

# THE CASE FOR AN INEQUALITY WORKING GROUP IN THE C20: MAKING G-20 COUNTRIES ACT TO REDUCE INEQUALITY

## Executive Summary

The richest 10% of the world now owns 76% of the world's wealth, while the poorest half of the population owns merely 2% of it. Women, ethnic, caste and racial minorities have been pushed further behind with the COVID-19 pandemic further intensifying inequality. The G20 needs to create a strong policy response to counter growing wealth and social inequalities because of its collective economic leverage and far-reaching influence over global and national policy matters. This, in turn, requires mobilization by global civil society by creating an official engagement group of Civil 20 (C20). This policy brief makes the case for the Indian presidency of the G 20 being the space for the creation of a Working Group on Inequality

Over the past three decades, more than half of the countries and close to 90 per cent of advanced economies saw an increase in income inequality.<sup>1</sup> The richest 10% of the world now owns 76% of the world's wealth, while the poorest half of the population owns merely 2% of it.<sup>2</sup> The pandemic has further widened the chasm between the rich and the poor.

### Inequality in the times of COVID-19

While the incomes of 99% of humanity worsened amidst the slaughter caused by COVID-19, the 10 richest men in the world doubled their wealth. For most of the world, the pandemic caused plummeting incomes as combined earnings fell by \$3.7 trillion, as millions lost their jobs around the world.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, 2020 marked the steepest increase in global billionaires<sup>4</sup>. 252 men account for more wealth than all 1 billion women and girls in Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean combined.<sup>5</sup> Women, people of colour and indigenous people faced reduced incomes, disappearing social security and degradation in their human rights.<sup>6</sup>

The intensification of income inequality vis-à-vis COVID-19 is layered upon existing horizontal inequalities which detrimentally affect ethnic groups and racial minorities. In Australia, aboriginal populations faced a disease burden 2.3 times greater than non-aborigines and on average they live at least 10 fewer years.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/Inequality/introduction-to-inequality>

<sup>2</sup> [https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/01/Summary\\_WorldInequalityReport2022\\_English.pdf](https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/01/Summary_WorldInequalityReport2022_English.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://inequality.org/facts/inequality-and-covid-19/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://thewire.in/political-economy/covid-19-exacerbated-inequalities-and-even-more-so-in-poor-countries-report>

<sup>5</sup> Inequality Kills: The unparalleled action needed to combat unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19 (openrepository.com)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2021/06/inequality-and-covid-19-ferreira.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Beating COVID: how Australian Aboriginal communities mobilised to fight the pandemic | by Oxfam International | Medium

## The risk of rising inequality

This widening gap between the rich and the poor fuels deprivation and triggers cascading failures in governance, access to public services and expression of human rights.<sup>8</sup> Inequality has been calculated to contribute to 21,300 deaths daily<sup>9</sup>. People in more equal societies have been shown to live longer, experience a higher sense of personal well-being and have better mental health<sup>10</sup>. In a developing country, a child from a poor family is seven times less likely to finish secondary school than a child from a rich family.<sup>11</sup> Unequal education systems perpetuate class privilege and fuel lifelong wealth inequalities.<sup>12</sup> High levels of inequality are associated with low levels of social cohesion and low trust in government.<sup>13</sup> Labour markets are the hot springs of inequality where extreme capital concentration creates wage differentials between management and workers, putting the latter at risk of reduced social protection and ultimately pushing them into poverty traps.<sup>14</sup>

Wealth and social inequalities have a damaging impact on peoples' lives and livelihoods; they also damage economies. For example, a 1% increase in inequality has been calculated to lower GDP by 0.6% to 1.1%.<sup>15</sup> Failing to address inequality puts future generations at risk of becoming poorer, sicker, less educated and aggravating mental and physical breakdown. Failing to address inequality undermines human rights<sup>16</sup> and violates international human rights law.<sup>17</sup> <sup>18</sup> Given these collective threats, countries need to come together to navigate a common solution for this global phenomenon.<sup>19</sup>

### Wealth and Social Identity:

At least 71% of the world's population is affected by inequalities of various kinds.<sup>20</sup> Inequalities exist not only in terms of individual characteristics of wealth and income, but are also based on social and other identities. These horizontal inequalities could exist on the basis of a range of factors including racial, ethnic, religious, caste, gender, age and disability status among others.

Thus, Black and Indigenous families are likely to own less than 12% wealth of an average white family in the United States.<sup>21</sup> More than 50% of women are overrepresented in low-paying positions contributing to their lower share of income.<sup>22</sup> Indigenous and tribal populations are exposed to a myriad of vulnerabilities. About a million of Amazon's indigenous communities<sup>23</sup> are subjected to land grabs and displacement severely affecting their livelihoods and subsistence.<sup>24</sup> Indigenous people are

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620599/bp-public-good-or-private-wealth-210119-en.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0277953614008399?via%3Dihub>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file\\_attachments/bp-education-inequality-170919-summ-en.pdf](https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-education-inequality-170919-summ-en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education (brookings.edu)

<sup>13</sup> [10\\_Inequality\\_How-Inequalities-undermine-Social-Cohesion.pdf \(g20-insights.org\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> Inequalities in the labour market (un.org)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/economy/growth-and-inequality-close-relationship.htm>

<sup>16</sup> <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2F978-3-030-30469-0.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Kuhn H. (2020) Reducing Inequality Within and Among Countries: Realizing SDG 10—A Developmental Perspective. In: Kaltenborn M., Krajewski M., Kuhn H. (eds) Sustainable Development Goals and Human Rights. Interdisciplinary Studies in Human Rights, vol 5. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30469-0\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-30469-0_8)

<sup>18</sup> Articles 3-10, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> <https://wir2018.wid.world/files/download/wir2018-summary-english.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/85796.html>

<sup>21</sup> Racial Economic Inequality - Inequality.org

<sup>22</sup> Economic inequality by gender - Our World in Data

<sup>23</sup> Amazon tribes - Survival International

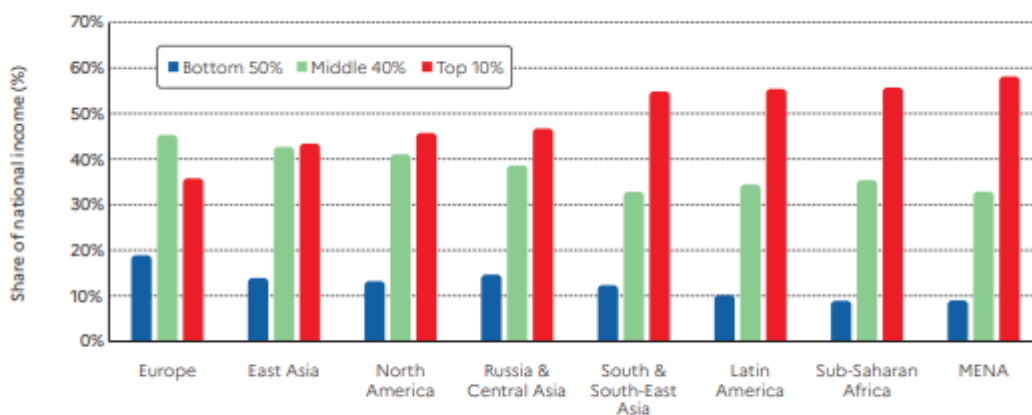
<sup>24</sup> Indigenous People Are Being Displaced By Amazon Rainforest Fires (greenmatters.com)

nearly three times as likely to be living in extreme poverty as their non-indigenous counterparts. They account for almost 19% of the extremely poor (those living below US\$1.90 per day).<sup>25</sup>

### The need for governments to address inequality hotspots

Wealth inequality is growing everywhere, but its spread is unequal. According to the World Inequality Database, MENA is the most unequal region in the world, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and the LAC regions.<sup>26</sup> War, instability, corruption and failure in the redistribution of income and uneven opportunities exacerbate inequalities.<sup>27 28</sup> Within the G 20 countries, Germany has the lowest income inequality while South Africa has the highest.<sup>29</sup> Widening inequality poses challenges to social and political cohesion, and imposes significant economic costs. Therefore, these trends may work against the G20's goal of strong, sustainable and balanced growth, most notably their collective commitment to achieving an additional 2%<sup>30</sup>(which has not been met as of now).<sup>31</sup>

**Figure 2** The poorest half lags behind: Bottom 50%, middle 40% and top 10% income shares across the world in 2021



**Interpretation:** In Latin America, the top 10% captures 55% of national income, compared to 36% in Europe. Income is measured after pension and unemployment contributions and benefits paid and received by individuals but before income taxes and other transfers. **Sources and series:** [www.wir2022.wid.world/methodology](http://www.wir2022.wid.world/methodology).

### Global efforts on reducing inequality

Inequality is not inevitable; it is a policy choice made by governments. Some of the measures that governments can take to reduce wealth and income inequality include more progressive taxation that taxes the wealth of the super-rich, enhancement of wage rates in the labour market to narrow the gap between employers and employees along with social security benefits and revamping of education policy to promote equal access to education and allow for higher secondary and tertiary education completion rates among the poor and marginalized.<sup>32</sup> However, of 158 countries for whom data was available, only 26 spent 15% of their budgets on health care, and 53 had social protection

<sup>25</sup> Rights of indigenous peoples: Urgent action needed to tackle poverty and inequalities facing indigenous peoples (ilo.org)

<sup>26</sup> [https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/01/Summary\\_WorldInequalityReport2022\\_English.pdf](https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2022/01/Summary_WorldInequalityReport2022_English.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> MENA most unequal region in the world, Piketty-linked inequality lab reveals (alaraby.co.uk)

<sup>28</sup> Deep inequalities worsen Latin America and Caribbean vulnerabilities to crises: IDB report | IADB

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Countries-Regions/International-Statistics/Publications/g20-in-figures-0000168179004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Countries-Regions/International-Statistics/Publications/g20-in-figures-0000168179004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)

<sup>30</sup> Inequality-in-G20-Countries-Causes-Impacts-and-Policy-Responses.pdf

<sup>31</sup> Australia's G20 plans died in Buenos Aires | by United States Studies Centre | Medium

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/economy/labour/49421421.pdf>

systems against unemployment and sickness.<sup>33</sup> Institutional mechanisms such as monetary and fiscal policy determined by central banks can be used to redistribute wealth and regulate inflation.<sup>34</sup>

Global attention towards mitigating inequalities was revitalized due to COVID-19 but it was reported that many experienced little or no effort on behalf of their governments to address these effectively.<sup>35</sup> Poverty and social inequality have topped global surveys in 24 countries with 31% feeling it was one of the main concerns during the course of the pandemic.<sup>36</sup> However, there was pessimism around global efforts on inequality with 65% of adults reporting to a Pew survey that reducing the gap between the rich and the poor in their country was a far-fetched policy goal.<sup>37</sup>

Despite this building popular opinion, the world has lacked a truly globally coordinated civil society policy outreach on addressing inequality. SDG 10 does provide a global framework for tracking the action to address inequality. Global efforts put by civil society under the Fight Inequality Alliance (FIA) have helped to mobilize people, movements and organisations on inequality issues in over 35 countries to leverage collective voice and demands nationally, regionally and globally. The alliance has thus acted as a springboard for a people's movement for combating inequality.<sup>38</sup> Other national and local struggles including anti-austerity protests have included inequality in their core framing. Movements of Indigenous peoples, Dalits, persons with disabilities, racial minorities and other marginalized communities fundamentally address horizontal inequalities. Despite this, the world is yet to see a robust coordinated fight to simultaneously address vertical and horizontal inequalities.

### G20's role in mitigating inequality

Prompted by the 2008 financial crisis, the G20 has wielded immense power and influence over geopolitical realities.<sup>39</sup> Notably, it has been characterized as the new systemic hub for global governance shaped by growing plurilateral political experiences and has emerged as an institution for managing economic shocks and minimizing vulnerabilities to the global economic system.<sup>40</sup> The strength of the G20 spaces has been to provide a space to keep avenues of communication open between heads of government and leading international organisations – especially in times of crisis<sup>41</sup>. As such, it is a critical space to shape policy narratives at a global stage.

Over the years, its decisions have also been catalytic over the policies of non-G20 countries partly because of its considerable 'economic' weight which accounts for around 80% of global economic output, 75% of global exports, and 60% of the world's population<sup>42</sup>. More importantly, its decision-making is also supplemented and supported by other multilateral and international financial institutions such as the UN, World Bank and the IMF.<sup>43</sup> Post-2015, G20 collective actions on development have increased with inequality also taking a centre stage in its declarations.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621061/rr-fighting-inequality-covid-19-cri-index-081020-en.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Colciago, A., Samarina, A., & de Haan, J. (2019). Central bank policies and income and wealth inequality: A survey. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, 33(4), 1199-1231.

<sup>35</sup> <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2021/2021-sustainable-development-report.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Survey reveals top global concerns; here's what Indians are worried about most | Latest News India - Hindustan Times

<sup>37</sup> Many worldwide were pessimistic about inequality even before COVID-19 | Pew Research Center

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.fightinequality.org/>

<sup>39</sup> Slaughter, S. (2019). *The power of the G20: the politics of legitimacy in global governance*. Routledge.

<sup>40</sup> Kirton, J. J. (2016). *G20 governance for a globalized world*. Routledge.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10220461.2019.1694576?needAccess=true>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/group-twenty>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.imf.org/en/About/Factsheets/A-Guide-to-Committees-Groups-and-Clubs>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/agenda-2030-development/G20-SDG-Report.pdf>

While it has been critical in shaping policy discourse, it has also come under criticism as elitist and for the lack of transparency and failing to take adequate action to address emerging global threats like growing inequality.

### Inequality in the agendas of previous G20 Presidencies

The G20 did not focus on reducing inequality before 2012. It first appeared as a goal at the St. Petersburg (2012) and Brisbane Summits (2014). A strong proposal for diluting its predatory effects came from the C20 policy pack during the Russian presidency in 2013.<sup>45</sup> However, the St Petersburg declaration did not prioritize inequality. It was only under the Turkish presidency that it took precedence, mainly because it was the year of adoption of the SDGs. A list of policy priorities was highlighted including the active use of appropriate wage-setting mechanisms (for example, minimum wages and strengthening collective bargaining), social protection systems, effective tax policies to address inequality and effectual use of employment services and active labour market policies to bring vulnerable or excluded populations into better jobs.<sup>46</sup> Subsequently, inequality was mentioned sporadically in leaders' declarations. It received minimal attention in Buenos Aires (2018) and Osaka (2019). Attention to it again came back during the Saudi Arabian Presidency (2020) which dedicated 15% of the text in the declaration to issues related to inequality because of the COVID pandemic. However, this fell to 2% during the 2021 Rome Summit. Oxfam International reports that only four of the G-20 countries have been able to tame income inequality by use of public redistributive measures.<sup>47</sup>

A similar experience is related to gender equality which saw emphasis after the G20 London Summit in 2009. In London G20 leaders dedicated just 2.5 % of the declaration text to gender equality which rose to a record of 14% in Hamburg in 2017<sup>48</sup>. In Buenos Aires in 2018 it plunged to 676 words (8%), offering an opportunity for the 2019 Osaka Summit to restore its rise. Furthermore, even the prioritization of gender as a national goal in most G20 countries has been lagging. The national gender commitments compliance averaged 60%, much below the G20's average of 71%. Core gender equality commitments averaged slightly higher compliance at 63% than the gender-related compliance of 56% in summits from 2008 to 2017<sup>49</sup>. This points to a chasm between gender commitments at the G20 levels and their translation at the national levels.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the G20 has come into severe criticism from civil society due to its failure to address vaccine inequality.<sup>50</sup> This has cast aspersions on its humanitarian and developmental outlook.<sup>51</sup> It has also been heavily criticized for not effectively managing debt relief in low-income countries.<sup>52</sup>

One of the primary tasks before the G20 is to crack down on tax havens and monitor leakages in the international financial system. As a solution, one way of reducing these incidences is reforming

---

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/c20/C20\\_proposals\\_2013\\_final.pdf](http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/c20/C20_proposals_2013_final.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_406426/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_406426/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>47</sup> Only four G20 countries – including just one high-income country, Korea – have reduced income inequality since 1990. In this, the G20 is being outdone: a large number of others, including low-income and lower middle-income countries, have reduced income inequality in this period <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/203569/bp157-left-behind-by-the-g20-190112-en.pdf;jsessionid=162E60882F952AB1244728A4BC45BF46?sequence=1>

<sup>48</sup> [https://www.g20-insights.org/policy\\_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/](https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/)

<sup>49</sup> [https://www.g20-insights.org/policy\\_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/](https://www.g20-insights.org/policy_briefs/g20-performance-gender-equality/)

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/g20-members-have-received-15-times-more-covid-19-vaccine-doses-capita-sub-saharan>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/activists-call-g20-leaders-end-global-vaccine-inequality-2021-10-29/>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.somo.nl/how-g20-finance-decisions-lead-to-global-inequality/>

corporate tax law.<sup>53</sup> G20 actions have not been able to stop profit shifting of corporates in a bid to avoid transnational taxation.<sup>54</sup>

Thus, there is much more that needs to be done to ensure that G20 adopt an ambitious plan for tackling inequality. Due attention must be provided to ensure collective action to address social and economic inequality through adopting new international instruments and coordinating action at the national level.

### Ways and measures to influence G20 on undertaking commitments for reducing inequalities

Over the years the G20 has been relying on several engagement groups which would provide nuanced policy recommendations.<sup>55</sup> The Civil 20 or C20 is an engagement group legitimized by the G20 to supplement development issues into its development and finance working groups. It provides a platform for the global civil society to discuss the issues that have been set as a priority by the host countries and the G20 agenda. According to the C20 principles, its aim is to ensure that world leaders listen not only to voices representing the government and business sectors but also to the proposals and demands of civil society and that they are guided by the core values of human rights, inclusion and sustainable development.

The C20 offers a critical space to hold governments to account, offer civil society experience and expertise and restore balance to a space that has been dominated by business interests<sup>56</sup>. A substantial share of the recommendations and influencing has flown from the C20 because of its global participation and inclusive nature.<sup>57</sup> As such, it would be critical for civil society to use this as an additional space for pushing the inequality agenda.

Issues of inequality have not been included in working group submissions that form the corpus of the Civil 20 policy packs.<sup>58</sup> While it has made space for some dialogue on inequality through its various working groups, there has not been a sub-group under its aegis to lead dedicated advocacy on inequality related questions. Such a forum could provide an opportunity to bring together groups working on interconnected inequalities i.e. both horizontal and vertical as well as those working on manifestations of inequality in other issue groups (like health and education).

### An inequality working group (under Civil 20) that encompasses questions related to both vertical and horizontal inequality

As a practice since the first Civil 20, the summit is usually hosted by national civil society forums that also enlist the participation of their neighbouring countries. For example, in recent years the C20 in Argentina was promoted to have greater participation of Latin American CSOs<sup>59</sup> and the Japanese presidency promoted participation of CSOs from the global south who were not part of the G20.<sup>60</sup> This usually, shadows the practice of G20 presidencies inviting non-G20 countries to the summits based on their strategic and financial weightages that enrich G20 discussions.<sup>61</sup> A similar exercise is being

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.justiceinitiative.org/voices/tackle-inequality-we-need-new-thinking-tax-havens>

<sup>54</sup> <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/581878/bn-still-broken-corporate-tax-101115-en.pdf;jsessionid=8C60658BA742775790E2AC3D66DA63AF?sequence=4>

<sup>55</sup> C20 Engagement Strategy for Indian Civil Society (Heinrich Boell Stiftung- Voluntary Action Network India)

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/interviews/4287-g20-civil-society-is-treated-as-a-second-class-partner-its-recommendations-often-go-unheard>

<sup>57</sup> C20 Engagement Strategy for Indian Civil Society (Heinrich Boell Stiftung- Voluntary Action Network India)

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.globalgovernanceproject.org/the-workings-of-the-c20/>

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/c20/2018-C20-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/04/23/national/tokyo-c20-civil-society-leaders-around-world-press-heard-osaka-g20/>

<sup>61</sup> G20 outreach and non-G20 member views on the G20 | Lowy Institute

promoted by Indonesian civil society to have active participation from ASEAN countries because it is a foreign policy objective that is looking at balancing regional interests as part of its G20 presidency.<sup>62</sup> An inequality working group could bring together activists from civil society organizations across the world to advocate for action on issues of inequality. Such a working group does not replace the need for wider mobilization on the ground or for purely civil society led actions on these issues.

We are also placed at a critical juncture of providing a continuum to civil society mobilization around inequality with the series of upcoming presidencies in India (2023), Brazil (2024) and South Africa (2025).

### **An inequality working group under C20 for the G20 2023 in India: The South Asian Perspective**

As such, an inequality working group would be suited for influencing not only global but also regional issues common to the subcontinent and also addressing homegrown challenges of inequality through the participation of civil society organizations actively working on inequality, social empowerment and gender.<sup>63</sup> This is primarily because working groups of various themes under C20, while typically global in outlook also have space for national issues with global linkages. The India C20 could be a space to address South Asian realities including a stronger focus on horizontal inequalities including caste-based violence and discrimination that is endemic in South Asia.<sup>64</sup> Marginalized and low caste communities in India, Nepal<sup>65</sup> and Bangladesh<sup>66</sup> face similar challenges. Globally, tribal and indigenous populations across the world have been disproportionately affected, impressed upon by social constructs that forced inequality onto them.<sup>67</sup>

These issues have not received due attention from the G20 which needs a civil society push for achieving tangible commitments on issues of inequalities based on class, caste, race, gender, disability, ethnicity, religious or other minority status in future declarations.

### **An inequality working group under C20 for G20 2023 in India: The Global Perspective**

The C20 presents a ripe moment for global and Indian civil society to highlight the need for stronger efforts to address inequality both overall and since the start of the pandemic. The working group on inequality will be an effective forum for leading diverse voices into one space.<sup>68</sup> The creation of a working group would also assist the international community to demand progress on SDG 10 from national governments, especially from middle- and low-income countries which have shown sub-optimal performance on this indicator.<sup>69</sup>

The mandate of the working group could focus on enlisting recommendations to close inequality gaps by putting the spotlight on wealth concentration, and vertical and horizontal inequalities. With the mobilization of CSOs working on empowerment and entitlements, it is expected that the C20 policy pack will also contain facts and information on horizontal inequalities with a view of building the case for global action to address these inequalities. It will also thrust for action on issues of horizontal

---

<sup>62</sup> [https://www.kas.de/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?uuid=99d16d0f-ee7e-f0de-79bb-c56ecd84f93b&groupId=252038](https://www.kas.de/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=99d16d0f-ee7e-f0de-79bb-c56ecd84f93b&groupId=252038)

<sup>63</sup> These would include organizations that are working on advocating rights and entitlements for differentially treated castes who have historically been relegated in society and are having difficulty overcoming these barriers even during the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

<sup>64</sup> Cordaux, R., Aunger, R., Bentley, G., Nasidze, I., Sirajuddin, S. M., & Stoneking, M. (2004). Independent origins of Indian caste and tribal paternal lineages. *Current Biology*, 14(3), 231-235.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.nepalitimes.com/here-now/covid-19-sharpens-caste-discrimination-in-nepal/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://thewire.in/south-asia/bangladesh-caste-discrimination-dalits-covid-19>

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_735575/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_735575/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>68</sup> Except for HLPF, most Indian CSOs working on caste/empowerment/entitlement issues have faced impediments or lacked the opportunity to work on influencing on international processes

<sup>69</sup> <https://sdg-tracker.org/inequality>

inequalities placing the issues of indigenous people, discrimination based on caste and descent, disability and other forms in its mandate and also align with other engagement groups of G20 such as Think Tank 20's (T20) taskforce on reducing inequality and poverty.<sup>70</sup>

### The India Presidency

The Indian presidency of G20 will commence preparations for the forthcoming summit on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022 and last till Nov 30, 2023.<sup>71</sup> The official mandate of India's G20 presidency has not been decided but going by past precedent it may cover economic cooperation, security and terrorism and other commercial interests.<sup>72</sup> Parliament has been informed that focus areas that impact the vulnerable and disadvantaged and sectors like health, employment, anti-corruption and women's empowerment are likely to receive emphasis<sup>73</sup>. 2023 also coincides with India celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year of independence.<sup>74</sup> The new troika of the G20 (participation of past, current and future presidency) will be functional after December 2022 to assist in the continuity of the G20's overarching policy focus which is dependent on extant factors (such as post-COVID recovery has been the priority of the past three presidencies). As such, it would be critical to building connections with civil society in Indonesia and Brazil.

The C20 in India will also technically become active after the handover ceremony on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2022.<sup>75</sup> This would then mean planning and conceptualizing different working groups which would be part of the C20 Indian presidency. For achieving global inclusivity in the process, India will likely involve the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal (BBIN) countries and is likely that the Indian C20 will see a host of organizations from neighbouring south Asia being invited to participate.

The Indian presidency presents a fertile ground for CSOs working on vertical and horizontal inequality to come together and influence policies of the G20 and engage with the Indian government to strengthen social safeguards for the poor and vulnerable. This is strategically important for a civil society agenda on inequality given India's own wealth and social inequalities.<sup>76</sup> This will also build global momentum in the upcoming presidencies and future C20's work on inequality in Brazil, where wealth and social inequality have also seen a constant rise.<sup>77</sup>

### Conclusion

The G20 decision-making extends to most countries because of its status as a powerful multilateral that brings together developed and developing countries. With inequality consistently rising, additionally fuelled by COVID-19, the world requires a giant leap to address the dreams of the SDG agenda and create a more equal and just society.<sup>78</sup> Because the G20 also brings together other multilateral and international institutions it can work in congruence with World Bank, UN and IMF<sup>79</sup> for setting inequality reduction objectives especially given that the time for achieving SDGs is running

<sup>70</sup> <https://jakartagrid.com/en/news/article/4190535/inclusive-policies-key-as-covid-19-widens-inequality:-t20>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-preps-for-g20-presidency-from-1-dec-greenlights-setting-up-a-secretariat-101644938503470.html>

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/india-g20-presidency/>

<sup>73</sup> [https://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/35171/QUESTION\\_NO4068\\_PRESIDENCY\\_ROLE\\_OF\\_INDIA\\_IN\\_G20](https://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/35171/QUESTION_NO4068_PRESIDENCY_ROLE_OF_INDIA_IN_G20)

<sup>74</sup> [https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/india-to-host-g20-summit-in-2023-instead-of-2022-120112300059\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/india-to-host-g20-summit-in-2023-instead-of-2022-120112300059_1.html)

<sup>75</sup> <https://civil-20.org/>

<sup>76</sup> World Inequality Report 2022: All Details | India | AFPR

<sup>77</sup> [BrazilInequality\\_Factsheet\\_large\\_en\\_.pdf](#) | Powered by Box

<sup>78</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1095942>

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2022/02/17/malpass-remarks-g20-finance-ministers-central-bank-governors-strengthening-global-health>



out. The G20 needs to get serious about diminishing inequality and come up with robust commitments that can be tracked and to which its members can be held accountable.

It needs to include civil society in this process and not take decisions behind closed doors. A C20 inequality working group can help to address these challenges. It can also bridge mass mobilizations on inequality and engagement with policy spaces. It can steer arguments in the G20 in a well-constructed manner through inputs from inequality experts, campaigners and grassroots organizations. The working group can help tie in inequality specific pieces which have been manifesting in people's movements, alliances and solidarity networks, most notably FIA. Effectively, it will bring in demands from these groups conditioned by global, national and regional realities to the G20 via the C20 forum and nudge the multilateral to heed the recommendations which lead to an equal society.

Once operationalized during the Indian G20 in 2023 it can be taken forward in the upcoming Brazilian presidency in 2024. The time has come when G20 should start delivering on reducing inequality and start to reverse the grossly unequal after-effects of COVID-19.<sup>80</sup>

**Authors: Arjun Phillips and Anjela Taneja**

**With inputs from:** Steve Price-Thomas, Max Lawson (Oxfam International), Jenny Ricks (Fight Inequality Alliance), Jörn Kalinski (Oxfam Germany), Siti Khoirun Ni'mah (Oxfam in Indonesia) and Pravas Ranjan (Oxfam India)

2022

---

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/desa/un-covid-19-could-lead-lost-decade-development>