheries workers and their families.
- | Enable agri-based Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to transition into a better new normal while ensuring adequate social protection of workers.
- | Support small scale commercial fishers and traders. However, when purchasing marine organisms wholesale or for personal consumption, always ensure to follow set size regulations. This will discourage fishers from catching undersized fish, etc.
- | Strengthen internal policies to protect workers' rights (e.g., sexual harassment).
- | Reduce freight cost.
- | Buy farmers produce at a higher price to ensure the income of farmers.
- | Create innovation to enable contactless deliveries, invest in better storage capacity, establish remuneration and pre-payment for crews' salaries.
- | Businesses must adapt themselves to think about the new social responsibility. Many businesses that closed down during the pandemic are letting go of their workers and are not taking any responsibility for them.

Q4

***Aside from making public recommendations for businesses and governments, has your organisation initiated programmes and initiatives to address the challenges that you identified?***

- | Lobbying for the enactment of regional and national policy frameworks on building back better from adverse impact of Covid-19 which will require a broad multi-stakeholder support.
- | Conducted a workshop on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace – Awareness and Training on 9 July 2020 for Fiji WIMA. Trainer was from the Fiji Women's Rights Movement.
- | One Ocean Hub - set up for holistic approach to problem solving - but at the moment we have no associated scholarships or internships to link in for Pacific Island grown ideas and ways of thinking - this was donor restricted in the funding application. We need to know from local or regional private sector and government what type of research is needed to help them and support from them to utilise and support local expertise and knowledge to achieve win-win collaborative outcomes. Often research scholarship topics are driven by overseas people and donors, not home grown of what we know needs to be done to be effective and make a difference to beneficiaries on the ground Example, ability to test for potential fish poisoning via harmful algae, local people in remote areas are dying and before Covid-19 this issue was impacting into Fiji overseas fish trade success - now these trade related jobs may be lost. We need private sector investment in research and development for this issue particularly for human resource capacity (someone with the time) to link existing local people with expertise together so they can problem solve effectively. we need forums to create links between sectors - e.g. tourism and natural resource economists and scientists and legal experts plus policy makers - everyone is working in silo's - it is not working and degradation of natural systems then creates more diseases like Covid-19 will continue.
- | Documenting CSOs initiatives to mitigate the impact of pandemic; ongoing conduct of land conflict monitoring; and in the process of drafting ANGOC Statement on Covid-19.
- | The LMMA Network is coordinating community surveys through its partners across the Pacific region to investigate the associated impacts of Covid-19 on island and coastal fishing communities. We hope these results will be able to benefit not only the communities, but also be able to influence policy makers to not make hasty

decisions when it comes to natural resource management, especially as it will be these resources the communities will need to rely on in the long-term. Support required is increased recognition of community-based resource management efforts and political will.

| Submission of position papers to Congress and the Senate with regards to Stimulus Fund for farmers, Fund drive for relief operations, promoting alternative farming through agro ecology Series of webinar national and regional forums to promote peasant issues and demands.

| Indonesia Ocean Justice Initiative have helped the government to identify the increasing threat of illegal fishing during this pandemic.

| LPN initiated 'Hand to Hand' project in response to the emergency needs to the migrant community. We are working with the migrant community workers as they are helping us to reach out to the communities. At the moment, the Thai government has not seen the importance of migrant workers who have been neglected pretty much during the pandemic period. What we would like to see is that country to country cooperation at government level to ensure the safety of migrant workers.

## CARE ECONOMY

Q1

***What challenges are you seeing in terms of Covid-19's impact on the care economy?***

| Lock downs and quarantines policies are essential to suppressing Covid-19. But they can trap women with more care works at home and because of economic burden during Covid-19, there was an increase in domestic abuse. Because of family members staying at home, working from home, and learning from home for their children, it impacts on more domestic/household works that should be done by women, such as taking care of their children and assisting their children during online school, taking care of the sick or elderly of their family members, cooking, cleaning the house etc. All of these works are not paid. For working women, they should manage their time for doing domestic/household work and working at home. For poor women, they should think of ways to survive and cope every day and even forced to leave the house to make a living.

| Many migrant workers failed to work abroad and many of them lost their jobs.

| Women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The childcare and household responsibilities have fallen entirely on women.

| Multiplication of women's care burdens and deepening of women's time-poverty and the absence of truly gender-responsive measures in government responses.

| Covid-19 pandemic exacerbates the care crisis that many societies have already undergone for long time. It provides the momentum to reframe the thinking and policies around care and care economy.

| Increased hours of labour in the informal sector of the care economy vs lay-offs in the formal sector because of Covid-19 hindering economic gain and causing lay-offs in the lines of nurses and similar care personnel (in a number of countries that are also experiencing an economic crisis). While the visible care-economy was rhetorically celebrated but still exploited and subject to discrimination and labour injustice, the invisible care labour was stuck in a paradox: domestic workers for example, in contexts of migration, were expected to keep households clean, yet treated as vectors of disease. While treating their employees as vectors of disease, employers did not provide them with PPE. In general, all forms of discrimination have intensified. Especially in contexts of migration as well as



trafficking. Some domestic workers are stranded with their abusers on borders due to Covid-19 border closure, etc. Care labour within the private sphere, such as domestic work, is now increasingly losing its 'income-generating' ability. Our affiliates are looking at re-skilling, however, that is not the justice for the sector. We need to be able to make ends meet while being able to valorise care-labour.

Domestic workers are invisible to government relief services. Domestic workers faced employment uncertainty and health risk.

Exclusion from relief and financial assistance, discrimination and stigmatisation against migrant domestic workers, erosion of rights, loss of jobs, and job insecurity.

Q2

***What are your recommendations for governments, businesses, civil society, international institutions or any other actors to address the impacts of Covid-19 on the care economy? (You can provide links if you have made public recommendations already.)***

Ensure the access of job, ensure the health access.

Provide childcare support for working mothers.

The recommendations embedded in these [materials](#) remain relevant in COVID times and are even more urgent today.

[The impacts of Covid-19 on Domestic Workers and Policy Responses.](#)

Provide legal and social protection to domestic workers. Campaign for recognition of contribution of DWs with employers and society.

[We are Migrants.](#)

Q3

***What is the most imaginative response or idea you have come across that addresses issues in the care economy?***

The care work done by women is unpaid, which is done in the context of social relation within household or family. In the context of macro-economy, care work for family is often overlooked, furthermore is often not being considered as productive work that contributes to the economy. This situation brings overburden to women and the lack of appreciation towards care work in Indonesia. Therefore, we should calculate how much money that should be paid for care work done by women, and advocate it to the government.

Alternative economic income for society.

More women in trade unions.

Tax credits for care work.

Feminist activists and scholars have successfully brought the issues of care into the arena of public policy and illustrate the overlooked links between care and economy. Challenges we are facing now is two-folded -- one is to strengthen the link between the care and economy, another is to delink them, so that profound issues of care in family and society and its intrinsic values for human society and ecologic environment can be addressed in holistic and systematic way, rather than merely in the realm of economic policies.

Under the pandemic, Portugal responded best because it granted citizenship rights to migrants/refugees, temporarily.

Register domestic workers with Minister of Labour. Advocate for legal and social protection of domestic workers. Promote using of employment contract and Code of Conduct in employing domestic workers.

Inclusion of all care workers in the Covid-19 response programme of governments, legalising all undocumented migrant workers, removal of agency fees, easier and direct process of employment contracts.

## GIG ECONOMY

Q1

***In the gig economy, what challenges are you seeing in terms of Covid-19's impact on the rights of workers?***

The lack of recognition of their status, as well as social protection.

In the developing world - mobility restrictions and changing consumption behaviour are reducing the demand for services. Because they are not registered workers, are not formally recognised by the state, and the relationship between platforms and workers is a partnership, gig workers are not entitled to worker benefits and are not compensated for the loss of income.

Lack of safety protection and equipment (PPEs).

Sudden drop in income due to lack of gig jobs.

Sudden increase in demand (e.g., food delivery) and tougher competition. "But do gig workers have workers' rights to begin with?"

No penalty to employers even when they violate labour laws.

Workers are more vulnerable in terms of job, income and social security. Workers' rights protection is weakening. Gig economy also prevent workers from joining or establishing a union.

Absence of employee entitlements/employments rights such as minimum income, paid sick leave, medical insurance for workers in the gig economy as labour laws do not apply to them.

Lack of minimum pay- uncertainty of demand and subsequently, of pay, in light of Covid-19 related lockdowns, restrictions amplified by lack of minimum pay requirements. For example, in ride-hailing services like Uber, drivers paid on the completion of rides; the demand for rides however has been compromised severely. During the lockdown months, Ola experienced a decline in revenue by 95 percent, while Uber had a 80-percent year-on-year decline in its global business in April.

Occupational safety. Gig economy workers in ride-hailing or food-delivery services are frontline workers who, along with their families, are exposed to high risk of infection. Risk is aggravated by companies' failure to provide adequate PPE.

Security in the form of medical insurance might be conditional or at company's discretion. For examples, Grab in Singapore has extended income support to drivers who continue to remain active through lockdowns. Uber in India is giving cash support to a limited set of drivers, without disclosing the criteria.

The uncertainty around platform workers' employment status – who are often classified as "independent contractors" – puts them beyond the pale of labour regulation and guarantees. Pursuing a judicial route to establish an employer-employee relationship has not been wholly encouraging, as several courts in USA, Spain and Belgium have upheld their independent contractor status. Even in jurisdictions where workers win judicial battles on employment status, such as California, they face enormous pushback and resistance from platform companies.

The lack of employee status also denies platform workers social security and minimum wage guarantees. While some progress on this front has been made in Europe, this is not so in countries in the global South where non-standard work arrangements have historically proliferated (e.g., India, Kenya). The proliferation

of subcontracting arrangements also muddies the chain of accountability towards platform workers, and leaves several work arrangements in the shadows.

These challenges for workers' rights have intensified during the coronavirus pandemic. In India, our research reveals that on-demand delivery workers have compelled to work without PPE, and confronted with reduced incentives and diminished earnings. Funds collected by platform companies such as Ola, Uber and Urban Clap through corporate social responsibility wings in the name of providing relief to their workforce have not percolated to the workers, and there is little transparency in disbursement.

In a data economy, workers' rights are intrinsically connected to their data rights. The absence of specific protection for workers' rights to explanation results in platform companies being let off the hook for opaque and unilateral algorithmic management practices. As experiences of trade unions in the United Kingdom reveal, a general personal data protection framework is not enough to protect platform workers against the excesses of workplace surveillance. A standalone legislation is required. Also, workers' economic rights in the data generated in the course of the labouring process needs to be protected. For example, Uber drivers have a right to collectively pool the data they generate through their rides and generate business intelligence for their own alternative cooperative platform.

The challenges are job security, social protection, and PPE. They work based on on-call and on-demand employment and not protected by any social security and health insurance. Those challenges are pre-existed. When the pandemic hits and governments impose measurement, gig workers are impacted most. They are no longer equipped with masks/gloves by the companies. Riding motorcycle had been prohibited to avoid the broader spreading virus. For the ones who have reliant on physical contacts with consumers/clients such as baby sitter, massage therapist and beauticians, they lost jobs.

In the new normal situation, there are passenger's limitation and work frequency restriction. For home caterers, they lost income too because people concern that the foods can spread the virus. At the same time, women get increased care burdens, given the husband and children are supposed to stay and have online class/remote work from home. Because the health insurance does not cover them, many cases show that hospitals rejected gig workers because the test toolkits are high cost and the public insurance does not include the test. It is also challenging for those who made bank loan and should pay a monthly instalment for buying capital goods to provide service work. They are trapped by too many loans.

Q2

***What are your recommendations for governments and businesses to address the impact of Covid-19? You can provide links if you have made public recommendations already.***

### **For Governments**

[REFSA's recommendations.](#)

[CSIS's recommendations.](#)

Enact legislation that will make it harder for business to use workers as self-employed (e.g., AB5 in California).

Treat self-employed workers equally to employees and provide allowances.

Protect gig workers through provision of unemployment benefit.

Dismiss government representatives at the Arbitration Council.

Strictly control corruption of labour officers.

Penalise employers who did union busting and labour law violations.

Wage subsidy and OSH protection.

- Extend minimum wage guarantees to platform workers by building on an Universal Labour Guarantee approach that is agnostic to employment status.
- Enable workers to come to the negotiating table to evolve practices to ensure fair wages; Uphold the social dialogue commitments in the spirit of tripartism.
- Develop a comprehensive social protection scheme that is inclusive of workers in non-standard work arrangements, including platform workers.
- Protect the occupational health and safety of workers, and ensure decent working conditions.
- Explore portable insurance and benefit schemes.
- [APLWD's recommendations.](#)

### **For Businesses**

- Recognise trade union as its social partner and discuss distribution of PPEs, etc.
- Not to use the crisis as a union busting tool.
- Fair share the benefit gained from the business.
- Protecting gig workers in the work environment through training and education.
- Providing health access for all and expanding paid leave
- Securing income and livelihoods of gig workers and small businesses.
- Without defaulting, make the requisite contributions to state's unorganised social security funds towards protecting platform workers' well-being, including the provision of health insurance, PPE, masks, sanitisers, etc.
- Recognise workers' rights to collective bargaining.
- Increase transparency with respect to workers' personal data, i.e., what data is collected, how it is processed, and for what purposes it is used.
- Uphold workers' "right to an explanation" with respect to algorithmic management practices of platform companies.
- Ensure social security funds created to support workers during Covid-19 are disbursed with full transparency.

Q3

### ***What is the most imaginative response or idea you have come across that addresses the opportunities or challenges you have identified?***

- Reclassification of gig economy workers as "independent employees".
- Basic income support for the duration of the pandemic.
- Development of trade union movement by rideshare drivers and food delivery riders in various countries.
- New legislation such as AB5 in California.
- Campaign and advocacy to government and buyers.
- Applying flexicurity.
- James Farrar, who has taken Uber to court in the UK and won the battle for workers' employment status, is now using violations of the GDPR, in particular the use of drivers' personal data, to leverage labour guarantees in the platform economy.
- In Uruguay, market access for platform companies such as Uber is contingent on the company providing mandatory social security to all its workers.
- The cooperative federation SEWA in India is exploring the possibility of setting up alternative platforms based on cooperatives principles for its women workers and women farmers.
- Guarantee wages to all impacted workers.

***Aside from making public recommendations for businesses and governments, has your organisation initiated programmes and initiatives to address the challenges that you identified?***

| Apart from producing reports, we aim to highlight the scenario and challenges faced by the gig workers in Malaysia via different medium and outputs, including but not limited to virtual seminars, podcasts, etc. Any funding support to run these events would be critical.

| Collaboration with labour rights organisation and trade unions including CSOs.

| Through our project 'Centering Women in India's digitalising economy' supported by the European Commission, we are exploring how to support women workers in the digital economy and are exploring alternative digital solutions and platforms for their empowerment. We also conducted a (forthcoming) study on platform work, supported by the ILO, to evolve an agenda for platform workers' rights, particularly centred on workers in the global south. Additionally, we also contributed to the trade union IFAT's (Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers) survey on occupational health and safety for ride-hailing drivers in India.