

C20 Working Group 8 Policy Brief

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

The C20 Working Group on Women's Rights and Gender Equality focuses on the pressing need for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity. The group's theme, "Advancing Gender Equality: Transforming Systems for Women's Economic and Political Empowerment," aligns with the broader global movement towards inclusive and sustainable development. In an era marked by conflict and significant socio-economic, environmental, and geopolitical challenges, the Women's Rights Group emphasizes the importance of systems change to ensure that all women and girls in all their diversity can thrive and contribute meaningfully in their communities.

The global context presents a unique set of challenges and opportunities for advancing the rights of women and girls. From addressing gender-based violence to ensuring equal access to education and economic opportunities, the group's efforts are rooted in a commitment to uphold international human rights standards, including those outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), among others. The group's work is particularly focused on the intersection of gender with other social and economic determinants, recognizing that the experiences of women and girls are shaped by a multitude of factors including race and ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual orientation and gender identity, among others.

To drive transformative change, the Women's Rights Group advocates for policies and practices that promote gender-responsive governance, economic empowerment, justice, and social inclusion. This includes pushing for greater representation of women in decision-making processes, enhancing access to quality education and healthcare, defending traditional territories, and addressing the systemic barriers that hinder women's full participation in the economy. The group's initiatives also emphasize the need for cultural and societal shifts to challenge and change the deep-rooted norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality.

1. Economic Justice & Rights

Economic empowerment requires comprehensive policies and systemic reforms across multiple dimensions, including labor rights, the care economy, financial access, social security and reforms to

the international financial architecture to support investments in social protection and gender equality. The C20 Women's Rights Group calls on G20 governments to:

- Accurately measure the contribution of unpaid care work and reduce the disproportionate share carried by women and girls, in all their diversity; Recognize the value of care and invest in care systems and infrastructure; redistribute care responsibilities equitably between women and men, families, and the state, guaranteeing their access to education, social protection, decent work, including public and private credit portfolios for micro, small, and medium enterprises led by women and underrepresented groups, including for migrant workers; implementing equitable parental leave policies and flexible work arrangements;
- Establish rights-based universal and inclusive social protection systems, remove barriers to decent work, and extend labor rights and social protection to informal workers, including migrant women and women with disabilities workers.
- Improve access to financial markets, services, and capacity building through targeted gender-sensitive and inclusive public procurement programs; learning, training, and skills development; and mandatory credit allocation to small- and medium-sized enterprises.

2. Equal representation in public life

Gender parity is a fundamental human right that requires systematic action, as well as a leading force for transformative change, therefore we call on G20 governments to:

- Remove barriers to entry by amending legislation; adopting and enforcing intersectional gender parity requirements and special measures; and holistically addressing care to reduce the unequal distribution of care responsibilities that impede women's participation in public life.
- Foster leadership development, promotion, and retention of women in public decision-making roles by making visible their value and contributions; providing financial support and campaign financing for women candidates for election; develop targeted recruitment, retention, and promotion strategies, including mentoring; preventing and addressing offline and online violence and harassment; and supporting internet access and digital literacy to facilitate participation in policy- and decision-making.
- Promote a more inclusive global governance by achieving parity in appointments to governance places at multilateral and national economic, social and environmental institutions, and peace and security mechanisms and enabling women's rights organizations to inform decision-and policymaking, while guaranteeing

interdisciplinary and gender-responsive foreign, economic and climate policies enhancing leadership and community resources, ensuring internal and external policies coherence.

3. Gender-based violence

There is an urgent need to address gender-based violence (GBV), which continues to undermine the autonomy and well-being of women and girls in all their diversity and we call on G20 governments to:

- Repeal legislation changes social norms that condone GBV and harmful practices like early and forced marriage and ratifies Convention 190 of the ILO.
- Establish and improve systems for prevention, protection, access to justice, and accountability, including for conflict-related sexual violence, and violence against human rights, environmental defenders, trans women, and women with disabilities.
- Invest in the expansion of essential and accessible support services, including psychological support and reproductive health services.

There is a critical need for inclusive, equitable, and lifelong education as a transformative tool to empower all women and girls. Therefore we call on G20 governments to:

- Invest 4-6% of GDP or at least 15-20% of public expenditure for 12 years of quality education for all girls and provide equitable access to primary, secondary, vocational, and tertiary education and lifelong learning.
- Effectively address digitalization gaps and ensure equitable and inclusive access to digital resources.
- Ensure the provision of comprehensive sexuality education for all in formal and non-formal education settings, reducing barriers and allocating adequate resources.
- Develop and provide educational programs and adopt a gender-transformative and disability and racial and ethnic inclusive approach to education.

4. Health and bodily autonomy

The significant regression in women's rights, gender equality, and human rights at the global and regional level has particularly impacted Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), with notable restrictions placed on the rights of women, girls, and LGBTQI+ individuals are extremely concerning. We call on G20 governments to:

- Invest in age- and disability-inclusive, and gender-responsive health and care systems that deliver equitable, integrated, and people-centered services.
- Guarantee sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including contraception, abortion, and comprehensive family planning services for all, – particularly women and girls belonging to racial and ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, People of African Descent, Africans, Asians, People of Asian Descent, migrants, refugees, Romas, Dalits, landless and homeless populations, women and, girls, LGBTQIAPN+ people, people with disabilities, including autistic people, and those with other health conditions, such as people living with HIV and dementia, and other groups in vulnerable situations
- Take a human rights approach to laws and policies guiding mental health care access and service provision.

5. Climate change

Gender-responsive policymaking and governance, involving inclusive decision-making and diverse perspectives, are key to more effective and equitable climate action outcomes, with positive knock-on effects for gender equality and human rights in areas such as health, security, democracy, economic development, human mobility, and disaster risk reduction. Without gender, racial, intergenerational, and social justice, finding sustainable solutions, including sustainable mobility solutions, to the climate crisis will remain elusive. The Group calls on G20 governments to:

- Ensure equitable rights and the full, equal representation and meaningful participation of women in climate action and disaster risk reduction at the local, regional, and global levels.
- Enhance the systematic, interdisciplinary integration of gender into climate policy and action, recognizing women and girls, particularly Indigenous women and girls, as agents of change and stewards of land, ecosystems, and communities.
- Enhance women’s leadership and community resources to advance local climate resilience and adaptation.
- Provide gender-transformative climate education to promote gender equality, sustainability, and the role of women and girls in addressing the impacts of climate change including women who are marginalized like those with disabilities.