



Media Contact:

Sumit Galhotra
Senior Communications Associate
sgalhotra@womendeliver.org
+ 1 (551) 257-6085

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As COVID-19 Exacerbates Inequalities, Women Deliver Elevates 300 Young Advocates Taking a Stand for a More Gender-Equal World

Advocates ages 15-28 from 96 countries and a range of diverse identities join award-winning Young Leaders Program

New York, NY, 10 June 2020 — During a historic moment when women and young people are on the frontlines of both the COVID-19 response and worldwide protests for racial justice, Women Deliver — a leading global advocate for gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women — announced a diverse new class of Women Deliver Young Leaders: [300 young changemakers](#) from 96 countries around the world who are committed to advancing gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the world that if we truly want to deliver health, wellbeing, and dignity for all, [girls, women, and young people must be front and center](#) in emergency responses, in social and economic recovery efforts, and in how we strengthen our health systems for the long term,” said **Katja Iversen, President/CEO of Women Deliver**. “As we witness young people responding to both new crises and old injustices, it’s clear that their leadership is fundamental to meaningful change. The Women Deliver Young Leaders Program is here to partner with young people, elevate their leadership, amplify their voices, and share knowledge and resources during this unprecedented time and beyond.”

Over the next two years, these 300 remarkable Women Deliver Young Leaders — chosen from more than **5,600 applicants** — will receive training and resources to extend their influence for gender equality and actively shape programs and policies that affect the health and rights of girls, women, and young people. These advocates will gain exclusive opportunities to take their work to new heights, including enhancing their advocacy knowledge and skills through Women Deliver’s digital learning platform, building their network through workshops and other convenings, receiving access to resources and grant funding, amplifying their influence through media and speaking opportunities, and participating in the Women Deliver 2022 Conference — the world’s largest conference on gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women.

The Women Deliver Young Leaders Class of 2020 represents young advocates from all over the world and a range of diverse identities, professions, and advocacy experience, including:

- **Nafisa Tasneem**, a 26-year-old medical volunteer who trains local leaders in southwestern Bangladesh on health, hygiene, and sanitation for girls and women, as well as girls’ rights.

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Working overtime to respond to the pandemic, Nafisa contracted COVID-19, recovered, and became the first woman in Bangladesh to donate her plasma.

- **Yidnekachew Mogessie**, a 24-year-old Ethiopian doctor advocating for gender equality and youth-friendly reproductive health services. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, he's been a volunteer advisor for the Ministry of Health's Adolescent and Youth Health Technical Working Group — helping to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on girls and women.
- **Natalia Norori**, a 26-year-old Nicaraguan global health advocate who resides in Costa Rica and is passionate about making healthcare research available to all. Throughout the pandemic, she has been working with the Open Access Button and the Open Data Charter to find ways to measure, respond to, and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 through open and inclusive research and data sharing, recognizing that the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 particularly hurt women from complex backgrounds, such as young immigrant women who refuse to seek help for fear of being deported.
- **Agita Pasaribu**, a 27-year-old Indonesian lawyer whose company uses artificial intelligence to put an end to cyberbullying and detect early symptoms of mental illness. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, she has launched a new platform that provides free mental health support and legal information for domestic violence victims.
- **Olorunisola (Sola) Rebecca Abe**, a 28-year-old Nigerian journalist who reports on influential women that inspire change and speaks to young girls about menstrual hygiene and management. With schools closed due to COVID-19, Olorunisola has turned to her online social media platforms to share important stories and resources.
- **Rukumani (Ruku) Tripathi**, a 26-year-old midwife from Nepal who — together with colleagues at the Midwifery Society of Nepal (MIDSON) — helped start a toll-free number for pregnant women unable to reach a health facility during the COVID-19 lockdown. She's also providing online counseling for women of reproductive age.
- **Ashlee Burnett**, a 22-year-old poet from Trinidad and Tobago who uses spoken word poetry to engage students on gender-based violence and violence and extremism. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, her organization, Feminitt, has been sharing information for survivors of domestic violence on how to access assistance and leveraging social media platforms to educate their audience. She also sat on the Youth COVID-19 Response Initiative Committee to submit ideas that ensure the response and recovery plan acknowledges the diverse roles women play in the country's economic recovery.

The new class represents **96** countries and collectively speaks **126** languages and dialects. It also represents groups that have often been marginalized, including:

- **94** Young Leaders who identify as LGBTQIA+,
- **60** who belong to a religious or ethnic minority group,
- **29** belonging to an indigenous community,
- **18** who have been forcibly displaced from their community or country,
- **15** persons with disabilities, and
- **8** living with HIV.



The Class of 2020 also includes **57** young people between the ages of 15 and 19 — the program’s largest contingent of adolescents to date.

“The great diversity of the Women Deliver Young Leaders Program offers advocates and activists with unique profiles a space to shed light on injustice and discrimination and opportunities to advance the rights of women, LGBTQIA+ people, and young people through an intersectional lens. It reminds us that public and social systems are not equally accessible for vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and others, which has become more apparent in the time of COVID-19,” said **Women Deliver Young Leader and youth programming consultant Hai Ha Vu Thi, who is based in Vietnam.** “It is thus a pivotal time to speak up, to highlight inequalities, and co-create inclusive solutions. I am excited to be part of this unique platform and to learn from exceptional individuals from all parts of the world.”

This was the program’s most competitive application process yet, with more than **5,600 applications from 167 countries for 300 spots — nearly double the applications received in the previous application round.**

Women Deliver selected all the Young Leaders for their potential to have a lasting impact on the lives of girls and women. As a group, they have already driven tangible progress on a wide range of issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, LGBTQIA+ rights, peace and security, water and sanitation, gender-based violence, education, climate and environment, political participation, and youth engagement.

Since 2010, Women Deliver’s award-winning Young Leaders Program has trained, supported, and elevated 700 young advocates who are tackling the greatest challenges facing girls, women, and young people in their communities and countries. The 300 Young Leaders from the Class of 2020 will bring this number to 1,000 young people from 148 countries. The program has:

- Trained 469 Young Leaders through a digital learning platform.
- Supported 200+ Young Leader speaking and advocacy opportunities in 2019 through logistical, financial, and technical assistance.
- Brought together 140 Young Leaders at local workshops and 440 Young Leaders at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference.
- Awarded \$750,000 in grants for advocacy projects.

Bios and photos of the new class of Women Deliver Young Leaders can be found [here](#).

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About Women Deliver: *Women Deliver is a leading global advocate that champions gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women. Our advocacy drives investment — political and financial — in the lives of girls and women. We harness evidence and unite diverse voices to spark commitment to gender equality. And we get results. Anchored in sexual and reproductive health, we advocate for the rights of girls and women across every aspect of their lives.*

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Started in 2010, the award-winning Women Deliver Young Leaders Program connects passionate young advocates with the platforms, people, and resources to amplify their influence on a larger scale. With an emphasis on sexual and reproductive health and rights, Women Deliver elevates the work of young people taking a stand for gender equality. The program has reached 1,000 young advocates from 148 countries.

Women Deliver is grateful to Global Affairs Canada, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Fondation Botnar, Novo Foundation, Oak Foundation, Unilever, and our entire community of supporters who provide the financial resources we need to advocate for the health and rights of girls and women everywhere. More information on our supporters can be found [here](#).

Learn more at womendeliver.org/youth and follow us on Twitter at [@YouthDeliver](#) and [@WomenDeliver](#).