

WOMEN AND G20: INCLUSION OR EXCLUSION

South Feminist Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

The Group of Twenty (G20), made up of 19 countries¹ and the European Union, is the international forum that brings together the world's major economies. G20, formed in 1999, was conceived as a bloc that would bring together the most important industrialised and developing economies to discuss international economic and financial stability for the world². Its members account for more than 80% of world Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 75% of global trade, 60% of the population of the planet³, produces 80% of global greenhouse gas emissions⁴ and has emerged as an important agenda-setter. It is a self-appointed 'elite and exclusive' group that sets economic and financial guidelines for the world. A majority of the countries that are at the margins of economic power are out of this bloc. Meanwhile, multinational corporations, International Financial Institutions (IFIs,) such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), play a significant role in influencing the G20's decisions to collectively drive neo-liberal capitalist globalisation models globally for economic growth based on free trade regimes. G20 represents world power and can be an important advocate for human rights, as well as social and economic justice including women's empowerment and gender equality for all. Unfortunately, it has not engaged with these issues comprehensively and its policies have only benefited a few, mostly the extremely rich, at the expense of the rest. It has so far demonstrated an adhoc or afterthought approach to women's issues and has paid little attention to gender equality. It is well established that economic growth alone doesn't translate into improved standards of life with dignity for all people. Trade agreements, IFI-funded development projects, and investments without an integrated gendered approach and without engaged participation of people, especially women, are neither inclusive nor sustainable models of development and can cause more harm than good to people's lives and environments.

Women, including gender non-conforming and trans-women, constitute a majority of the world's poor and face multiple forms of oppression, exclusion, and discrimination on grounds of gender identity, caste, race, class, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, disability, literacy and age etc. Women are on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis as they make up the bulk of essential

workers, including 70% of global health and social care workers⁵. Women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid work at home compared to men and face higher incidences of violence. All women work, whether paid or unpaid, but their work is invisible, unaccounted for, undervalued and under-appreciated. They have gender-prescribed roles to provide food, water, fuel and care for themselves and for their families. Lack of access to infrastructure, energy, appropriate technology and the impacts of the climate crisis further add to this burden. Women face structural barriers to access, control and ownership over resources, causing dispossession of land and livelihoods. Women's reproductive work remains undervalued and unpaid and they face discrimination in labour markets due to their maternal responsibilities. Women continue to bear a disproportionate burden owing to global macroeconomic policy changes and, are worse affected due to vaccine apartheid which has deepened inequalities in accessing the more-desired types and qualities of vaccines. Without the informed, meaningful and full social, political and economic participation of all women in decision making processes, there can be no sustainable development. Limiting efforts to only the representation of women will not be fruitful; there is a need to ensure their diverse and active participation in all the processes within G20 spaces. There is, besides, an under-representation of women in leadership, governance and decision-making roles in all facets of G20 countries.

From rampant protectionism to climate change – the global economy is facing a multitude of challenges. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the economic well-being of people. The fallout from the pandemic has been especially damaging to the economic well-being of women—worsening gender inequality by crippling women's employment and earning opportunities while exacerbating household challenges such as violence against women. Gender inequality is certainly not a new feature of G20 economies; only around a third or less of women are formally employed in India, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, and low rates of female labor-force participation have long mired economies worldwide^{5a}. But since the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, women's employment rates have fallen precipitously in many nations, usually at a quicker pace than those of men. Women are confronting additional challenges of increased poverty of the household

¹The Group of Twenty (G20) is comprised of Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, EU, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, UK and USA.

²McBride, J and Chatzky, A. (2019). The Group of Twenty, Council on Foreign Relations, Accessed at: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/group-twenty>

³About the G20, Accessed at: <https://www.g20.org/about-the-g20.html>

⁴Climate change: G20 leaders 'largely avoiding firm goals' ahead of COP26, says report on draft statement, 30 October 2021, Accessed at: <https://news.sky.com/story/climate-change-g20-leaders-largely-avoiding-firm-goals-ahead-of-cop26-says-report-on-draft-statement-12454985>

⁵WHO, Delivered by Women, Led by Men: A Gender and Equity Analysis of the Global Health and Social Workforce, Accessed at: https://www.who.int/hrh/resources/en_exec-summ_delivered-by-women-led-by-men.pdf

^{5a}International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database, Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15 +), Data retrieved on June 15, 2021, Accessed at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?view=map>

and increased burden of multiple work, including care work - both paid and unpaid - to support themselves and the family at any cost. These multiple crises have severely impacted the lives of all, particularly poor women both in rural and urban areas, especially in the global South. People across the world are looking at global leaders of G20, for vision, leadership and support. Can G20 rise to this challenge? Shrinking democratic spaces, economic and environmental crises, the health crisis unleashed by the pandemic, raise a critical need to evaluate the effectiveness of G20 for people, especially women and girls. How inclusive and supportive is the G20 to women's issues in its policy formulations and agendas? Has G20 been an open, transparent and gender inclusive space for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), especially for feminists and women leaders? What has been the experiences of women from the global South engaging with G20? What are the expectations, challenges, and limitations for gender equality? Are there opportunities too?

These questions have been part of several debates and discussions around G20 since its inception. Feminists have had mixed feelings around relevance, and productiveness of G20 engagements and have, in general, 'dismissed' it as an 'elite' bloc that only works for the extremely wealthy and hence a 'total waste of time'. Additionally, feminists from the South, including members of BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW), strongly believe G20 to be a 'North' driven bloc with no space for the South's agenda. However, decisions made by G20 do impact our daily lives. Therefore, in spite of skepticism around the G20, BFW and several other global-South feminists do make attempts to engage with it, fuelled by hope.

To understand some of the concerns around the G20, as shared by BFW members and other voices from the South, BFW and PWESCR, along with partners -The Inequality Movement, Gen Dev Centre for Research and Innovation, Espaço Feminista, FEIM and Feminist Land Platform - hosted a webinar **Women included or excluded in G20: Implications on Gender Equality** on August 2nd 2021. The online seminar provided an engaging space and brought experts from different regions and countries to share their views.

This paper will broadly examine the G20 policy frameworks and Summit declarations and also critically look at all other initiatives, tools and mechanisms within G20 and their role

in advocating for women's rights and gender equality. The aim of this paper is to capture key analyses of the feminist critiques around G20 and to take stock of how gender-inclusive G20 spaces are. What have been the shared observations and experiences of feminist engagements at these spaces, what are the collective recommendations and what is the way forward? The paper will, in addition, capture the reflections and observations highlighted in the Online Seminar.

WOMEN AND THE G20: A SPRINKLING OF GENDER HERE AND THERE!

The G20 was created in response to both the financial crises that arose in a number of emerging economies in the 1990s and to a growing recognition that some of these countries were not adequately represented in global economic discussions and governance. Since December 1999, Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors have met annually⁶. G20 has declared itself as the "premier forum of international economic cooperation"⁷ to confront the most pressing world economy challenges⁸.

The objectives of the G20 are⁹:

- (1) Policy coordination between its members in order to achieve global economic stability and sustainable growth;
- (2) To promote financial regulations that reduce risks and prevent future financial crises; and
- (3) To create new international financial architecture.

Sixteen G20 Summits have been hosted with the participation of the respective Heads of State and government since 2008 and different countries have rotated responsibilities as hosts. The G20 has committed itself to a goal of shared and inclusive growth but it is disappointing how little attention has been paid to issues of gender equality in its policy frameworks, summits and declarations¹⁰.

G20 Framework:

In the aftermath of the financial crisis, the key role of G20 has been to drive the global economy and inclusive growth as laid out in the Framework for Strong, Sustainable and Balanced Growth adopted in 2009, during the Pittsburgh Summit. The framework provides broad guidelines for economic policy and governance for G20. This was further

⁶The Group of Twenty- G20, Accessed at: <http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/g20-august-2012.pdf>

⁷At the 2009 Pittsburgh Summit, the Heads of State and Government decided to institutionalize the G20 as the main forum for global economic and financial cooperation. The first Summit was G20 Toronto Summit 2010 in new capacity as the premier forum of international economic cooperation.

⁸Heintz, J. (2013). Missing Women: The G20, Gender Equality and Global Economic Governance, Heinrich BöllStiftung, Accessed at: <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/521-missing-women-the-g20-gender-equality-and-global-economic-governance>

⁹The Group of Twenty- G20, Accessed at: <http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/g20-august-2012.pdf>

¹⁰Heintz, J. (2013). Missing Women: The G20, Gender Equality and Global Economic Governance, Heinrich BöllStiftung, Accessed at: <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/521-missing-women-the-g20-gender-equality-and-global-economic-governance>

elaborated in successive Summits and the emphasis placed on growth to be shared, inclusive and sustainable¹¹. It is unfortunate that the G20 framework doesn't mention women or gender – not even once! However, as James Heinz argues in his paper¹², that for commitments to be shared and inclusive growth, poverty reduction and the narrowing of economic inequalities imply the need to incorporate a gender perspective into the formulation of economic policy. The international development world is increasingly realising that gender equality is at the core of sustainable development and inclusive growth. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, acknowledge that gender equality is not only a fundamental right, but a prerequisite for a peaceful and prosperous world. *There is no sustainable development without gender equality*¹³. Countries that ensure equal access for women and girls to education, health care, decent work, assets, and economic resources, promote their political participation and decision-making power, and protect them from violence and gender-based discrimination are best positioned to achieve sustainable development and economic growth.

As a bloc of global leaders, the G20 has important roles to play in both recognising women as independent economic agents contributing to economic growth and development and promoting women and men's equal rights. There is no development if women and girls don't play a leading role and aren't put at the centre of policies, but the concept of inclusive growth within the G20 has not included women, and very little attention has been paid to issues of gender equality in its Summit declarations and its policy positions¹⁴.

The G20 has a gender-blind approach to policies which are formulated without any reference to gender and assume that financial and economic policies are gender neutral in impact. Gender-blind policies are not gender neutral in impact. This is, in fact, a fundamental problem with this group's approach to gender. The existing prevalence and persistence of gender inequalities rooted in social norms, culture, as well as economic inequalities does impact men and women differently. If gender is not fully integrated in policy formulation, then the danger is, that in reality, it might further perpetuate gender inequalities and gaps. Therefore, it is important to proactively incorporate gender analysis in all aspects of G20 policies.

Following the global financial crisis of 2008, fiscal policy continues to be the G20s major concern. The crisis resulted in a fall of government tax revenue and an increase in

demand on public spending to provide social protection, unemployment insurance and additional social services. Several governments were forced to borrow which increased their public debt. The G20, as a bloc, collectively made a policy commitment in 2012 to reduce public debt¹⁵, which could be achieved either by raising taxes or by cutting public spending. Unfortunately, the G20 favoured spending cuts. Reduction in public spending has huge gender implications as women and girls in particular rely on government -supported social services more than men. Also, such cuts in government spending result in increasing women's unpaid work burden as the responsibility of such services, including care, shifts from the public domain to private and household responsibility.

All crises, including financial, impact men and women differently. For example, a crisis can impact reduction in household income which may force women to enter the labour market, work longer hours and/or increase her unpaid work burden. Crises may also lead to loss of jobs and an increase in unemployment, as witnessed during the recent pandemic. Women were the first to lose their jobs. Multiple factors, including lack of childcare, social norms around women's work, preference given to the employment of male members etc. contribute to this. The G20 has not carried out gender assessments of its policy reforms initiatives and it has failed to integrate these important gender dimensions.

Financial inclusion is one of the major policy initiatives of the G20 and, under this, the group has particularly targeted women¹⁶. Women, compared to men, have lower access to credit, hence such initiatives can be helpful. Without adequate regulations and consumer protection legislation, credit processes can have exploitative practices and unfavourable tactics of extracting repayment, such as using violence and threat. Part of women's financial inclusion models include micro finance to support women's livelihoods, especially in developing countries. Micro finance has had some positive outcomes, but it is not a magic bullet. Such programmes should go beyond just giving loans and should be designed with a more-integrated gender sensitivity and gender indicators; only then can it contribute towards gender equality.

The G20, through its Summit declarations, has supported free, unrestricted, multilateral trade¹⁷. Trade liberalisation benefits the rich and powerful countries more than the others. Global trade, however, is on a decline since the global financial crisis and has forced world leaders to

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, September 2015

¹⁴Heintz, J. (2013). Missing Women: The G20, Gender Equality and Global Economic Governance, Heinrich BöllStiftung, Accessed at: <https://peri.umass.edu/component/k2/item/521-missing-women-the-g20-gender-equality-and-global-economic-governance>

¹⁵G20 Leaders Declaration, Los Cabos, Mexico, June 19, 2012

¹⁶G20 leaders Declaration, G20 Seoul Summit, 2010.

¹⁷G20 leaders Declaration, G20 Washington DC, 2008

renegotiate and develop trade reforms to address inequalities between countries. International trade reforms do have both positive and negative impacts on women as women work as landless farm workers in addition to some of the most labour-intensive export sectors such as garments, electronics, flowers etc. Trade liberalisation encourages competition which can drive cost of labour down and bring an influx of jobs in global supply chains to developing countries resulting in an increase in the hiring of women to provide cheap labour. At one end, while women get employment as they provide cheap labour, but, on the other hand, they are forced to work under horrendous conditions with no rights and protection. Any demand for labour rights, decent work, living wages and environmental protection results in loss of employment with the global brand looking at other sources and, often, even moving to another country. Therefore, the G20's position in support of free trade only helps global brands to reap higher profits without translating into benefits for workers, especially women, who are at the lowest levels of these supply chains.

G20 Summits: More Rhetoric, Less Implementation

G20 leaders first addressed gender equality at the London Summit in 2009 where it raised a call to build a fair and family-friendly labour market for both women and men¹⁸. However, there was no mention of gender equality. Neither did women or girls find a mention in the 2009 Pittsburgh Summit or the 2010 Toronto Summit's leaders' declarations¹⁹. Since the fifth summit in Seoul in 2010, the G20's attention slowly increased in both size and scope²⁰ as it committed to closely monitoring progress related in the realms of education, health and gender gaps. The Cannes Action Plan for Growth and Jobs had encouraged the participation of older workers and women, where appropriate²¹. At the 2012 Los Cabos Summit, G20 members committed to overcoming barriers hindering women's full economic and social participation to expand opportunities as well as gender equality in all areas. The emphasis was on care-giving responsibilities, financial services, education and female labour-force participation²².

At the St. Petersburg Summit in 2013, the focus on gender-equality peaked in comparison to previous years²³. The Women's Finance Hub, with International Finance Corporation (IFC) was launched²⁴. It continued to focus on financial inclusion, education of women and enhanced coherence through Global Partnerships for Financial Inclusion (GPFI)²⁵. At the 2014 Brisbane Summit, G20 members adopted the Brisbane Action Plan which included the goal of reducing the gap in labour force participation rates between men and women in G20 countries by 25 per cent by 2025, taking into account national circumstances²⁶. The G20 Leaders' Communiqué's goal to bring 100 million women into the labour force, aimed to significantly increase global growth and reduce poverty and inequality²⁷. The Brisbane Action Plan is seen by women leaders to have some promise.

At the 2015 Antalya Summit, G20 members continued to commit to reducing the gender gap in female labour force participation and to foster safer and healthier workplaces. For the first time particular attention was paid to the needs of smallholder and family farmers, rural women and youth in addition to strengthening support for refugees. This year, the Women20(W20) was also established and aimed at providing comprehensive inclusion of women in economic processes and providing them with full-fledged representation²⁸. Through various communiqués, the W20 has made efforts to present pressing gender issues to the G20. Though W20 offers some promise and hope, this is not an open space as the delegates are hand-picked by governments and does not include all women and does not represent all women in their full diversity.

At the 2016 Hangzhou Summit, the G20 Leaders' Communiqué affirmed the implementation of the SDGs which has a separate goal on gender equality (SDG5)²⁹. However, the G20 Communiqué did not include much of the W20's language and recommendations. At the 2017 Hamburg Summit, the G20, for the first time, incorporated a section on women's empowerment which included language from the W20's digitisation, Information and

¹⁸London Summit-Leaders' Statement, 2 April 2009, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2009/2009communiqué0402.pdf>

¹⁹Kulik, J (2015), G20 Leaders' Conclusions on Gender, 2008-2014, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/analysis/conclusions/gender-l.pdf>

²⁰Kulik, J (2020). G20 Performance on Gender Equality, Accessed at: https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/?fbclid=IwAR0U0Llg63cQpj96fzJEUUkdKSmYv_2xtyhZdpHs7oj4MEQBTQqWAWuRM

²¹Kulik, J (2015), G20 Leaders' Conclusions on Gender, 2008-2014, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/analysis/conclusions/gender-l.pdf>

²²2012 Los Cabos Mexico G20 Leaders Declaration, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2012/2012-0619-loscabos.pdf>

²³Dawe, K, Noh, M and the Research group (2021). 2020 G20 Riyadh Summit Interim Compliance Report, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/compliance/2020riyadh-interim/10-2020-g20-compliance-interim-gender-inequalities.pdf>

²⁴G20 Leaders Declaration, September 6, 2013, St. Petersburg, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2013/2013-0906-declaration.html>

²⁵Kulik, J (2015), G20 Leaders' Conclusions on Gender, 2008-2014, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/analysis/conclusions/gender-l.pdf>

²⁶Brisbane Action Plan, G20 Australia 2014, Accessed at: http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2014/brisbane_action_plan.pdf

²⁷G20 Leaders' Communiqué Brisbane Summit, 15-16 November 2014, Accessed at: http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2014/brisbane_g20_leaders_summit_communique.pdf

²⁸<http://eawfpress.ru/en/news/main/w20/the-story-behind-the-establishment-of-the-w20/>

²⁹The 17 Goals, UN, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Accessed at: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

Communications Technology (ICT) along with the launch of #eSkills4Girls initiative and Women Entrepreneurs Financing Initiative (We-Fi)³⁰.

The 2018 Buenos Aires Summit focused on making progress in achieving the Brisbane commitment to reducing the gender gap in the labour force and continued to promote initiatives to end all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence. It remained committed to a gender-mainstreaming strategy across the G20 agenda³¹, however, a whole section on rural women in the W20 communiqué did not get included in the G20 Leaders Declaration³².

The 2019 Osaka Summit claimed progress made towards the Brisbane Goal to reduce the gender gap in female labour force participation and raised the need to address the gender gap in unpaid care work. This was recognised as a major obstacle to women's participation in the labour market^{32a}. G20 EMPOWER³³ was launched³⁴ to accelerate women's leadership and empowerment in the private sector³⁵. The Osaka Summit prioritised digital inclusion.

As in other Summits, the 2020 G20 Riyadh Summit prioritised financial inclusion and the Leaders' Declaration recognised women as a "key drivers of economic growth"³⁶. The onset of COVID-19 set the 2020 Summit apart. W20 recommended G20 to undertake immediate and long-term responses to mitigate the negative impact and setback from COVID-19. W20 communiqué also focused on economic recovery and women's economic empowerment³⁷. There was also Extraordinary Summit which came out with a separate statement on COVID-19 in March 2020. This focused on the impact of pandemic on the global economy, financial markets, trade and global supply chains³⁸.

The 2021 G20 Summit came during an extraordinary moment in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked the deepest economic recession in nearly a century, and has resulted in more than 4.89 million deaths globally³⁹. The pandemic has also exposed the inadequate health

infrastructure and services, especially in developing countries. It has raised questions about the imbalance of impact on vulnerable communities and the sheer inequity in access to health and life-saving vaccines across the world. Hoarding of vaccines by wealthy Northern States and the interference of powerful transnational corporations and philanthropic capitalists are the key reason for this injustice⁴⁰.

The Rome Summit has committed to put gender at the core of its recovery efforts and prioritised mental health in the context of isolation, gender-based violence, unemployment, lack of education and sexual and reproductive rights. The Leaders' Declaration included women's empowerment within sustainable development section and also called for sustainable energy for all. A separate section is introduced on gender equality and women's empowerment. It has included improving livelihoods of small-holder and marginal farmers in terms of food security, nutrition and food systems⁴¹.

There has been a loud demand from all corners of the world for the TRIPS waiver, which would allow the COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing around the world without paying patent fees. India, South Africa and then joined by the US and many other developing countries asked for temporary TRIPS waiver to boost production and fairer distribution of the shots across the world. The G20 nations remained divided over the waiving of intellectual property rights and commit instead to "patent-pooling". Under a patent pool, drugmakers decide voluntarily to share licences for the manufacturing of their products in poorer nations. The Summit's conclusions stress that G20 leaders commit to promoting "voluntary licensing, technology and knowledge transfer, and patent-pooling"⁴². This is seen as a major failure of the world leaders, especially, during such a global crisis to be unable to go beyond nationalism and profits before people's health and lives and it also exposed the domination of rich North countries within G20.

³⁰G20 Leaders Declaration: Shaping an Interconnected World, G20 Germany 2017, Accessed at: <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2017/2017-G20-leaders-declaration.pdf>

³¹G20 Leaders' declaration: Building consensus for fair and sustainable development, G20 Argentina 2018, Accessed at: http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2018/buenos_aires_leaders_declaration.pdf

³²2018 W20 Argentina Communiqué

^{32a}G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration, Accessed at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40124/final_g20_osaka_leaders_declaration.pdf

³³G20 EMPOWER alliance brings together G20 countries' private sector leaders and government counterparts to support and promote the advancement of women in leadership positions.

³⁴G20 Osaka Leaders' Declaration, Accessed at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/40124/final_g20_osaka_leaders_declaration.pdf

³⁵G20 EMPOWER, Accessed at: <https://www.g20.org/about-the-g20/g20-empower.html>

³⁶Leaders' Declaration, Riyadh Summit 2020, Accessed at: http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2020/G20_Riyadh_Summit_Leaders_Declaration_EN.pdf

³⁷W20 Communiqué 2020

³⁸Opening Remarks for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques during the Extraordinary G20 Leaders' Summit

³⁹As on 14 October 2021, Worldometer

⁴⁰Awid, STATEMENT: Feminists Demand #VaccineJustice, 14 July 202, <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/statement-feminists-demand-vaccinejustice>

⁴¹G20 Rome Summit 2021 Leaders' Declaration, Accessed at: <https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/G20-ROME-LEADERS-DECLARATION.pdf>

⁴²Ibid

OTHER MECHANISMS-GENDER WASHING

Women 20 (W20):

W20 is the official G20 engagement group focused on gender equity. Its primary objective is to ensure that gender considerations are mainstreamed into G20 discussions and translated in the G20 Leaders' Declaration as policies and commitments that foster gender equality and women's economic empowerment. Since its establishment in 2015 during the G20's Antalya Summit, this group has pushed their recommendations to the G20 leaders every year. There has been a gradual acceptance of the W20 group's inputs but at a level that is far from ideal.

The W20 was established to ensure adequate consideration to gender issues within the G20 discussions, foster gender equality and promote women's empowerment⁴³. W20 has mostly focused on three areas: labour inclusion, financial and digital inclusion⁴⁴ in the past five years in its recommendations⁴⁵. This elite engagement group within G20 brings a very affluent class of women entrepreneurs and high-powered business women to the policy table and they speak on behalf of the economic elite which in no way represents women of the world, especially not women in developing countries – poor, single, rural, migrants etc. This top-down approach of W20 not only leaves a majority of women behind, but also renders feminist leaders from the global South, who have for years been 'screaming' about structural causes of women's oppression and inferior status, totally irrelevant. Become a business-woman and all your problems will be solved, is the mantra⁴⁶. The prevailing view is that all women are the same, have the same capabilities, and can become entrepreneurs, that is all they need to do to overcome economic hardships to make all other forms of inequalities and discrimination along gender, caste, class, racial lines just vanish. There are limited rhetorical, superfluous conversations about poverty, structural causes of inequalities, livelihoods, women farmers, burden of unpaid work in subsistence livelihoods, women's work in the informal economy, climate justice or rural economies. Poverty is conceptualised only in economic dimensions. A woman is poor not because she has less money, but due to the existing forms of structural discrimination and historic, traditional harmful practices that prevent her from accessing opportunities and resources. These social, cultural

dimensions of poverty are totally missing from the G20 perspective.

The W20 operates in a Eurocentric approach where the South realities and women on the margins don't really have a place to be seen or heard. Several feminists have pointed out at W20 events that only an affluent class of women entrepreneurs or business women hand-picked by their governments are given a voice and that it is not a democratically-accessible event for global South feminists. In fact, even influencing the Communiqué is difficult as the focus is too limited, narrow and Eurocentric⁴⁷. The selection of Chairs, country delegations for engagement groups like the W20 is neither done in a consultative manner nor is it transparent, thereby negatively affecting the agenda-setting of the G20 forums, recommendations and decision-making processes. There is no space at the national level to have consultations and engagements with wider women groups, collectives, leaders to ensure a more inclusive process. There is no awareness and information on this.

From the trend, it can be seen that the inputs from the W20 don't generally make it into the G20 Leaders' Summit either. In 2016, issues on the W20 Communiqué did not find their way into the Summit declaration. However, the W20's 2017 Communiqué presented recommendations to promote girls on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and proposed #ekills4girls along with formation of group of entrepreneurs, which was endorsed by the G20 Leaders' Declaration. Rural women and access to productive resources find mention in the W20 Communiqué from Germany and a section of the 2018 Argentina W20 Communiqué was dedicated to the development of rural women. The Argentinian communiqué also covered the issue of responsibility-sharing in care work but did not touch on unpaid work beyond care and domestic work.

Overall, in all the documents, the Brisbane goal of achieving '25 by 25' is mentioned and followed up. The Brisbane Action Plan 2014 is aimed at reducing the gap in labour force participation rates between men and women by 25 percent by 2025 with the aim of bringing 100 million women into the labour market. In 2021, the Labour and Employment Ministerial Declaration of G20 included the G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target: more, better and equally paid jobs for women⁴⁸ with the aim

⁴³About Women 20, Accessed at: <https://www.g20.org/italian-g20-presidency/engagement-groups.html>

⁴⁴Labour inclusion focus on how to increase women participation in the workforce and ensure that they have fair, equitable and supportive working conditions; financial inclusion focus on how to increase access to the financial system and support women financial independence; digital inclusion focuses on how to increase digital literacy, create a more effective command of digital technology for women and ensure gender-sensitive and non-biased digital ecosystem.

⁴⁵Lopez, X and Contreras, O. (2020) Gender Equality Discussion within the G20, Milken Institute, Accessed at: https://milkeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/reports-pdf/W20%20Gender%20Equality%20PDF_0.pdf

⁴⁶Darooka, Priti, For whom the bells toll: not for feminists, or civil society, <https://www.ingenere.it/en/articles/whom-bells-toll-not-feminists-or-civil-society>, blog, 2017

⁴⁷Poswayo, S. Online Seminar on Women Included or Excluded: Implications for Gender Equality, 2 August 2021

⁴⁸G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target: more, better and equally paid jobs for women, https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/G20-2021-LEM-Annex1_RoadmapBrisbane.pdf

of implementing a multidimensional approach to achieving equal opportunities in society and, specifically, in the labour market.

Over the course of seven years, there has been a continued commitment to achieving the Brisbane goal in reducing the gap in labour force participation. From the beginning, the G20's commitments on gender focused on increasing female labour force participation and improving workplace conditions. There was a slight expansion in 2015 to include women entrepreneurs and women farmers, and later, to digital skills development and education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In 2017 and 2018, the G20 committed to ending gender-based violence, a particularly important issue this year as the incidence of domestic violence directly related to COVID-19-induced quarantines rose⁴⁹. The issue on reducing unpaid care labour and its distribution is seen as an obstruction in female labour force participation and does not include unpaid non-care work including subsistence forms of livelihood that provide food security to communities in the South. In totality, the gender equality commitments made by G20 which are often targeted at employment, labour force participation and financial inclusion but do not address, structural causes of poverty, discrimination or inequality. Unfortunately, the G20, with the exception of the Communique from Turkey in 2015 and W20 Communique from 2018, has not engaged with issues of rural women and their lives and livelihoods.

From 2008 to 2019, G20 leaders made 55 commitments on gender equality⁵⁰. The G20 members' compliance with these commitments has been low⁵¹. As per the ILO and OECD reports 2020, there has been an increase in the labour force participation rate of women aged 15-64 between 2012 and 2019. Promoting greater labour force participation of women is only half the battle and further progress is required in closing gaps in job quality and employment opportunities⁵². There is a need for multi-year compliance on self-assessment and monitoring the progress on gender equality commitments in each G20 member country. There has yet to be a G20 meeting for ministers responsible for improving gender equality. This may partially explain the G20's much lower than average compliance with gender commitments, compared to those

on macroeconomic and financial regulation where G20 finance ministers have met frequently each year since the start of the G20 Summit⁵³. The world leaders of G20 have the opportunity to do a lot to address gender gaps, and address some pressing issues impacting women and girls. But this has not been really a priority – even if it makes it on paper, it either does not get implemented or the implementation is adhoc. The G20's genesis is tied to maintaining financial stability and promoting economic growth that deprioritises global South women's agenda and raises questions on their exclusion in terms of meaningful participation in G20 spaces. Hence women in the South say, WHY BOTHER!! First, they don't include us or our issues and even if some gender issues get included on paper, they are never implemented and there is no systematic monitoring or accountability. So why bother! G20 is not for us!⁵⁴

Civil 20 (C20):

The C20, which is composed of civil society organisations from all over the world who are encouraged to take part in C20 and share their recommendations with the G20 governments. The C20 is organised into thematic Working Groups with two co-facilitators, one from the host country and one from international civil society. The Steering Committee leads the process, supported by an International Advisory Committee. The civil society from the host country chairs the overall process. Within the Steering Committee, the current, previous and following G20/C20 host countries gathered in the Troika facilitate the international coordination⁵⁵. In 2018, Feminist groups in Argentina conducted a wide-ranging survey among broad participation groups during the C20, resulting in a Gender Working Group. The group is dedicated to an intersectional and multi disciplinary approach to gender in the G20 agenda that guarantees the promotion and protection of human rights. Mabel Bianco, the Chair of the group emphasised in the Online Seminar that for her, the Gender Working Group in the C20 is more open and independent because the C20 has greater experience and is more established compared to the W20⁵⁶. The Gender Working Group within the civil society group is more open to women's participation, but it does not have the same power as W20.

⁴⁹Kulik, J, G20 performance on gender equality, The Global Governance Project, 17 November 2020, Accessed at: <https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/g20-performance-on-gender-equality-3/>

⁵⁰The numbering for the following entries will now become 45, 46, 47 and 48 instead of 46, 47, 48 and 49 since 45 has been deleted

⁵¹Kuliik, J (2020). G20 Performance on Gender Equality, Accessed at: https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/?fbclid=IwAR0U0Llg63cJQpj96fzJEUUkdKSmYv_2xtyhZdphhs7oj4MEQBTQqpWAuRM

⁵²Women at Work in G20 countries: Progress and policy action since 2019, Paper prepared for the G20 Employment Working Group, Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency 2020, ILO and OECD, Accessed at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---cabinet/documents/publication/wcms_756334.pdf

⁵³Kuliik, J (2020). G20 Performance on Gender Equality, Accessed at: https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/?fbclid=IwAR0U0Llg63cJQpj96fzJEUUkdKSmYv_2xtyhZdphhs7oj4MEQBTQqpWAuRM

⁵⁴Darooka, P, discussant at Online Seminar on Women Included or Excluded: Implications for Gender Equality by BFW, 2 August 2021

⁵⁵About C20, Accessed at: <https://civil-20.org/about-c20/>

⁵⁶Ibid

Gender Working Group (GWG)

2018 saw the establishment of a Gender Working Group (GWG) within C20, a platform of civil society organisations to engage with G20. Women leaders have found GWG a more open and democratic space within C20 as compared to W20 which also brings some gender analysis to other working groups such as health, labour etc. However, GWG is not an institutional mechanism and therefore doesn't have the same access to the G20 leadership as W20 does. In 2021, GWG issued a communique drawing attention to women and girls right to health in particular.

The C20 Gender Working Group calls on the G20 leaders to move beyond the emergency-based logic of pandemic preparedness and resilience and keep in mind the broader concepts of the right to health and wellbeing, taking into account the 2030 Agenda's basic concept of leaving no one behind and ensuring a gender approach in addition to the One Health approach⁵⁷.

This unfortunately did not get included in the Rome Declaration.

Conference on Women's Empowerment

The first ever G20 Conference on Women's Empowerment took place under the Italian presidency in 2018. This was a dedicated event on women's empowerment and focused on the quality of women's work, the implementation of policies aimed at increasing women's participation in positions of leadership, the protection of women's rights, and on tackling gender-based violence. The event focused on two specific areas:

- Stem, financial and digital literacy, the environment, and sustainability,
- Labour and economic empowerment and work-life balance.

Proceedings from the Conference were captured by the Chair in a statement that was shared with the G20 leadership⁵⁸. The event emphasised the need to adopt a systematic crosscutting approach to addressing all aspects of women's lives (and not just the economic ones) and also the need to develop women's empowerment tools for systematic monitoring and evaluation. The importance of such ministerial meetings dedicated to women's empowerment within the G20 framework was also recognised. A collective statement was later issued by various working groups in the G20 demanding this to be made an annual event.

G20 EMPOWER

The G20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER) was launched in 2019 at the Osaka Summit and established during the G20 Saudi Presidency. The purpose of the Alliance is to build and maintain a network within the private sector to identify the challenges, share the lessons learned and the best practices to support greater equity in the advancement of women's leadership. The Alliance has also built, in each of its G20 and guest countries, a network of over 400 advocates within the private sector⁵⁹. This is again limited to private companies which excludes the majority of rural women as well as indigenous women in the South who are engaged in subsistence forms of livelihoods.

Whether G20 EMPOWER will actually translate into women's empowerment on the ground is yet to be seen. This shift of responsibility for women's empowerment from the state to the private sector also shifts the discourse from human rights to corporate social responsibility, which is often equated with charity.

WHY IS G20 NOT FOR WOMEN OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH?

The G20 started with a gender-blind approach but, over the years, has made efforts to integrate gender into its structure, framework, policies and priorities. Has this made world leaders of this group true advocates for women empowerment, or are these what the Feminist Forum calls "pink washing" - a corporate marketing tactic that uses the appearance of gender inclusiveness to sell a positive image rather than proposing policies that would actually improve the lives of women and LGBTQI communities⁶⁰. To simply stir 'women' into the G20 mix is likely to prove a failed strategy.

The bloc is viewed with continued skepticism by feminists in the South⁶¹. Here are some the reasons shared:

1. Given the colonial history of several developing countries, the top-down approach of G20 is seen, especially by the South, as a continuation of colonial ideologies – the West knows the best-so lets help the poor women in developing countries! This mind set denies most women their agency to be economic and development agents.
2. With the formation of G20, the G7 group was expanded to include developing countries from the global South. However, as feminists from the global South, we

⁵⁷C20 Gender Working Group Communiqué on the Global Health Summit of May 21st 2021, <https://civil-20.org/c20-gender-working-group-communiqué-on-the-global-health-summit-of-may-21st-2021/>

⁵⁸Chair Statement, Conference on Women's Empowerment, <https://www.g20.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Chairs-statement-ENG-26-August.pdf>

⁵⁹About G20 EMPOWER, Accessed at: <https://www.g20.org/about-the-g20/g20-empower.html>

⁶⁰AWID, 5 Myths Around the G20, The Feminist Forum against G20, 2017.

⁶¹G20 is not particularly gender inclusive to women, but this is even more distant to women and gender issues from the global South.

believe that the G20 continues to operate as a G7 group with a Eurocentric approach and limited global-South engagement. 'It is as if 'the Club' belongs to them (G7) and they are now going to allow us (the developing countries) to participate, but we will have to follow their terms⁶²¹. BFW, and several global South-based organisations, networks and movements find this aspect of G20 greatly problematic.

3. It is a known fact that economic growth alone does not translate into improved standards of living and life with dignity for all. Trade and investment based on neoliberal models with austerity and privatisation have proven to have destructive effects on people's lives and the environment.
4. Reduction in public debt as a policy focus of the G20 advocates that governments reduce public spending. Cutbacks in public spending impact essential services such as healthcare, including sexual and reproductive health, and education and affect women the hardest. The G20 Rome Summit committed to establishing a 15% global minimum corporate tax rate by 2023 as a measure to prevent multinational companies from stashing profits offshore^{62a}. However, the average global corporate rate has decreased from 40% in 1980 to the current average rate of 23.8%^{62b}.
5. The G20's focus on economic growth is also seen as a globalisation tool that only benefits the rich and continues to exploit and extract labour and natural resources from the South. Although the leadership of the bloc talks about increase in employment it fails to talk about fair and just conditions of work, especially in global supply chains.
6. Advocating for cuts in public spending on one hand and committing to providing employment, social protection to women on the other hand are seen as two contradictory things. Reduction in government budgets results in terminating several essential social services and loss of jobs, especially for women.
7. Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon and women's poverty has several social and cultural dimensions. Addressing poverty in economic terms – employment, financial inclusion etc. - is limited and not sustainable. It is important to build analysis around who is poor and why. For example, women are poor not just because they have less money but also because of existing forms of structural discrimination, social norms and historic and traditional practices that prevent them from accessing resources and opportunities equally. The

G20 fails to bring this comprehensive feminist analysis to its activities around economic empowerment of women.

8. The G20 doesn't represent the whole world as it is a tiny elite group of only 20 countries with South Africa being the sole representative from all of Africa. However, the G20 does impact all countries. This is perceived as being North-driven and Eurocentric as the decision-making power within G20 is in the hands of the world's major economic powers.
9. The private sector is an important stakeholder within G20. There is an assumption that corporates are effective, inclusive, and responsible development-players. The real reason why corporates are in this space is to make money. There is no discourse within G20 around corporate accountability, or to acknowledge corporate greed and the enormous wealth accumulation in the hands of a few. G20 is also silent on equitable distribution of wealth, labour rights, environmental protection and accountability mechanisms. Most of these extremely rich and powerful corporates that are part of the G20's structure and decision making are North based and much wealthier than several countries in the South. Multinational Corporations (MNCs) are also part of the global supply chains in developing countries. In the absence of any accountability mechanisms within the G20 and adhoc monitoring and evaluation, this results in an imbalance of power hugely in favour of North and North-based corporations. People have, for years, been protesting against multinational corporations' exploitation and extractivism of labour, (especially women's, both paid and unpaid) and destruction of the environment resulting in loss of livelihoods, food security. Women are at the forefront of these struggles globally, challenging the rising power of corporations and demanding their rights. The G20 is perceived to be sleeping with the enemy—the corporates - and therefore fails to get acceptance or trust from the people, communities and women on the ground.
10. The G20 is very focused on finance and economic growth, making it difficult to bring comprehensive feminist issues to these spaces. Maria Grazia Panunzi, the 2021 Chair of Gender Working Group (GWG), highlights the challenges faced, for example, when sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as the right to contraceptives, safe abortion, are raised. These issues were presented by the GWG but did not get included in the Health Summit Declaration or Rome Declaration. The GWG, in its communique, had highlighted the need to work on prevention, and the need to continue programmes that support maternity and

⁶²Shared by south feminist during the BFW webinar Women included or excluded in G20: Implications on Gender Equality on August 2nd 2021

^{62a}G20 opens with call for more vaccines for poor countries, The Hindu, 30 October 2021, Accessed at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/g-20-opens-with-call-for-more-vaccines-for-poor-countries/article37251081.ece>

^{62b}Guaerrero, Maurizio, Is the end of corporate tax evasion and tax havens finally in sight?, Equal Times, 21 May, 2021, Accessed at: <https://www.equaltimes.org/is-the-end-of-corporate-tax#.YX4Go9ZBy3l>

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child care, prevention of harmful practices, to not interrupt Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services and to combat any form of gender-based violence and discrimination, but unfortunately these were not recognised by the bloc. Not enough efforts are made by governments to put gender at the heart of all development policies and to uphold rights of all women and girls⁶³. Although women make up 70% of the global healthcare workforce, women and girls have not been at the centre of the strategies to address the pandemic.

11. The G20 at the Rome Summit had an opportunity to ensure the voices of those hardest hit by the pandemic were heard and brought to the centre of decision making. This unfortunately did not happen.
12. Women's participation in G20 governance and structure continues to be extremely limited. Most G20 Heads of States are men and women continue to be either on the periphery or only on paper. Even W20 spaces are not open to all. Only a few women selected by the government from each representative country participate as delegates. The women included within the G20 spaces do not represent the women from the global South in all their diversity and their realities. Working class, migrants, indigenous, peasants, afro-descendants, lesbians, trans and queer communities, rural women are not represented in G20 spaces. There are different G20 Engagement Groups⁶⁴ to ensure the broader inclusion and participation of different social actors to address different areas related to entrepreneurship, labour, women's empowerment, urban policies, sustainable development and the fight against inequalities. Within them, particularly C20, W20 and G20 EMPOWER⁶⁵, are the structures which are meant to look into gender equality and women's empowerment. These forums are currently white, elite, and disturbingly Eurocentric⁶⁶.
13. The G20 is not on the radar of most women leaders in the South. Even if they hear about it, they choose not to participate as there is a strong feeling that this is a government-coopted space with little or no room for engaged civil society participation⁶⁷. For example, W20

is not an open democratic space. Country delegates are hand-picked by the relevant governments without any transparency about the process. There are also no consultations at the national level to engage diverse women leaders in a systematic manner. Who then does W20 really represent? Not 'us', is what our southern sisters have repeatedly said⁶⁸.

14. The G20, in more recent years, has started to pay more attention to gender equality and has promoted several initiatives particularly focused on women's economic empowerment. However, the expanding size and scope of G20 public deliberations on gender equality have not yet translated into a significant number of action-oriented commitments to improve gender equality nor has the G20 shown high levels of compliance with its gender-equality commitments⁶⁹.
15. In 2021, a collective demand for the institutionalisation of a G20 Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting –an official mechanism to ensure gender mainstreaming in each G20 Working Group - was made by the B20, C20, L20 and W20 engagement groups.

To realize the motto of leaving no one behind, women and girls in all their diversity must be put in a position where they can meaningfully participate on an equal footing, by removing all the structural barriers, stereotypes and discrimination that have caused in unequal distribution of power among sexes and genders. The institutionalisation of a G20 Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting and the subsequent creation of a G20 Working Group on Gender would be a much needed and strategic step in that direction⁷⁰.

G20 leaders did not commit to this collective demand for an institutionalised mechanism for gender equality. However, a Women's Empowerment Conference will be hosted again in 2022.

16. The G20 does not have integrated gender indicators or accountability mechanisms for advancing gender equality and, therefore, gender becomes a hit or miss category that mostly stays as rhetoric on paper.

⁶³Panunzi, Maria Grazia, Italy, shared during her presentation on the BFW webinar Women included or excluded in G20: Implications on Gender Equality on August 2nd 2021

⁶⁴There are various engagement groups such as Business 20 (B20), Civil 20 (C20), Labour 20 (L20), Science 20 (S20), Think 20(T20), Urban 20 (U20), Women 20 (W20) and Youth 20 (Y20) to ensure broader inclusion and participation of different social actors to address different areas related to entrepreneurship, labour, women's empowerment, urban policies, sustainable development and the fight against inequalities.

⁶⁵The G20 Alliance for the Empowerment and Progression of Women's Economic Representation (G20 EMPOWER) is accelerating women's leadership and empowerment in the private sector.

⁶⁶Darooka, P. (2017), For whom the bells toll: not for feminists, or civil society, ingenere, Accessed at: <https://www.ingenere.it/en/articles/whom-bells-toll-not-feminists-or-civil-society>

⁶⁷Bianco, Mabel, Argentina, shared during her presentation on the BFW webinar Women included or excluded in G20: Implications on Gender Equality on August 2nd 2021

⁶⁸Several conversations with BFW members and at various South based events.

⁶⁹Statement by B20, C20, L20, W20 to G20, 2021, https://civil-20.org/2021/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/B20-C20-L20-W20-Joint-Statement_call-on-the-institutionalization-of-a-G20-Equality-Gender-Ministerial-Meeting-and-Working-Group.docx.pdf

⁷⁰Ibid

17. Feminist Sisters from the global South are particularly disappointed with the G20 member states from emerging economies, especially BRICS, as they have failed to challenge the North-driven agenda and failed to bring a more nuanced global South priority to the G20 structure and policy spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR G20

The G20's framework and priorities in the foundation years exposed its gender-neutral ways of working. There was no mention of women, girls or gender in its entire framework adopted in 2009. Since then, the bloc has come under continuous criticism and has made efforts through various initiatives and some decisions to bring gender into its structure and policies. Despite the inclusion of gender equality as a theme, however, this 'add women and stir' and sprinkling gender here and there has not made women or gender equality an integrated part of the G20. Some of the recommendations we would like to put forward are:

- G20 should develop an external gender advisory group or a gender committee with the mandate to develop a gender policy to integrate gender comprehensively in all aspects of its structure, and policy formulation. This group should ensure the representation of full gender diversity and have feminist experts from the global-South.
- Have a track within the G20 on gender equality in order to achieve gender mainstreaming. The G20 should go beyond its adhoc approach to gender and develop a comprehensive gender policy that informs all its policies.
- Have structured monitoring and evaluation tools based on indicators to broaden and go beyond the Brisbane gender goals. The G20 should develop an extensive gender toolkit with clear gender indicators to effectively monitor implementation of gender policies, and commitments. Demand sex desegregated data for all social and economic indicators. Gender equality should be part of all monitoring activities and achieving gender equality should be to captured annually in a report that is made public to hold member states accountable.
- Conduct wide-ranging consultations with feminist groups and CSOs globally and at the country level. Go beyond token representation and make C20, L20 and W20 inclusive and open for all women, especially feminist groups from the global South, including women from grassroots movements. Ensure their active, informed and meaningful participation in all the processes.

- Persuade G20 countries and leaders to move beyond mere basic pandemic preparedness and resilience and keep in mind the broader concept of the right to health and wellbeing of persons in various communities, while prioritising sexual and reproductive health rights.
- Make women central to the equitable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 through vaccine equity, public investments in the care economy and the introduction of gender-responsive social protection mechanisms.



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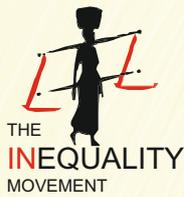
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of PWESCR and BRICS Feminist Watch, I would like to thank Shubha Chacko for undertaking this research and providing mentoring support to Kripa Basnyat on this paper. I am grateful to Kripa for anchoring the online seminar and for providing all logistical support. The seminar would not have been possible without the extremely insightful presentations by all our panelists –Mabel Bianco, Maria Grazia Panunzi, Sibulele Poswayo, Faustina Araba Boakye, Feng Yuan, Govind Kelkar, and Patricia Chaves. I am grateful to Patricia Chaves and her team at EspaçoFeminista for providing technical support for the webinar. I am also grateful to all partnering organisations – The Inequality Movement, Gen Dev Centre for Research and Innovation, EspaçoFeminista, Feminist Land Platform and FEIM—for joining us to host this important conversation. I am additionally grateful to Bulan Lahiri for her excellent editing and to Vishwanath for designing the paper. I would like to extend my appreciation to Shalini Yog and others at the Heinrich Böll Stiftung's Regional Office in New Delhi for their support.

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FUNDING PARTNER :



This publication was prepared with the support of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung's Regional Office in New Delhi. The views and analysis contained in the publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the foundation.



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