

Envisioning the New Normal




TINGUENA

Building Just Systems

Months after a global pandemic exposed cracks in our systems, a question hangs in the air: what will the new normal look like? COVID-19 disproportionately impacted marginalized peoples, making clear that normal as we knew it benefitted very few. Let's not return to systems that sacrifice people for power, political gain and corporate profit.

The opportunity has arrived to rebuild systems and create a new normal that ensures justice and equality, that is people-focused and rooted in the expertise of local communities. For 45 years, Inter Pares' counterparts and allies have been putting pieces into place to support these new systems. Their actions, analysis and vision offer a roadmap towards a more equal future.

This *Bulletin*, informed by the thoughts and experiences of our community, shares a vision for a new normal that promotes health, economic justice, gender justice and food sovereignty. May it offer guidance as we work to build a more just and equal world. 

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Reimagining Healthcare in Canada and Around the World

Pauline Worsfold's schedule would exhaust us mere mortals. A frontline nurse, she is also Secretary-Treasurer of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions and Chairperson of the Canadian Health Coalition, an Inter Pares counterpart. For decades, Pauline has been at the forefront of healthcare activism nationally, and in her home province of Alberta.

Envisioning a post-COVID transformation, Pauline says, "This is our opportunity to reimagine healthcare. If I could wave my magic wand, we would have a



seamless system with mental health support, home care, pharmacare, dental care, and national regulations for seniors' care. Our public system would be about wellness, not sickness. Now's the time and our only problem will be not asking for enough."

Pauline sees privatization and the profit motive as a threat to this vision. "Profiteers can't be the puppeteers of the system – making money off the backs of

the sick, frail and elderly. When people ask how we can afford all of this, I note that investments in pharmacare would save us between \$5 and \$13 billion¹."

Pauline's vision is an integrated one. Recently, a young man came into her care. He had broken several bones when he was thrown out of the dumpster where he had spent the night. "The social determinants of health should be our lens. Broken bones can heal but what about mental health and addictions counselling? What about homelessness? What about nutrition and poverty? I want to live in a country and in a world where I know that young man would be supported."

Inter Pares sees parallels between Pauline's vision and that of our international counterparts, including Likhaan Center for Women's Health in the Philippines and the Mae Tao Clinic and Backpack Health Workers Team in Thailand and Burma. Together, we all share a vision of healthcare rooted in equity and compassion. 

¹ See: www.healthcoalition.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Economic-case-for-pharmacare-4.pdf

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

What's Taxation Got to Do With It?

When we talk about addressing inequality or women's rights, the focus is generally on spending tax dollars – for example, creating a day care program. Such programs are important.

But how taxes are generated – who is taxed and how – has a significant effect on inequality.

Ghana, for example, has had a decade of high economic growth, with effective poverty reduction and women's rights programs. Yet inequality in Ghana is higher than ever, and women still face widespread poverty.

The problem is that the "fixes" can't keep up with the inequalities and poverty created by the tax collection system itself.

Ghanaians point out that their national tax policies are shaped by pressure from multinational corporations to reduce their taxes. And international financial institutions – such as the International Monetary Fund – recommend that governments raise more revenue with flat-rate consumption taxes like sales taxes, while urging governments to give more tax incentives and tax breaks to increase foreign investment. The result of these policies is to increase taxes on the poor, resulting in greater



JEAN SYMES INTER PARES

gender and income disparities for Ghanaians.

With the health and economic ravages of COVID-19 firmly in their minds, Ghanaian activists see an opportunity to advocate “taxing for equality”. Most

revenues, they say, should be raised through progressive personal and corporate income taxes –with corporations paying their fair share – and far less from flat-rate consumption taxes. They also want to examine

Ghana’s special extractive industry tax regimes and tax incentives and deductions, that only benefit those with high incomes.

Together with the Global Alliance for Tax Justice, Tax Justice Network Africa, Canadians for Tax Fairness and Queen’s University, Inter Pares is supporting* Ghanaian civil society’s efforts to generate solid evidence-based tax options that address gender and income inequalities and poverty, stabilize the economy, and produce tax revenues that can fund the social and physical infrastructure for a better future. [E](#)

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GENDER JUSTICE

Violence, Discrimination and Inequalities: Revealing flaws in the system



USE-ANNE LEVELLE/INTER PARES

In the global North and South, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and caused an increase in physical, structural and economic violence experienced by women.

Amanda Dale, Chair of the Inter Pares Board of Directors, is an academic and international human rights activist. She emphasizes that Canada is no exception when it comes to

violence against women, a pandemic even more prevalent among Indigenous women.

In El Salvador, La Colectiva Feminista para el Desarrollo Local, an organization that confronts violence against women and advocates for the recognition of their rights, also noted an increase in gender-based violence during the lockdown, as well as an escalation of militarized, repressive government control.


It is difficult to see a positive future when discussing gender-based violence. One can hope that this crisis will lead to new forms of intersectional feminist advocacy. Amanda Dale says that such advocacy must demand that tackling the gender-based violence pandemic be made a priority, now that it has been demonstrated that coordinated government efforts are possible.

The pandemic is also making it necessary to find new [PAGE 4](#) ▶

ways to reach isolated women. To this end, La Colectiva has set up new telephone lines to offer women psychological and legal support.

The lockdown has given rise to new spaces for international

solidarity, such as webinars, which bring together women who are sometimes isolated but share the same feminist struggle. Amanda Dale says, "More than ever, we are in contact with women all over the world.

Organizations like La Colectiva Feminista demonstrate the determination and positivity that all women must hold on to so to avoid falling into despair and inaction." 

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Building Resilient and Just Food Systems




The COVID-19 pandemic has led to massive loss of life and livelihoods. In its wake, global hunger is expected to double by year's end. The pandemic has revealed deep inequalities in our societies and the vulnerabilities of a globalized and heavily concentrated food system that needs to change.

For decades, Inter Pares and our counterparts have worked to build more resilient and just food systems. In Telangana, India, women's collectives supported by the Deccan Development Society have secured land, grow food from their own saved seeds, and rely on biodiversity and the

use of natural inputs to improve soil health. Through local processing of grains, and direct marketing to consumers, they also assert control over markets. This food sovereignty has enabled them to weather droughts, the 2008 food crisis, and today's pandemic.

In West Africa, Inter Pares supports farmers' organizations dedicated to preserving agricultural biodiversity and farmers' autonomy. Through the *Vivres de souveraineté* (Foods of Sovereignty) program, communities have built up local seed reserves, growing drought-resistant varieties such as sorghum, millets and fonio, and practice agroecology to not depend on foreign seeds or inputs. With the disruptions in supply chains due to COVID-19, and the

ongoing climate crisis, we see the wisdom of this approach.

In Canada, worsening rates of hunger and the tragic deaths of migrant farm workers have shed light on deep inequalities in our food system. In 2011, Inter Pares and allies brought together 3,500 activists from across the country to offer solutions. The Peoples Food Policy called for policies to protect migrant workers, further localize food systems, support ecological agriculture, enact a poverty elimination program, and bring in a universal school food program. At the time, the ideas were met with skepticism. Today, these policy solutions are advancing at the municipal, provincial and federal levels. Let's keep up the momentum to make them a reality. 

INTER PARES

221 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6P1 Canada

Tel: 613-563-4801 • Toll free: 1-866-563-4801 • Fax: 613-594-4704 • info@interpares.ca • www.interpares.ca

With the support of thousands of Canadians, Inter Pares works in Canada and around the world with social change organizations who share the analysis that poverty and injustice are caused by inequalities within and among nations, and who are working to promote peace, and social and economic justice in their communities and societies.

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