



Solidarity

Equality

Sustainability



C20 POLICY PACK 2025



DECLARATION

Solidarity

Equality

Sustainability

C20 POLITICAL DECLARATION/ COMMUNIQUÈ

6 November 2025

As South Africa ends its Presidency at the helm of the G20 since taking charge from December 2024, we are reminded of our shared past—one defined by exploitation, colonialism, and systemic exclusion—but also of our enduring hope in solidarity, equality, and sustainability.

The recommendations contained herein reflect the urgent demands and pragmatic solutions of 14 Working Groups that constitute the C20, rooted in the lived expertise of over 3000 organisations across the world. They are shaped by feminist, LGBTQI+, people who share traditional values; disability, Indigenous, and youth-led perspectives, and grounded in the realities of communities most affected by inequality, exclusion, and crisis¹.

Read together with the 14 Policy Briefs and 2 Statements of Intent, this C20 Political Declaration/ Communiqué outline a blueprint for transformative, people-centred development rooted in justice, dignity, and planetary care.

Civil society voices have insisted that:

- the future is political;
- justice delayed is justice denied.

This Political Declaration/ Communiqué is a mandate to reform global financial systems; to anchor climate action in justice; to democratise technology and data governance; to protect civic space; and to recognise that without reparative action, sustainability remains a fiction.

We assert that the wellbeing of people and the health of the planet must be at the centre of the global economic agenda. This requires infrastructure investment, community-led health pathways, education and energy initiatives. It rejects extractive models that concentrate wealth and erode local resources harming communities, degrading ecosystems, and further entrenching inequalities.

We call for a new social contract—one that recognises Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems as strategic, living economic assets. Rooted in centuries of ecological stewardship and innovation, they are not relics of the past but engines of cultural, climate, and economic resilience.

The Russian delegation to the C20 does not endorse provisions related to the promotion of LGBTQI+ issues, as these do not reflect its national legal framework or policy positions.

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The time for incrementalism has passed. The path ahead must be grounded in participation, redistribution, and environmental justice. We present this declaration not just to G20 governments—but to the people of the world—as a manifesto for just futures.

Let this be the year civil society was not simply heard, but heeded.

C20 2025 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Economic Justice & Financial Reform: Redesign financial systems for justice and democratic legitimacy.

1. **Democratise global financial governance.** Reform International Monetary Fund and World Bank quota and voting structures to reflect the real economic contributions of the Global South. Shift decision-making on sovereign debt, taxation, and investment to UN-led platforms with full civil society and institutionalise G20 debt workout mechanisms linked to sustainable development.
2. **Implement reparative and redistributive financing systems**, including global wealth taxes, debt cancellation frameworks, and binding commitments to grant-based climate and development finance.
3. **Cancel unsustainable debt** for low and middle income countries through a new legal multilateral mechanism, including debt-for-health, debt-for-education and debt-for-climate swaps.
4. **Reform global trade rules and strengthen the decision-making power of developing countries** within the World Trade Organization. Restore the full and fair functioning of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism, and remove non-tariff and quasi-ecological barriers that undermine Global South economic sovereignty.
5. **Support the development of equitable regional cooperation platforms**, including the Greater Eurasian Partnership, to strengthen infrastructure integration, inclusive investment, and just economic relations in a multipolar world.
6. **Transform unequal gender relations:** Commit to allocating a meaningful share of national GDP—determined in line with each country's sovereign priorities—to gender equality initiatives, including public services, education, and survivor-centred gender-based violence prevention and response infrastructure

B. Food, Work, and Care Economies: Centre nutrition, care and informal economies as foundational to resilience and dignity.

7. **Guarantee nutrition-linked social protection** and scale investment in inclusive, climate-resilient food systems co-designed with Indigenous and local communities, grounded in agroecology, secure land rights, care systems, and rural value chains.
8. **Recognise and formalise the informal economy**, ensuring universal labour protections, decent work guarantees, and social protection for all — especially youth, women, people with disabilities, and migrant workers.

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9. **Build resilient health systems** by anchoring them in domestic financing for primary health care, expanding and fairly compensating the health workforce, scaling health promotion, and sustaining support for mechanisms like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB & Malaria.
10. **Uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights** as essential to Universal Health Coverage, ensuring access to contraception, safe termination of pregnancy, inclusive HIV services, and comprehensive sexuality education for all, including youth, people with disabilities and LGBTQI+ communities in accordance with internationally agreed human rights frameworks and national legal contexts².

C. Climate and Environmental Justice: Act with urgency to protect planetary health through equity-driven transitions.

11. **Commit to a time-bound, equitable transition away from fossil fuel dependency**, while recognising the varied national contexts and development needs of fossil fuel-reliant economies. Ensure that all just transition plans are community-defined, gender-just, and centred on workers, women, and Indigenous peoples, supported by public financing and international solidarity.
12. **Support the development of international migration frameworks**—including through the UN and other multilateral platforms—that ensure displaced and stateless communities, including those affected by war and climate impacts, have direct access to funding and protection. Encourage G20 nations to engage in equitable responsibility-sharing mechanisms, grounded in humanitarian principles and aligned with international law.
13. **Guarantee energy sovereignty through equitable access to clean, affordable energy**; establish binding G20 mineral governance frameworks; and promote inclusive renewable energy models and local beneficiation that ensure meaningful community participation and benefit-sharing.
14. **Resource disaster resilience through nature-based systems**. Scale early warning systems, climate-adaptive infrastructure and ecosystem restoration that integrates indigenous knowledge systems and prioritises protection of vulnerable citizens.
15. **Advance transparent, rights-based environmental protection frameworks** that address the harms of toxic pollution and unsustainable extractive practices—ensuring that regulatory standards are shaped by affected communities, prioritise ecological and public health, and do not entrench new forms of trade or development inequity.
16. **Prioritise public investment in value-adding green infrastructure**. Fund sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and adaptation projects that promote local processing, benefit smallholder and Indigenous livelihoods, and support the establishment of sustainability hubs for knowledge exchange, finance and multi-sector partnerships.
17. **Establish and strengthen South–South and North–South trade facilitation platforms** to advance equitable market access, knowledge exchange, and regional value chain development

² The Russian delegation to the C20 does not support references related to the promotion of LGBTQI+ issues or the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education, including for youth, as these do not align with its national legislation and policy framework

D. Knowledge, Technology & Cultural Sovereignty: Build future-ready societies through decolonised knowledge and technology governance.

18. **Publicly fund inclusive, decolonised education systems**, with emphasis on equitable access for marginalised youth and learners with disabilities to STEM, AI, and sustainability training; creating leadership pathways for technology governance and digital entrepreneurship; and affirming Indigenous knowledge and local languages.
19. **Promote the preservation of historical memory**, including diverse narratives of anti-colonial and anti-fascist resistance, as a foundation for peace, pluralism, and international solidarity.
20. **Advance technology governance** rooted in community data ownership, inclusive AI standards, and legal protections against algorithmic bias.
21. **Establish a Global Artificial Intelligence Yearly Assessment (AIYA) Mechanism** constituted through a multilateral, civil-society–driven framework to monitor and certify the ethical, environmental, and societal impacts of AI deployment across G20 nations.
22. **Recognise cultural restitution and heritage protection** as a G20 commitment, through ethical museum policies, reparation processes, and indigenous knowledge system-led cultural policy frameworks.
23. **Facilitate the development of a framework for international best practices for regenerative** tourism that centre community empowerment, cultural sustainability, and climate resilience—supported by knowledge-sharing platforms and voluntary reporting on climate-neutral, community-led destinations.
24. **Establish a Global Indigenous Knowledge Systems Fund** to strengthen Indigenous health and local economies, backing innovation, cultural sovereignty, and resilient value chains that ensure fair returns and local employment.
25. **Invest in Global South Research and Development ecosystems**, with equitable access to public funding, open knowledge platforms, and science partnerships that respect sovereignty.
26. **Ensure that trade, finance, and climate agreements uphold national sovereignty** and protect the cultural and historical identity of all peoples, without discrimination.

E. Rights, Participation & Civic Space: Guarantee voice, safety, and power for all

27. **Safeguard civic space and the rights of human, Indigenous, and environmental defenders** by ensuring that national security and public order laws are not misused to silence dissent or suppress democratic participation. Promote transparent legal standards and early response mechanisms to protect those at risk—grounded in the rule of law and aligned with national constitutions and international human rights commitments.
28. **Reject the use of unilateral economic sanctions** not approved by the United Nations Security Council, given their disproportionate impact on civilians and their misuse as tools of coercion.
29. **Establish a Permanent G20 Gender Equality Taskforce** with mandatory, funded representation from women-led organizations

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30. **Reframe migration as a driver of shared prosperity** by aligning legal pathways with labour market needs, embedding rights-based protections and; accelerating credential recognition and reducing remittance costs, directed through global standards for displacement, including the Kampala Convention.
31. **Leverage Sport for Diplomacy & Peacebuilding:** Invest in inclusive, community-based sports programmes that inspire hope, break down barriers, and build social cohesion — recognising sport's unique ability to unite people and promote dignity, especially among youth. We call on G20 member states and the Sherpa process to recognise sport as a cross-cutting priority and include it in future G20 declarations.
32. **Strengthen global justice architecture through inclusive, multilateral mechanisms** that promote conflict mediation, human rights protection, and the rule of law. Encourage G20 engagement with impartial and internationally recognised frameworks that reinforce the legitimacy and coherence of global governance.

The future is not sustainable without justice. No one must be left behind. The question is: not whether the G20 has been told - but whether they will act on the clear collective demands of the constituencies they serve.

The 14 Policy Briefs and 2 Statements of Intent that form an integral part of this Political Declaration/ Communiqué can be found in this link below:

[C20 Policy Pack FINAL](#)

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STATEMENTS OF INTENT

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STATEMENT OF INTENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ORGANISED UNDER THE BANNER OF DISABILITY20 (D20) - “Nothing about us without us: Statement of Intent letter of intent for disability justice at the c20”

Dr. Zukiswa Nzo (2nd Deputy Chairperson of the C20 South Africa Apex Leadership member)

When I wheel into any room, I carry more than my research. I carry the roads that are still not paved, the buildings still without ramps, and the voices of rural women who wake before dawn to chase opportunities that remain just out of reach. I carry history, too—our collective history of being spoken *about* instead of *with*.

It was **1981** when the world, for the first time, called disability a global issue. The United Nations named it *The International Year of Disabled Persons*. The theme was “Full Participation and Equality.” For the first time, governments were told: people with disabilities are not patients — we are citizens.

Then came the **UN Decade of Disabled Persons, 1983–1992**. Policies multiplied, committees were formed, and somewhere in the midst of it, a new movement was born — one that refused to be grateful for charity or silenced by pity.

We called ourselves **Disabled Peoples’ International**, and we shouted a phrase that has never lost its power: **“Nothing About Us Without Us.”**

That phrase travelled from conference rooms in New York to the dusty town halls of the Global South — to communities like mine.

- If policy marked the beginning, **people** made the movement.
- It emerged from disabled people’s own organising
- Its modern embrace in disability politics reminds us that policy
- without participation repeats paternalism.

After years of advocacy, the world adopted the **UNCRPD** on **13 December 2006**, opening for signature in **March 2007** and entering into force on **3 May 2008** — a landmark in human rights that reframed persons with disabilities as **rights-holders** and agents.

I recount this history not as a detached scholar, but as a **Black South African woman, a wheelchair user, an activist and a researcher**. I stand here carrying the work of communities who fought for ramps that

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were never poured, for buses that never lowered their steps, for screens that never spoke, for jobs that never materialised—and for dignity that never wavered.

In South Africa, our struggle for inclusion was woven into our struggle for freedom. When democracy came, our Constitution of 1996 declared equality for all — and for the first time, “disability” stood in law as a human right, not a medical condition.

We crafted frameworks, white papers, and strategic plans. The **White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2016)** spoke of barrier removal, empowerment, and dignity.

And yet — every time I roll past a staircase without a ramp, I am reminded that *policy is not the same as practice*.

In my recent research, I travelled between two South Africa’s — the **rural Limpopo** of Rudzani, who reads with a magnifier because braille came too late, and the **urban Gauteng** of Thando, who runs a small perfume business from her home, selling scents door to door because formal jobs are closed to blind women.

I met **Lucas**, a man who lost his sight after finishing school, who still believes that education — not charity — is the key to dignity. Their stories are not just examples; they are evidence.

Evidence that despite decades of good policy, economic empowerment for persons with disabilities remains *the exception, not the norm*.

We are living in a digital age — where government, commerce, and even community are increasingly online. The **G20**, under South Africa’s leadership, has made *digital inclusion* a national priority. But inclusion cannot be achieved if it is not *accessible*.

If AI cannot recognise our voices, if digital platforms cannot read our screens, if public data systems are not interoperable, then we are not just left behind — we are locked out.

Digital transformation without accessibility is simply a new form of exclusion wearing a modern name. Technology must not only be *smart*; it must be *just*. Artificial Intelligence (AI) must not only be *intelligent*; it must be *inclusive*. Digital public infrastructure must not only connect; it must *empower*.

That means:

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- Devices that speak to those who cannot see.
- Websites navigable by everyone, regardless of ability.
- Procurement systems that test for accessibility before approval.
- Innovation funds that invest in home-grown assistive technologies.

Because the question is not whether the future will be digital — the question is **whether it will be equitable**. **My friends, Intersectionality is not a theory — it's a daily reality.**

I stand before you as a **Black woman, a wheelchair user, a mother, a scholar, and a South African.**

These identities do not take turns, they arrive together. When I roll into a government building, I am reminded that sexism, racism, and ableism often sit at the same table — and they are still eating well. Intersectionality means that if policy **only sees one of my identities**, it will fail all of them.

And yet, intersectionality is also where the greatest possibility lies. When we design for those at the margins, we build systems that work better for everyone.

So, as we gather under the banner of the **C20** — with themes of **solidarity, equality, and sustainability** — I offer this **intent**:

1. Let us **redefine inclusion** not as an afterthought but as a design principle.
2. Let us **fund accessibility** as infrastructure, not as charity.
3. Let us **measure success** not by policy adoption, but by lived access.
4. Let us **move from learnerships to livelihoods**, from pilots to permanence.
5. Let us **build digital economies that reflect human diversity**, not erase it.

My personal pledge

When I was younger, I dreamed of a world where ramps were the norm, where buses lowered their steps, where schools welcomed every child. Today, I dream of a world where **the code itself is inclusive** — where digital systems recognise every human voice, where AI does not reproduce our biases, and where “innovation” means freedom, not exclusion. I speak today not as a statistic, but as a survivor of policy gaps, a witness to resilience, and a believer in change.

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I speak for the millions whose names never make it into declarations — for the rural woman and child navigating gravel roads with dignity, for the blind entrepreneur reinventing independence, for the young graduate waiting for the system to believe in his capability.

When coming to Our shared future, the G20 is not just a gathering of economies — it is a gathering of *futures*. And if we are honest, the measure of our progress will not be the size of our GDPs but the **breadth of our humanity**.

So, let this summit be remembered not only for the words we spoke, but for the access we built, the lives we touched, and the barriers we broke.

In closing.... fellow friends, know this...and note this as my final plea for recognition of the Disability20 (D20) as one of the official engagement groups in the next G20 Presidencies.

The **Disability-20 (D20)** stands as living proof that when persons with disabilities lead — not follow — the conversation, the world becomes fairer, wiser, and more humane.

Throughout this 2025 Presidency, we have worked tirelessly — coordinating across continents, shaping policy submissions, and amplifying lived experience — to ensure that disability is no longer peripheral, but central, to global governance.

Through the D20's collaboration with the **C20** and the broader G20 process, we are redefining inclusion not as an act of benevolence, but as an act of justice. We are proving that **inclusion is not charity — it is governance**.

Together with South Africa's G20 Presidency, we are setting a new global standard — one grounded in *solidarity, equality, and sustainability*. A standard where accessibility is infrastructure, not an afterthought; where representation is participation, not tokenism, and where leadership by persons with disabilities is recognised as essential to the world's collective progress. This is the future we claim — a G20 that does not merely speak of equality, but *practices* it. **Boldly. Visibly. Together. Leaving no one behind.**

Because the promise made in 1981 still echoes: **Full participation. Equality. Dignity.**

And because the words of our movement still stand: **Nothing About Us Without Us — ever again.**

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STATEMENT OF INTENT OF LGBTQIA+ PERSONS ORGANISED UNDER THE BANNER OF QUEER20 (Q20)

Roche Kester (2nd Deputy Chairperson of the C20 South Africa Apex Leadership member)

I am writing in my capacity as Second Sous Sherpa of the Civil 20 (C20) to formally express the intent to fully integrate the comprehensive stakeholder submissions from the LGBTIQA+ sector into the 2025 C20 Policy Pack. These inputs, submitted by a wide array of civil society organizations and experts, provide an indispensable roadmap for ensuring that the G20's agenda is truly inclusive and leaves no one behind.

The contributions received reflect a robust, evidence-based perspective that is simultaneously national, regional, and global in its scope. They articulate the specific challenges and opportunities facing LGBTIQA+ persons across G20 nations and the Global South, with a particular emphasis on the African continent. This multi-level engagement ensures that the resulting policy recommendations are grounded in local realities while being informed by universal human rights principles.

A defining strength of these submissions is their intersectional approach across the C20's fourteen working groups. The inputs meticulously demonstrate how issues of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) are not siloed but are intrinsically linked to the core mandates of each group—from Digital Transformation and Health to Education, Climate Justice, and Global Finance. This cross-cutting analysis reveals that LGBTIQA+ inclusion is not a standalone issue but a fundamental prerequisite for achieving the G20's goals in economic stability, sustainable development, and social cohesion.

Key cross-cutting issues identified include:

- The critical need for data disaggregation to make LGBTIQA+ communities visible in policy planning.
- The eradication of discriminatory legislative and policy frameworks, particularly colonial-era laws, that perpetuate violence and exclusion.
- Ensuring safe and equitable access to essential services, including healthcare, education, social protection, and digital spaces.
- Addressing the targeted online harm and political scapegoating that uniquely endanger LGBTIQA+ individuals and undermine social fabric.

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Of particular significance are the submissions to the Working Group on Economics , which powerfully argue that financial and trade architecture must be designed to support all individuals and the diverse families they form . The inputs highlight how tax, inheritance, and social benefit laws that privilege one family type actively worsen poverty and lock non-conforming families out of development gains. By advocating for economic policies that support LGBTIQA+-led enterprises, ensure workplace non-discrimination, and provide targeted entrepreneurial funding, these recommendations chart a clear path toward a better standard of living for those on the margins, directly combating poverty and economic inequality.

These submissions are not made in a vacuum. They are firmly supported by existing legislative and policy frameworks , including international human rights law, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the Maputo Protocol. The contributions expertly leverage these instruments to demonstrate that promoting LGBTIQA+ inclusivity is a matter of legal obligation and alignment with established global commitments.

Ultimately, these inputs affirm the fundamental principle that LGBTIQA+ rights are human rights. They compellingly argue that human dignity and safety are non-negotiable precursors to ensuring equitable access to economic opportunity, healthcare, education, and a sustainable environment. One cannot access a classroom, a clinic, or a marketplace in fear of violence or discrimination.

I therefore urge the fullest consideration and integration of these vital contributions into the 2025 C20 Policy Pack. By doing so, we will send a powerful message that the G20 process is committed to full citizen inclusivity and is dedicated to building a future where every person, without exception, can participate in and benefit from global progress.

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POLICY BRIEFS

Solidarity

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Policy Brief: Trade, Financial Architecture & Sustainable Development

Endorsed: October 2025

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Executive Summary

The current global trade and financial architecture entrenches inequality, debt dependency, and vulnerability of the Global South to external shocks. Rising debt service obligations crowd out essential investment in social sectors, while trade rules and investor-state dispute mechanisms constrain industrial policy and economic sovereignty. Climate finance remains predominantly loan-based, inaccessible for low-income countries, and tied to donor priorities, further limiting transformative development. Unilateral sanctions destabilize global commodity markets, undermine energy security, and compromise economic growth in developing countries.

For the G20, these systemic inequities matter profoundly: as controllers of the majority of global trade and finance flows, its policy stance determines whether disparities are perpetuated or addressed. Without decisive action, debt crises, unfair trade practices, sanctions, and climate-finance inequities will continue to compromise SDG achievement, social cohesion, and regional stability.

This brief recommends actionable measures for reform: advance debt cancellation frameworks and equitable IMF/World Bank governance; reform WTO rules to protect policy space; shift climate finance from loans to grants; end harmful subsidies and unilateral sanctions; strengthen South–South trade and investment partnerships; and engage with emerging initiatives such as the Greater Eurasian Partnership. These measures aim to foster inclusive growth, sustainable development, and resilience in Global South economies while promoting fairness in a multipolar global order.

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Introduction

The Civil 20 (C20) South Africa Working Group on Trade, Financial Architecture & Sustainable Development convenes at a pivotal moment in global geopolitics. The unipolar order is giving way to a multipolar world, elevating the importance of civil society voices in shaping equitable economic systems. The Global South continues to face structural barriers in trade, finance, and investment that limit its ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 17 (Partnerships).

International frameworks provide guiding principles for reform. UNCTAD mandates equitable trade practices that prioritize development needs, while the ICESCR enshrines the right to development. The Paris Agreement obligates donor countries to deliver climate finance in forms that support low-income nations. The African Union's Agenda 2063 emphasizes inclusive growth and financial sovereignty, while the G20 Deccan Principles on Food Security and the Rio Declaration on Environment & Development provide additional benchmarks.

Civil society emphasizes that unilateral sanctions outside UN Security Council approval are illegal and unjust, destabilizing global markets and impeding SDG progress. Initiatives such as the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP) offer opportunities for South-South, North-South cooperation, integrating trade and infrastructure systems across multiple regions while respecting national sovereignty. Civil society's input ensures G20 levers, finance ministers' meetings, trade working groups, and MDB governance are deployed to reduce inequalities, promote sustainable development, and strengthen equitable partnerships in a multipolar world.

Issue Analysis

1. Debt Crisis and Austerity Traps

Sovereign debt in African countries has escalated rapidly, significantly undermining fiscal space for development. By 2025, African nations are projected to spend USD 88.7 billion on external debt service, approximately 24.5% of GDP (data.one.org). Interest payments have risen 132% over the past decade (UNCTAD), with 16.7% of government revenue now dedicated to debt servicing, outpacing

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spending on health or education (iej.org.za). IMF-backed adjustment programs reinforce austerity, often imposing regressive tax increases and spending cuts that weaken investments in essential services and stall SDG progress.

2. Trade Rules That Undermine Development

WTO disciplines restrict industrial policy tools and reduce developing nations' ability to leverage strategic trade policy (UNCTAD, IATP). Tariff escalation penalizes processed exports while raw materials face minimal duties, locking countries into low-value chains. Investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanisms expose states to litigation risks when enacting development-oriented regulations. Civil society calls for WTO reform that strengthens the voice of the Global South, removes disguised protectionism, and ensures the unconditional functioning of dispute settlement bodies.

3. Climate Finance and Investment Justice

Climate finance remains insufficient and misaligned. Only 26–28% of funds for developing countries arrive as grants, while 71–72% are loans (UNCTAD, WRI). Developing countries require up to USD 5.9 trillion annually for adaptation, mitigation, and loss-and-damage measures (Le Monde, Reuters). Persistent reliance on loan-based finance and donor-driven priorities exacerbates vulnerability, while locally governed, grant-based programs are underfunded.

4. Commodity Dependence and Unfair Pricing

Over 60% of exports from Global South nations are raw commodities (UNCTAD), leaving producers vulnerable to price volatility. African agricultural exports have risen to 19% of total commodity exports (2021–23, The Habari Network), yet farmers retain only ~7% of final value (Ferdi). This reinforces structural inequality and dependence on extractive trade patterns.

5. Unilateral Sanctions and Global Market Stability

Unilateral sanctions undermine energy security, destabilize commodity markets, and weaken economic sectors. Civil society stresses that sanctions must be adopted only through UN Security Council approval, and G20 advocacy should facilitate dialogue to replace unilateral measures with cooperative solutions.

6. Respect for Sovereignty, Cultural/Historical Identity, and Social Inclusion

Western cultural dominance shapes trade and finance, marginalizing the Global South. Civil society emphasizes sovereign rights to self-determined development paths, respect for local traditions, and the protection of cultural and historical identity as prerequisites for equitable SDG implementation.

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7. Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP)

The Civil 20 welcomes the GEP as a framework integrating the EAEU, SCO, ASEAN, and China's Belt and Road Initiative. Open to cooperation with BIMSTEC, GCC, and African partnerships, the GEP aims to reconcile strategic interests, integrate infrastructure and trade systems, and promote just cooperation in a multipolar world. Civil society encourages G20 support for inclusive participation and equitable partnership among member countries.

8. Preserving Historical Memory and Preventing the Distortion of History

In 2025, the global community commemorated the 80th anniversary of the victory in World War II. The civil society of the G20 emphasises the importance of preserving historical memory and preventing the distortion of history to avoid repeating the tragic events of the Second World War.

The victory in World War II came at the cost of numerous human sacrifices and huge economic losses. The civil society of the G20 acknowledges that this victory was made possible by the decisive role of the Soviet people, thanks to their heroism and resilience in the face of fascist invaders. The allies of the USSR in the Anti-Hitler coalition also played a crucial role in the overall victory. During these times, the allied forces came together and, despite political divisions, coordinate their actions in the fight against Nazism and in the post-war political and economic reconstruction of Europe.

The C20 considers unacceptable the attempts of some countries to revise the outcomes of World War II, including the destruction of monuments to Anti-Nazi fighters and soldier-liberators, as well as marches to glorify Nazis and their accomplices. We strongly condemn these actions.

9. Exclusion of discrimination based on race, nationality, gender, language and religion

Discrimination in international economic relations based on race, nationality, gender, language and religion is unacceptable. The civil society of the G20 strongly opposes any manifestations of such discrimination. We especially note that the use of such discrimination contradicts Part three of paragraph one of Article 1 of Chapter I of the Charter of the United Nations.

10. Exclusion of Differently Abled People in Trade and Financial Systems

Persons with disabilities are frequently excluded from economic opportunities, limiting their participation

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in trade, entrepreneurship, and labour markets. Despite international frameworks promoting inclusion, structural barriers—such as inaccessible infrastructure, discriminatory policies, and limited access to finance and skills development prevent persons with disabilities from fully engaging in national and international trade. This exclusion reinforces economic inequalities and limits the potential for inclusive economic growth.

Summary of Key Themes

Issue	Key Data / Insight
Debt Service	16.7% of revenue spent on interest; outpaces health/education spending
Industrial Policy Constraints	WTO rules restrict essential tools and protections
Climate Finance	Majority of funds in loans; unmet Paris Agreement commitments
Commodity Dependence	High export concentration; farmers retain minimal value
Sanctions	Unilateral sanctions destabilize markets and energy security
Sovereignty & Culture	Respect for development paths and cultural identity essential
Exclusion of Differently Abled People	Persons with disabilities represent 15% of the global population (over 1.3 billion people), yet experience double the unemployment rate and face an annual global GDP loss of up to US\$2 trillion due to exclusion

Recommendations

Governance Reform

- 1. Democratize MDB Governance** – Reform IMF and World Bank quota and voting structures to reflect the actual economic weight and development contributions of the Global South, promote the equitable distribution of financial resources and the development of all members of the organization.

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2. **Establish a G20 Debt Workout Mechanism** – Implement a UN-based framework linking debt relief to sustainable development rather than austerity-driven measures.
3. **Strengthen WTO Decision-Making for the Global South** – Ensure reforms increase developing nations' influence in trade negotiations and dispute resolution. To abandon quasi-ecological and other barriers, to establish the unconditional functioning of the dispute settlement body.
4. **To develop the Greater Eurasian Partnership** as an initiative aimed at ensuring equal partnership and fair international economic cooperation.
5. **Institutionalise mandatory OPD participation in decision-making spaces** across debt, trade, and climate finance negotiations, with published records showing how their input shaped outcomes.

Investment Priorities

6. **Give priority** to renewable energy, sustainable agriculture and adaptation projects in the Global South and in the Greater Eurasian Partnership area.
7. **Value-Addition and Industrial Development** – Promote local processing of raw commodities to reduce dependency on extractive trade.
8. **Sustainability Hubs** – Create regional centres for knowledge exchange, finance, and partnerships supporting local governments, civil society, and SMEs.

Legal / Policy Instruments

9. **Reform WTO Rules** – Revise rules on subsidies, tariffs, and ISDS to protect policy space for developing nations.
10. **Enact Anti-Illlicit Financial Flow Legislation** – Recover capital flight and illicit transfers undermining public investment.
11. **Abandon the policy of unilateral sanctions** not approved by the UN Security Council.

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Programmatic Actions

12. **South-South, North-South Trade Facilitation Platforms** – Foster equitable trade partnerships, knowledge sharing, and capacity building across regions.
13. **Community-Managed Climate Finance Funds** – Direct resources to women-led SMEs, rural producers, and locally governed climate projects.
14. **Historical and Cultural Preservation Programs** – Safeguard heritage sites, document local histories, and integrate cultural identity into development planning.
15. **Engage with the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP)** – Support the GEP as a platform for strategic alignment, infrastructure integration, and just cooperation in a multipolar world.
16. **Establish an Inclusive Family Funding solutions** – Support families in accessing housing, finance, and livelihoods.
17. Mandate a **minimum 5% public procurement set-aside** for disability-owned suppliers, backed by verified registries and penalties for fronting. Develop local capacity to provide AT products and repair services, and help firms from low-income countries to integrate into global AT markets.
18. Not to apply in trade and other economic relations a policy of unilateral sanctions not approved by the UN Security Council.
19. To carry out activities aimed at preserving historical memory and preventing distortion of history, including about the Second World War and the role of the Soviet people in the Victory over fascism.

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C20 Policy Brief

Theme: Migration and People-to-People Movement

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Introduction

Migration and people-to-people movement are vital to global economic and social development. They facilitate the flow of skills, innovation, and capital. Unfortunately, current global systems treat mobility primarily as a security issue. This framing prioritises deterrence metrics such as apprehensions and detentions over meaningful integration outcomes such as decent work, credential recognition, and access to healthcare and education.

The consequence is exclusion of migrants and refugees from economic opportunity, perpetuating inequality and undermining their potential contributions. Host countries also lose out on the proven benefits of migration, as demonstrated by historical examples of innovation in industrialised nations in the Global North under open border policies, before the rising tensions around immigration that started to take hold in the late 2010s and early 2020s. G20 countries must shift towards a people-centred, dignity-based approach that recognises migration as an engine for growth, resilience, and justice. There are six key issues that have exacerbated the migration issues that are prevalent globally:

1. **Security & Migration:** Current migration frameworks are still dominated by a border-security paradigm, treating human mobility as a risk to be contained rather than a force for development, solidarity, and shared prosperity. This approach undermines global commitments to fairness, dignity, and inclusion.
2. **Unproductive KPIs:** Apprehensions, detentions, and deportations overshadow indicators of social inclusion such as employment, education, or healthcare access. Success is measured by numbers of apprehensions, detentions, and deportations, rather than by meaningful indicators of human well-being such as employment rates, school enrollment, access to healthcare, and social cohesion. This perpetuates a cycle where fear and deterrence overshadow integration and opportunity.
3. **Systemic Discrimination and racism:** Migrants, indigenous groups, Afro-descendants, LGBTQI+ people, and other marginalized groups remain excluded, facing compounded barriers across gender, class, and disability; limiting access to protection, justice, and economic participation, and deepening global inequality.

4. **Skills Mismatch and Waste:** Skilled professionals are often relegated to low-wage, informal, or unsafe work because of delayed or non-recognition of their qualifications. This undermines economic efficiency and increases social tensions as competition increases in entry level jobs. This not only wastes talent but also hampers innovation, drives inefficiency, and inflames social tensions as competition for entry-level jobs rises.
5. **Governance Gaps:** Fragmented inter-governmental coordination, insufficient data, and slow decision-making have led to crisis-driven responses rather than proactive, sustainable migration governance. Without integrated planning across labour, health, education, and housing sectors, both migrants and host communities remain vulnerable to instability and inequality. Unintegrated systems, processes and timelines to legalise migrants create delays and misinformation that can lead to exclusion and heightened tensions of xenophobia.
6. **Digital Systems:** Artificial intelligence (AI) carries significant risks when applied to migration governance without proper planning and discretion. Biometric and facial recognition systems have been shown to have higher error rates for darker skin toned people and non-European races, raising risks of misidentification, wrongful detention, and rights violations. Opaque risk scoring and automated triage tools used in visa and asylum systems have been shown to reproduce bias; for example, the UK scrapped its visa “streaming algorithm” after discrimination concerns. At the same time, border-tech expansion without safeguards (including AI for biometrics, risk assessment, and surveillance in the EU) exposes migrants to under-regulated experimentation. Poorly governed “high-risk” systems, such as automated document checks and traveller screening, can make de facto decisions without accountability, disproportionately affecting migrants who may often lack avenues to appeal. Trials of age and identity estimation technologies have shown accuracy gaps and racial disparities, posing particular risks where age determines eligibility for protection or detention.

The G20 represents 80% of global GDP and 60% of the world's population, giving it unparalleled power to shape migration, trade, and financial frameworks. Its decisions ripple across every region, meaning a people-centered shift here can redefine mobility and equity for generations. It must tackle aging populations, climate change, terrorism, wars and rumors of wars. Ageing populations

across G20 economies which has brought on fears of labour shortages and a higher social burden as people live longer; migration is a proven lever to address these issues. The Global South further bears a disproportionate burden of climate-related disasters and conflict-driven displacement. The South African G20 presidency provides a historic opportunity to champion just, people-centered migration policies that dismantle prejudice, enhance fairness and embed solidarity in global economic governance ensuring no one is left behind. G20 leadership must ensure shared responsibility, fair financing, and anticipatory solutions, particularly from major emitters and global corporations to deliver climate justice and prevent future humanitarian crises.

Our brief is linked to the following SDGs, Human Rights Frameworks and G20 commitments: SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and SDG 16 (Inclusive Institutions). It reinforces the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers. It builds on Brazil's 2024 Presidency focus on people-centred development and India's 2023 emphasis on inclusive growth. South Africa now has the opportunity to move from commitments to delivery.

Recommendations

This brief urges G20 leaders to adopt the following framework:



Flowchart: Match – Protect – Invest Framework

Reframe Migration

Reframe migration as an opportunity rather than a crisis, positioning it as a driver of shared prosperity and a solution to labour shortages and demographic challenges. Close gaps in protection, especially for stateless persons, women, LGBTQI+, migrants, children, and persons with disabilities, ensuring rights-based pathways and access to services.

Arbitrary Displacement

Governments must prevent arbitrary displacement driven by war, weak governance, and climate crisis, uphold international law, and provide durable solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs; including return, integration, or relocation). State stability and non-infringement on sovereign nations grounded in respect for international law remain the single most important interventions to curb arbitrary displacement. Furthermore a global commitment to climate accountability, where nations that have historically contributed the most to greenhouse gas emissions and benefited from extractive economic activities take the lead in funding just transitions, supporting affected countries, and holding corporations accountable for climate damage. This is essential not only for justice but for building resilience and shared security for future generations. AI can be leveraged to implement early warning & forecasting where predictive analytics anticipate climate and conflict displacement hotspots, helping allocate resources. Establish a War and Climate Displacement Compact to ensure proportional responsibility sharing among G20 nations.

Inclusive Microeconomics & Anti-Prejudice Economies

Governments must align pathways with labour market needs to limit skills waste, accelerating credential recognition to support industrialization. Create a minimum 90-day credential recognition framework in health, engineering, and construction sectors, unlocking talent faster and preventing skills waste. Governments must expand safe, legal routes tied to actual labour market needs including childcare support and bridging assessments to ensure equity for women and primary caregivers. Share responsibilities for climate and conflict-related displacement proportionally, with major emitters and disruptors of international law with G20 economies contributing to just transitions, resilience funding, and anticipatory planning for future displacement, ensuring housing, education, and healthcare systems remain inclusive and resilient. Remove visa/KYC barriers for migrant-owned MSMEs fostering job creation, innovation, and shared prosperity. Uphold G20 commitments to ≤3% transfer costs enabling families to retain more income, stabilising local economies, and accelerating SDG progress. Artificial intelligence efficiencies can be leveraged to responsibly streamline skills matching, service delivery, and remittance systems, while ensuring safeguards against bias and exclusion.

Protection of Rights

G20 governments can prioritise the following: ensure gender-responsive and LGBTQI-inclusive pathways, safeguarding dignity and equal access at every stage of migration. Closing statelessness gaps by fast-tracking documentation and legal identity solutions for all affected persons. Training of frontline staff is key to guaranteeing ethical, lawful implementation of migration policies to actively counter misinformation. The adoption of alternatives to detention, paired with work rights and comprehensive case management to uphold human dignity will align closely with the reframing. There must be a monitoring body that can launch a Cohesion Index to measure sentiment, trust, and hate speech trends enabling evidence-based interventions.

Integration of AI

It is imperative that there are no AI-only decisions about rights. Mandate meaningful human review for asylum, detention, removal, and status decisions; give applicants a right to know when AI is used and to obtain explanations. (Align with EU AI Act due-diligence principles while closing migration exceptions.) Create independent bias & impact audits. This will require pre-deployment

testing and regular audits (disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, disability), with public summaries and remediation timelines. Public contracts for border/migration technologies must include transparency clauses (model cards, data lineage, performance by subgroup), testing, and kill-switch provisions. There should be support for International Organisation for Migration-aligned digital identity standards that are voluntary, privacy-preserving, and usable across borders for 90-day credential recognition pathways in critical sectors. Fund AI for translation, appointment triage, and case-management in arrival municipalities (health, schooling, work permits) paired with offline alternatives to avoid digital exclusion and alleviate administrative pressure at these points. Tie the G20 remittance roadmap to migrant protection and reward providers that hit cost/transfer-time targets and publish inclusion metrics (e.g., availability for undocumented or recently regularized users).

Implementation of Social Development Plans

G20 countries should implement Social Development Plans (SDPs) that provide migrants with lawful residence, documentation, and access to essential services. Embedding SDPs across national and local systems will reduce irregularity, enhance integration, and foster inclusive, resilient communities. Positive Models of Service Delivery Plans are France, UK, Türkiye, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. They reduce irregularity through lawful residence, documentation, and work permits. There are still gaps in the USA, India, China, Japan, Germany, Canada, ROK, and South Africa. These countries lack comprehensive Service Delivery Plans leaving migrants vulnerable to irregularity and statelessness.

The Kampala Convention: A Framework for G20 Adoption

This is the first binding continent-wide treaty on internal displacement (AU, 2009). It covers displacement due to conflict, human rights violations, disasters (incl. climate change), and development projects. Its core priorities are to prevent arbitrary displacement, protect IDPs without discrimination, ensure dignity, and provide durable solutions. We recommend that the G20 adopt the Kampala Convention globally as a baseline for IDP protection.

Conclusion

Migration is not a crisis—it is a cornerstone of global prosperity. By reframing mobility as an opportunity, the G20 can transform systems that currently perpetuate exclusion into engines of justice, resilience, and sustainable growth. South Africa's G20 Presidency presents a historic moment to embed people-centred migration policies into global economic governance, ensuring that dignity, fairness, and opportunity guide future mobility frameworks.

WG3 Policy Brief- Democratic Governance, Civic Space, Anti-Corruption and Access to Justice

Endorsed: October 2025

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Introduction

Currently many countries in the G20 are facing democratic crisis. Despite universal ratification of the African Union (AU), United Nations (UN) frameworks to benefit citizens and foster global stability and human rights. The AU Agenda 2063, AU Prevention and Combating Corruption (AUPCC), United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), UN SDG 16 are important tools that continue guiding us to overcome our challenges. Regrettably, we have observed over time, states inability to govern effectively and uphold democratic values. This leads to citizens losing faith in democracy, resulting in social unrest and inequality. Noting this effect, the growing gap between the developing and developed countries, neglect of the marginalised, is marked by social fragmentation, economic uncertainty, and exacerbation of geopolitical conflicts. Although representing 85% of global GDP and two-thirds of the world's population, the persisting governance gaps in the G20 regress gains towards meaningful attainment of social-economical cohesion, safe communities, and effectively running institutions.

The WG 3 is advancing this Policy Brief to highlight the shortcomings in the G20 governance systems affecting its progressive policy regime to champion global economic development. This Policy Brief responds to these challenges by advancing four interlinked pillars: Democratic Governance, Civic Space, Anti-Corruption, and Access to Justice. Together, they provide a roadmap for reinforcing the G20 vision of stability, inclusivity, and sustainable development

Notable progress has been made through past declarations, such as the High-Level Principles on Beneficial Ownership Transparency (2014) and commitments emerging from the Anti-Corruption Working Group (2021–2024), but implementation consistently lags behind ambition.

Key gaps persist:

- Democratic backsliding is evident even in long-standing democracies, where electoral integrity and institutional independence face renewed pressures.
- Civic space continues to shrink across G20 countries, with civil society organisations, human rights defenders, whistleblowers, journalists and vulnerable groups encountering greater barriers to participation and protection.
- Anti-corruption efforts, despite universal ratification of the UNCAC, AUCC remain fragmented, with weak cooperation on illicit financial flows and money laundering.

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- Access to justice is uneven, as courts in some G20 states face political interference, while systemic barriers limit legal empowerment for marginalized communities, and especially the LGBTQIA+. Physical, communicative, and procedural barriers within justice systems disproportionately exclude persons with disabilities, denying them redress.

The WG3 stresses stronger collaboration among the G20 leading to effective implementation of treaties and policies. By sharing best practices and resources, countries can overcome challenges and work towards collective goals more efficiently.

Executive Summary

In today's rapidly changing world, the health of our democracy and trust is more critical than ever. If we fail to seize the opportunity to address the threats facing it, we risk being overwhelmed by the modern challenges including, corruption, misinformation and erosion of civil liberties. This discussion explores how existing global and regional instruments can be leveraged to ensure coherence and accountability in this ongoing fight.

Significant milestones on the international stage are commended for efforts to restore trust and confidence with our citizens in increasing our attention in fighting corruption. The G20 High-Level Principles on Beneficial Ownership Transparency established in 2014 has made strides in paving the way for the Anti-Corruption Working Group (2021–2024). This reiterates a clear intent to combat corruption on a global scale. Opportunities also lie in leveraging existing global and regional instruments, UNCAC, the AU Anti-Corruption Convention, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, to ensure coherence and accountability. However, the true challenge lies in transforming this intent into institutionalized reforms, supported by unwavering political will.

The G20 carries not only an influential position, but also a moral and imperative responsibility all over the global community. With such economic and demographic weight, inaction or half measures continue impacting negatively all around the world. Those on the receiving end are mostly in the developing world, particularly, vulnerable groups like women, and youth, who barely survive from "hand to mouth". As for persons with disabilities, gender identity individuals face double stigma and negative attitudes. More decisive action is required from leaders to reduce the gap between commitments and implementation, ensuring G20 decisions translate into tangible improvements for governance , justice and civic participation.

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We propose the following actionable recommendations aligned with the global agenda for sustaining peacebuilding efforts. Peaceful societies are built on the pillars of accountable governance, inclusive civic participation, transparent institutions, and equitable justice systems. As stewards of the global agenda, G20 leaders can solidify cooperation to these principles, not only as policy ideals but as practical imperatives for lasting peace and shared values.

Democratic Governance - Despite most G20 countries having matured democracies - democratic institutions are being challenged now more than before in these contexts. In today's interconnected world, the international blocks have become a significant force of shaping public opinion and preserving democratic systems. Notably the countries like the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China, have seen the emergence of powerful blocks that play a crucial role in supporting democratic values. Emphasising principles of inclusivity, and cooperation in the G20 can contribute positively to unity and shared purpose.

Civic Space - The recent global civic space report highlights staggering negative trends towards civil society and human rights defenders safeguarding the right to freedom of association , assembly, expression and information. Only 40 out of 198 countries implement enabling environment policies realising civic freedoms. Regressive practices in the African continent and other countries in the world deny citizens safeguarded rights in regional and international human rights systems. Civic space is the cornerstone of democracy, peace, justice and must be enhanced to empower citizens participation and engaging more actively and responsibly. Shrinking civic space and discriminatory systems lock out persons with disabilities and marginalized genders from participating in governance and policy-making. Targeted Persecution of LGBTIQA+ Persons is also a serious concern. The pervasive criminalization of LGBTIQA+ identities in many G20 nations forces individuals to flee, facing violence and exclusion from justice and protection. This criminalization should be condemned, and the G20 should consider cooperation on asylum mechanisms and decriminalization.

The G20 success as a global leader rests on the vibrant active citizenry. Therefore implementing measures protecting civil society, human rights defenders, whistleblowers, and vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, marginalised gender individuals, will have far reaching consequences in preserving good governance and human dignity.

Anti-Corruption - From the Corruption Perception Index (2025, World Population Review) highlights high levels of corruption across the globe. Money laundering, illicit financial flows, bribery, weak enforcement agencies to hold suspects accountable, frustrate the global economic development goals. Global cooperation among the G20 requires integrity in the public sector, transparency, accountability and stressing competency, ethical codes in recruitment. Civil society, including researchers, watchdogs, journalists are recognised as key stakeholders in supporting effective and

anti-corruption policies. Their collaboration with states is highly recommended for encouraging efficiency in government administration structures and implementation of global frameworks fostering seizing and recovering assets . All G20 members have ratified the UNCAC, but deeper cooperation is needed in domestication of AU conventions as models.

Access to Justice - The poor in developing countries especially women in rural areas, youth, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ+A, children and their families grapple daily to make ends meet. They face many hurdles accessing justice, fairness in economic opportunities, because many lack legal infrastructure for economic development. They need fairness in legal protection to promote innovation and entrepreneurial empowerment, to create better conditions for investment with infrastructure for basic services, including ICT. We as the G20 should renew our pledges and collaborative efforts to reduce the inequality gaps affecting economic growth for them and their involvement in the vision and contributing to ethical legal integrity.

Recommendations

Democratic Governance

- Cultivate political pluralism and cultural tolerance promoting regional and international cooperation
- Mandate the inclusion and representation of persons with disabilities and all marginalized gender identities in all co-created governance models and leadership programming.
- Institutionalise civic data monitoring mechanism, using citizen generated information to inform real-time feedback reflections on service delivery and corruption trends.
- Support co-created governance models by funding civil society led social accountability initiatives, particularly in conflict affected contexts
- Embed youth, feminist and grassroot leadership within democratic governance programming, especially in countries where representative inclusion is undermined by contexts where representative inclusion is constrained by structural barriers.
- Prioritise institutional resilience against democratic backsliding, particularly through adequately funded democratic institutions protecting electoral integrity, independent oversight bodies and media freedom.
- Promote adherence to UN (SDG16) and AU governance mechanisms, specifically AU Charter on Election Democracy and Governance

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- Institutionalize participatory forums (ward-to-national) with published minutes, timelines, and feedback loops. Adopt open contracting & open budgets so citizens can trace decisions to spending. Publish service delivery dashboards (DPI/open data) to track commitments vs outcomes.

Civic Space

- Help to halt the erosion of civic space, including excess digital surveillance, arbitrary detention and over-regulation of civil society actors, human rights defenders, under the guise of national security.
- Establish permanent G20-C20-UN civil society dialogue mechanisms, not limited to annual cycles, to ensure year round access to decision making.
- Prioritise legal empowerment and legal literacy programming, especially in underserved rural and informal urban communities, to build durable civic engagement.
- Support civil society, human rights defenders, and multi-stakeholder interventions aimed at safeguarding civic space domestically and regionally. Integrating ACHPR Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly in Africa & UN Declaration of Human Rights Defenders promoting model law enactment.
- Strengthen cooperation and shared knowledge advancing harmony, fundamental freedoms, justice, dignity for all leaving no one behind.
- Implement Human Rights Defender protection measures (rapid legal aid, incident hotlines, non-retaliation).
- Fund community media and rural voice hubs to counter stigmatization of activists.
- Provide low-cost digital security kits & training for CBOs (threat modeling, secure comms, data hygiene & dignity products).

Anti-Corruption

- Reinforce transnational anti-corruption enforcement and collaboration, including commitments to beneficial ownership transparency, automatic exchange of information and corporate accountability

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- Protect anti-corruption activists, human rights defenders, whistleblowers and investigative journalists through model laws and safe haven mechanisms, cross-border support and enforceable protocols
- Promote community driven anti-corruption innovations, such as dialogues, participatory budgeting, social audits, and digital whistleblowing platforms
- Leverage multilateral platforms: regional and international such as the Open Government Partnership, SADC, High Level Panel - Illicit Financial Flow from Africa, Pan African Parliament, African Peer Review Mechanism, SADC Parliamentary Forum
- By leveraging international and regional instruments such as African Union & United Nations Anti Corruption instruments, the SADC Model Law on Public Finance Management (PFM), OGP commitments and FATF recommendations to inform national policy reforms, our efforts can strengthen the vertical coherence between national initiatives and regional strategies for accountability.
- Implement central, public beneficial-ownership registers with sanctions for non-compliance. Mandate Open Contracting Data Standard in all major procurements; publish bidders, prices, variations.
- Create civic monitors (citizen audits/social accountability)

Access to Justice

- Decriminalise poverty-related offences (Example of informal vending, minor drug use, petty theft, sex work) that entrench inequality and overburden judicial systems
- Implement data-driven judicial reform with transparent dashboards tracking case backlogs, pre-trial detention rates, and human rights violations
- Mandate universal accessibility and reasonable accommodation in all courts, police stations, and legal aid services.
- Champion intersectional justice by funding tailored support for families, women in rural areas, youth, migrants, LGBTIQ+ persons, people with disabilities, as well as albinism and other structurally excluded groups, ensuring equitable access beyond formal courts.
- Align national new laws with international and regional frameworks, including the UN *Justice for All* agenda, AU Transitional Justice Policy, SDG 16, and AU Agenda 2063 (Article 3).
- Modernise the ICC and ICJ and have them recognized as complementary guarantors, mediators of peace, mercy and understanding partners in ensuring stability, coherence, impartiality, and the strengthening of the G20 justice institutions across all levels, for better balance in peace mediation.

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- Scale legal aid & paralegal networks in rural communities; waive/limit fees for indigent users. Deploy e-justice tools (SMS/USSD case status; online small-claims; remote filings) with offline options, and Translate laws/processes; mobile clinics; schools, community paralegals and ombuds points.
- Set service standards (case timelines, access targets), publish performance, and provide remedies for delays. Establish GBV one-stop justice pathways (evidence handling, survivor support, fast-track courts).

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C20 Working Group on Women and Gender Equity – Policy Brief

Title: Gender Equality for an equitable and progressive society

Endorsed : October 2025

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Executive Summary

Despite decades of commitment, gender inequality persists across G20 and non-G20 countries. Women and girls continue to face structural barriers in economic participation, political representation, and safety. Gender-based violence (GBV) alone costs the global economy an estimated \$1.5 trillion annually [1], while persistent wage gaps and the undervaluation of unpaid care work reduce GDP and deepen inequality.

Why the G20 must act: As the world's most influential economic forum, the G20 has both responsibility and opportunity to accelerate gender equality. Aligning with SDG 5, the Beijing Platform for Action, Africa's Agenda 2063 and commitments of the G20 Gender Equality Ministers, bold action on gender equity is a proven driver of economic growth, stability, and social resilience. Policies must also explicitly address the realities of migrant, refugee, and undocumented women and girls, who face compounded exclusion in accessing healthcare, education, safety, and livelihoods. Their inclusion is central to achieving gender equality across G20 and beyond.

Core recommendations:

- Mandate gender-responsive budgeting in all G20 recovery and climate finance packages.
- Establish a Permanent G20 Gender Equality Taskforce with measurable accountability.
- Allocate at least 1% of GDP to gender equality initiatives, prioritizing women-led, youth-led disability-led, SOGIESC and grassroots feminist initiatives.
- Enforce ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190 on workplace violence and eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage and FGM, by 2030.
- Fund universal childcare and GBV prevention/response systems, including safe transport, survivor services, and digital protection.
- Ensure inclusion of women and girls of diverse SOGIESC, disability, and rural backgrounds in all policies.
- Guarantee women's access to land, credit, digital technology, and markets to close economic participation gaps.
- Ensure women's leadership in climate action and digital transformation, integrating Indigenous knowledge and tackling online GBV.
- Ensure all gender equality initiatives are fully inclusive and accessible to women and girls with disabilities, by mandating their participation in governance and ring-fencing dedicated financing

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Introduction

The year 2025 marks a pivotal moment for advancing global gender equality. South Africa's G20 Presidency coincides with major milestones: the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, and the mid-point review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet progress is dangerously off-track: at the current pace, global gender equality will take nearly 300 years to achieve.

International and regional legal frameworks provide a clear mandate for urgent action:

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sets binding obligations to eliminate discrimination. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) remains the most comprehensive global roadmap for advancing women's rights. The ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment at work recognizes the right of all women to dignity and safety in employment. Furthermore, UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Agreed Conclusions consistently reaffirm the need for women's economic empowerment as a driver of development.

Regionally, instruments such as the African Union's Maputo Protocol and the Agenda 2063 provide frameworks that reinforce commitments to women's rights in Africa, directly relevant as South Africa assumes the 2025 G20 Presidency.

Despite these commitments, women continue to face persistent barriers. The economic and social costs of inaction are stark. GBV costs the global economy \$1.5 trillion annually^[1], while the gender pay gap suppresses GDP growth across all G20 economies. Women perform three-quarters of unpaid care work globally, reducing women's participation in formal labor markets. At the same time, women's leadership, grassroots organizing, and traditional ecological knowledge are powerful but underutilized drivers of resilience. Additionally, inconsistencies across legal and policy frameworks perpetuate the criminalization of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) that further entrenches violence faced by LGBTIQA+ persons, creating barriers to achieving

global

gender

equality.

This policy brief argues that gender equality is not a side issue, but a core driver of inclusive economic recovery, climate resilience, digital transformation, and sustainable peace. The 2025 G20 Presidency offers a historic opportunity to institutionalise gender equality within global governance, ensuring that commitments are matched with resources, accountability, and transformative policies.

Economic Inequality and Women's Empowerment

Women across the G20 and non G20 countries including the Global South continue to face entrenched economic inequality. They are overrepresented in informal and precarious work, concentrated in low-wage sectors such as

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care, retail, and agriculture, and disproportionately excluded from access to land, credit, and digital tools. Globally, an estimated 60% of women work informally, leaving them without social protection [2]. In India, women comprise roughly 80% of garment workers yet are often excluded from union protections; in South Africa, rural women farmers lack secure land rights, limiting access to climate finance.

The gender pay gap persists in every G20 country, suppressing growth and deepening poverty. Women also shoulder nearly three times more unpaid care work than men, amounting to trillions of dollars in unrecognized economic value annually [3]. Further, unpaid care work for people with disabilities remains invisible. Without structural transformation, recovery and growth models will continue to reproduce inequality and further exclude marginalised groups such as the LGBTIQA+ and women living with disability

Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Mandate gender-responsive budgeting across all G20 economic and recovery packages.
- Establish a Permanent G20 Gender Equality Taskforce with mandatory, funded representation from women-led organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) as well as mandate their inclusion in all national gender council drafting and review processes.
- **Investment Priorities:** Establish dedicated financing for women-led enterprises, including cooperatives, and support inclusive procurement policies.
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Enforce equal pay legislation and ratify/implement ILO Convention 190 to address harassment in workplaces.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Expand universal childcare, invest in care infrastructure, and ensure social protection for informal and precarious workers.
- **Digital & Financial Inclusion:** Close the digital divide by investing in women's digital literacy and ensuring equitable access to fintech solutions.

Gender-Based Violence and Safety

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a global epidemic and a systemic barrier to equality. It undermines health, dignity, and participation while also imposing massive economic costs. The World Bank estimates that violence against women costs the global economy about \$1.5 trillion annually ($\approx 2\%$ of global GDP) [1].

GBV manifests in multiple, overlapping forms: intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, technology-facilitated violence, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) affecting infants, adolescents, and adult women, non-consensual, medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex persons, infants and children which are a

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violation of their bodily integrity and reproductive rights. Also, child and forced marriage as well as so-called “conversion practices” aimed at erasing LGBTIQ+ identities and hate crimes targeting women and girls of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) continue to be a challenge. State-sanctioned violence, particularly through the criminalisation of homosexuality, further exacerbates risks and poses a major threat to the safety of LGBTIQA+ persons. The cumulative effect of these violations is devastating — denying women, girls and LGBTIQA+ persons bodily autonomy, perpetuating cycles of trauma, and excluding them from education, employment, and civic participation. Crucially, GBV is not only a human rights crisis, but also an economic one: it reduces women’s labour force participation, lowers productivity, and increases health and justice system costs. No G20 economy can achieve inclusive and sustainable growth while absorbing the social and economic losses caused by GBV.

Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Establish a G20-wide accountability mechanism to monitor GBV, harmful practices, and hate crimes, with disaggregated data on SOGIESC.
- **Investment Priorities:** Fund and mandate national survivor-centered services, including trauma-informed healthcare, shelters, legal aid, reintegration programs
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Ratify and enforce ILO Convention 190 on workplace harassment; set and enforce the minimum legal age of child marriage at 18 years without exception, criminalize all forms of FGM (infant, adolescent, adult), conversion practices, urge full implementation and funding of hate crime laws and national strategies with specific protections for women and girls of diverse SOGIESC.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Expand survivor-led advocacy, strengthen digital protections against tech-enabled GBV, and ensure all services are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ persons, women with disabilities, and rural/migrant women. Ensure GBV prevention and response services are accessible to refugee, migrant, and undocumented women and girls, regardless of legal status, including cross-border cooperation to prevent trafficking and exploitation. Establish dedicated funding for safe shelters, legal aid, and psychosocial counseling for displaced women and families.
- Fund and mandate universally accessible, survivor-centered GBV services which cater for the needs of women and girls living with disabilities, including sign language interpreters, accessible shelters, and information in easy-to-read formats. Ensure SRHR services and information are fully accessible and that providers are trained on the rights and needs of people with disabilities.
- Provide capacity-building for police, judiciary, and healthcare workers on SOGIESC competencies and the specific vulnerabilities of LGBTIQA+ persons to GBV.
- **Corporate Accountability:** Mandate workplace GBV prevention policies and require corporations to audit and address GBV across global supply chains.

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Political Participation and Leadership

Despite progress in women's representation, political participation gaps remain entrenched across G20 and non G20 countries. Women hold only about 26.7% of parliamentary seats worldwide, and roughly one in four ministerial posts [4]. In many contexts, women who do enter politics or leadership face backlash, harassment, and violence, both offline and online. Importantly, numbers alone are insufficient. The presence of women in parliaments or boardrooms does not automatically translate into gender-responsive decision-making. Structural barriers — from political party financing rules to "masculine" institutional cultures, to meetings scheduled during caregiving hours — systematically exclude women and entrench inequality.

LGBTIQ+ leaders, women with disabilities, young women, and those from rural or migrant backgrounds face compounded exclusion. Hate speech, targeted harassment, and political violence against women in public life — including online "pile-ons" — have become normalized tools to silence them. Refugee and migrant women remain systematically excluded from decision-making spaces despite their critical contributions to community resilience. G20 commitments must guarantee their meaningful participation in civic, political, and leadership structures.

Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Enact and enforce gender parity laws for political representation, and mandate gender balance on corporate boards across G20.
- **Investment Priorities:** Support leadership training, mentorship, and civic participation programs, particularly for young women, women with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ persons.
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Criminalize political harassment and violence against women in public life; implement protections in line with CEDAW General Recommendation 23 and ILO C190.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Fund safe digital platforms for women leaders, create support programs and protective mechanisms for women and LGBTQIA+ human rights defenders (HRDs) and asylum seekers who face targeted violence, and institutionalize family-friendly parliamentary practices (e.g., childcare support, flexible hours).
- **Feminist Foreign Policy:** Encourage G20 members to adopt feminist foreign and development policies that promote inclusive leadership globally.

Gender-Responsive Climate Action and Just Transition

Climate change is not gender neutral. Women and marginalized genders are disproportionately impacted due to their roles in agriculture, water collection, and informal economies — all highly sensitive to environmental shocks. Limited access to land, credit, technology, and decision-making power amplifies vulnerability. Climate-induced displacement increases risks of trafficking, GBV, and exploitation, especially for refugee, rural, and LGBTIQ+ communities^[5].

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Despite these vulnerabilities, women are leaders in climate resilience. From Indigenous ecological practices to grassroots adaptation strategies, women and girls bring invaluable knowledge that is often excluded from formal climate planning. Ignoring these contributions not only perpetuates gender inequality but also weakens global climate responses.

The economic cost is high: the International Labour Organization warns that climate change could displace around 80 million jobs by 2030^[6], while empowering women farmers with equal access to resources could increase agricultural output by up to 30% in some regions^[7].

Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Mandate gender parity in climate decision-making bodies and integrate gender in all G20 climate frameworks.
- **Investment Priorities:** Earmark funds for women-led climate initiatives and simplify access to climate finance for grassroots, rural, and Indigenous women.
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Protect the rights of displaced women and girls, criminalize climate-related trafficking, and align policies with the Paris Agreement gender action plan. Protect the rights of displaced women and girls, including refugees and undocumented persons, by guaranteeing access to services regardless of status, and align migration, gender, and climate frameworks to address heightened risks of trafficking and exploitation.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Promote gender-sensitive climate technologies and digital access; scale up universal social protection for climate-affected workers; integrate Indigenous and women's ecological knowledge into national adaptation strategies.
- **Just Transition:** Ensure green economy jobs are accessible to women, LGBTIQ+ persons, and other marginalized groups through quotas, vocational training, and safe working conditions.

Digital Inclusion and Safety

The digital revolution offers unprecedented opportunities, but it also risks entrenching existing inequalities. Women and girls remain about 18% less likely than men to own a smartphone and 20% less likely to access mobile internet globally^[8]. For rural women, women with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ persons, this digital divide is even wider. Lack of digital literacy, cost barriers, and social restrictions limit meaningful access.

At the same time, online spaces are increasingly unsafe. Women, girls, and queer persons are disproportionately subjected to technology-facilitated GBV (TF-GBV), including cyberstalking, image-based abuse, doxxing, and hate speech. Research shows roughly 38% of women globally have experienced online violence, with the rate higher among young women, trans persons, and women human rights defenders^[9].

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Digital exclusion is not just a rights issue — it is an economic one. Without closing the gender digital divide, the global economy risks losing over \$1 trillion in GDP by 2025^[10]. Moreover, women's exclusion from AI and digital policymaking entrenches male-dominated algorithms that reproduce bias.

Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Mandate gender parity in AI and digital governance bodies across G20 institutions.
- **Investment Priorities:** Fund digital literacy programs for women and girls, especially in rural and marginalized communities, and support development of accessible technologies.
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Criminalize TF-GBV and adopt global standards for online safety, aligned with CEDAW General Recommendation 35.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Develop gender-sensitive AI systems that eliminate bias; establish national/regional TF-GBV data repositories; leverage digital platforms to expand access to SRHR information, safe online spaces, and economic opportunities for women and LGBTQI+ persons.
- Invest in scholarships and vocational training for women with disabilities, ensuring universal design in digital platforms and physical infrastructure.
- **Corporate Accountability:** Require tech companies to implement robust content moderation, privacy protections, and survivor redress mechanisms.

Adolescent Girls, Harmful Practices & Disability Inclusion

Adolescent girls continue to face harmful practices that strip them of their rights, health, and futures. Each year, an estimated 12 million girls are married before the age of 18[11]. Female genital mutilation (FGM) affects more than 200 million women and girls alive today, spanning infants, adolescents, and adult women across at least 30 countries [12]. Practices such as “virginity testing”, child marriage, and so-called “conversion practices” targeting LGBTQI+ youth persist despite international prohibitions.

Crises — from conflict and climate disasters to pandemics — exacerbate these risks. During humanitarian crises, adolescent girls face heightened risks of trafficking, sexual exploitation, and early pregnancy, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of poverty.

Hate crimes and discriminatory practices also target adolescent girls of diverse SOGIESC, silencing their voices and cutting them off from education, health care, and participation in society. For refugee and displaced adolescent girls, these risks are even more acute: separation from families, denial of schooling, and lack of access to SRHR services compound their vulnerability to child marriage, trafficking, and early pregnancy.

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Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** Make elimination of child marriage, FGM (across life stages), virginity testing, and conversion practices a priority in all G20 gender equality agendas.
- **Investment Priorities:** Fund youth- and feminist-led initiatives, including survivor-led campaigns, and allocate resources for adolescent-friendly SRHR services.
- **Legal/Policy Instruments:** Set and enforce laws setting 18 as the minimum age of marriage without exceptions; criminalize all forms of FGM, virginity testing, and conversion practices; strengthen anti-hate crime legislation protecting adolescent girls of diverse SOGIESC; repeal laws criminalizing consensual same-sex conduct and diverse gender identities and expressions.
- **Programmatic Actions:** Scale up comprehensive sexuality education (CSE); expand access to adolescent-friendly health services, including contraception, safe abortion, and mental health support; develop community-based prevention engaging traditional and faith leaders and boys/men.
- **Disability Inclusion:** Ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); fund inclusive infrastructure; ensure all GBV, health, and education services are accessible to women and girls with disabilities, including through assistive technologies.

Cross-Cutting Principles

- **Intersectionality:** Policies must reflect the lived realities of diverse women and girls — rural, Indigenous, disabled, migrant, and LGBTIQ+ communities. Migration and Displacement: Ensure all G20 policies explicitly include migrant, refugee, and undocumented women and girls, guaranteeing access to health, education, safety, and livelihoods irrespective of legal status.
- **Disaggregated Data:**
 - Collect and analyze data by gender, age, disability, rural/urban status, and SOGIESC to design targeted interventions.
 - implement mandatory disability-disaggregated data collection across all WEGE indicators. The proposed G20 Gender Equality Scorecard must explicitly track and report outcomes for women and girls with disabilities to ensure accountability
- **Targeted Interventions:** Abandon “one-size-fits-all” approaches; prioritize tailored responses for marginalized groups.
- **Coalition Building:** Build solidarity across feminist, labor, climate, disability, and LGBTIQ+ movements to strengthen advocacy.

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- **Financing & Investment Justice:** Reform multilateral lending criteria to incentivize gender equality; allocate at least 1% of GDP to gender equality nationally. Create a 5% public procurement set-aside for businesses owned by women with disabilities and support their access to credit and markets.
- **Global South Solidarity:** Elevate South–South feminist networks and grassroots movements as central actors in policy design and monitoring.
- **Community-Led Solutions:** Invest in women’s cooperatives, youth-led initiatives, and survivor-driven campaigns.
- **Transparency & Accountability:** Establish a G20 Gender Equality Scorecard, with annual public reporting, participatory monitoring, and civil society oversight.

Conclusion and Call to Action

Gender equality is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity. It is integral to tackling today’s most urgent challenges — from economic recovery and digital transformation to climate change and global peace. The cost of inaction is measured in lost lives, suppressed potential, and trillions of dollars in economic losses. The G20, under South Africa’s Presidency, must seize this historic opportunity to embed gender equality at the heart of global economic governance. Incremental measures are no longer enough — only transformative change will close the gaps.

The C20 therefore calls on G20 leaders to:

Governance Reform

- Commit to a G20 Gender Equality Pact with measurable targets.
- Establish a Permanent G20 Gender Equality Taskforce.

Investment Priorities

- Allocate a minimum of 1% of GDP to gender equality nationally, with a specific portion ring-fenced for initiatives benefiting women and girls with disabilities, including grants for OPDs and funding for reasonable accommodations
- Fund survivor-centered GBV prevention and response infrastructure, including shelters, safe transport, and digital protection.
- Invest in universal childcare and care economy systems, recognizing unpaid care as central to economic resilience.

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Legal and Policy Instruments

- Ratify and enforce CEDAW, the Beijing Platform, ILO C190, the Maputo Protocol, and the SADC Gender Protocol.
- Eliminate child marriage, FGM, virginity testing, and conversion practices by 2030, through enforcing 18 as the minimum legal age of marriage and fully funded national action plans.

Programmatic Actions

- Explicitly include and protect women and girls of diverse SOGIESC and with disabilities in all G20 commitments.
- Expand women's access to land, credit, technology, and markets to close financial inclusion gaps.
- Strengthen women's leadership in climate adaptation and just transition planning, integrating Indigenous and traditional knowledge.
- Close the digital gender gap by expanding rural connectivity, digital literacy, and protection against online GBV.
- Invest in universal childcare and accessible GBV services

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Civil 20 (C20) Working Group on Cultural Diversity Recognition and Embracement Under the G20 South Africa Presidency, 2025

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Executive Summary

Cultural rights remain under-protected, with governance gaps that allow heritage destruction, inequitable economies, and exclusionary education systems. Cultural diversity remains marginalized in global governance, with indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and heritage under threat from extractive industries, market commodification, and systemic neglect.

For the G20, cultural diversity is not peripheral but central to inclusive development, conflict prevention, and innovation. Recognizing cultural rights strengthens democracy, safeguards heritage, and fosters equitable economies.

Core Recommendations:

- **Governance Reform:** The G20 should require Cultural Impact Assessments (CIAs) for projects; legally recognize communal land rights; and ensure indigenous representation in policymaking.
- **Investment Priorities:** The G20 should fund community-owned cultural enterprises, language preservation, and support women as knowledge keepers.
- **Legal & Policy Instruments:** The G20 should ratify and implement UNESCO and AU cultural conventions; establish intercultural competence frameworks; and safeguard digital heritage. As highlighted in Article 1(c) of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions is an essential condition for sustainable development and human dignity.
- **Programmatic Actions:** The G20 should launch cultural exchange platforms; integrate indigenous knowledge into curricula; support grassroots-led policy innovation; and link cultural protection to climate adaptation.
- Support and fund local, culturally competent LGBTQ + movements that's are leading legal reform and challenging harmful narratives from within their own cultural contexts.

This Policy Brief outlines **six thematic priorities**:

1. Protection and Restitution of Cultural Heritage
2. Recognition and Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Authorities
3. Promotion of Intercultural Dialogues
4. Support for Language Diversity and Revitalization
5. Cultural Sustainability and Climate Change
6. Practicalizing Cultural Embrace by Advancing Indigenous Knowledge Systems as Wellbeing Economies.

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Together, these themes provide a roadmap for embedding cultural diversity into G20 policymaking, aligned with **UNESCO MONDIACULT 2022**, the **Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)**, **UNDRIP**, and the **African Union Agenda 2063**

The Working Group calls on G20 leaders to recognize culture as a standalone pillar in global frameworks, establish a G20 Cultural Diversity Forum, and ensure that Indigenous voices shape collective solutions to global challenges. Embedding cultural diversity in G20 policy is an act of justice and resilience, positioning culture as a driver of peace, equity, and sustainable development.

Introduction

Culture is the soul of human dignity, the foundation of identity, and a driver of inclusive economies. Yet, cultural diversity faces systemic marginalization across governance, education and development frameworks. In many Global South contexts, colonial legacies disrupted indigenous governance systems, suppressed languages, and commodified heritage, reducing culture to a resource for exploitation rather than empowerment. The UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights stresses that participation in cultural life is a fundamental human right, central to reducing inequalities and fostering justice.

As reaffirmed in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. This article also guarantees the rights of national minorities to preserve and develop their cultural identity. International frameworks provide clear recognition of cultural rights. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) affirms cultural diversity as “the common heritage of humanity.” As recognised in Article 1 (c) of the UNESCO Constitution, states are reminded of the necessity of engagement in “dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchange in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace” (UNESCo 1945).

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, Article 15) guarantees participation in cultural life. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) upholds rights to self-determination, heritage, and land. Regionally, the African Union Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006) calls for revitalization of indigenous knowledge and languages. Similarly, Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees that “everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits,” and to “protection of the moral and material interest resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author” (UN, 1948).

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South Africa's Constitution further enshrines protection for cultural, religious, and linguistic rights. Despite these commitments, implementation lags. In the Global South, cultural erasure is tied to poverty, inequality, and climate vulnerability. Languages disappear, indigenous economies are side-lined, and cultural sites face destruction from extractive projects. Yet, culture is a powerful tool for resilience. For example, African community-led heritage conservation preserves sacred forests and rock art while enhancing climate adaptation. Similarly, indigenous languages like Kiswahili and Amharic, if elevated, can serve as vehicles of innovation, unity, and economic transformation.

For the G20, centering cultural diversity is both a moral and strategic imperative. It advances the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 10 (Reduced Inequalities), Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and Goal 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Culture must not be seen as decorative but as a political economy issue: who benefits, who is excluded, and how justice can be restored.

This brief calls for a paradigm shift: from rhetoric to enforceable rights, from top-down policies to community-led solutions, and from extractive development to cultural justice.

Thematic Priorities and Recommendations

1. Protection and Restitution of Cultural Heritage

Colonialism, conflict, and exploitation displaced countless artifacts, ancestral remains, and knowledge systems. Restitution is a question of **justice, sovereignty, and healing**. The Benin Artefacts Campaign promoted the Benin Cultural Heritage in the diaspora and advocated for the return of Benin Artefacts. In 2022, Bronzes from the Smithsonian National Museum in United States were returned to Benin, Nigeria. Like many other Kingdoms in Africa, Benin Kingdom did not have the full capacity to store the returned artefacts from different colonial states. Therefore, funding must be made available to build museums and create jobs and learning areas for the African History.

Recommendations

1. Urge G20 states to **domesticate and implement** the UNESCO 1970 Convention on illicit trafficking of cultural property.
2. Establish **binding frameworks** for repatriation of artefacts, remains, and sacred objects, in consultation with source communities.
3. Empower communities through **funding, training, and decision-making roles** in heritage preservation.

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4. Invest in **digital archives, 3D scans, and block chain** for provenance tracking and accessible online heritage repositories.
5. Strengthen **legal frameworks** to recognize cultural sovereignty and penalize illicit trade.
6. Promote **co-curation between museums and traditional custodians** to redefine narratives while preserving our cultural heritage
7. Support **libraries, museums, and archives in Africa and the Diaspora** to facilitate restitution and conservation, through funding and promotions of African history and decolonization of the education system.
8. Challenge the 'un-African' narrative by funding research, public education, and cultural programs that document and celebrate the historical existence and acceptance of diverse SOGIESC in pre-colonial African societies.

2. Recognition and Inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Traditional Authorities

Indigenous peoples and traditional leaders hold legitimacy but face systemic exclusion. Their recognition is key to **self-determination, justice, and inclusive governance**

There is a significant policy gap between the stated commitment to cultural rights in international declarations and their implementation at the international and national level. Legal frameworks often fail to recognize indigenous knowledge systems, communal land rights, and traditional forms of governance, leading to a disconnect that enables the exploitation of natural resources and cultural heritage.

The G20's focus on infrastructure development often overlooks cultural impact. The construction of a major dam in a G20 country, for instance, may displace indigenous communities and submerge sacred sites. The commercialisation of national parks without the consent of the custodians of the land continues to undermine the importance of culture and its connection to those sacred sites.

We propose mandatory cultural impact assessments (CIAs) for all G20 funded projects to mitigate such damage and ensure the protection of cultural heritage, land and its resources, leading to fair beneficiation. Indigenous people mainly in Kenya, Tanzania, Brazil, Amazon Forests face challenges of displacement and violation of their human rights, through deforestation of rain forests and indigenous forests that these people have been living and using for nature conservation and their spiritual rights.

Recommendations

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1. Ensure **full participation of Indigenous peoples** in land, resource, and cultural decision-making (aligned with UNDRIP).
2. Protect **customary law, Indigenous governance, and community-based justice systems** through constitutional frameworks.
3. Institutionalize **inclusive platforms** for intercultural governance (elders, spiritual leaders, women, youth, people with disability and the LGBTQ+)
4. **Legal Recognition of Communal Land Rights:** Promote legal and policy instruments that recognize and protect the communal land rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, linking land ownership to cultural identity and traditional land management.
5. **Indigenous Representation in Policy Making:** Establish formal mechanisms for the participation of indigenous and traditional leaders in national and regional policy-making bodies that impact cultural heritage and natural resources.
6. **Strengthening Anti-Appropriation Legislation:** Develop and enforce stronger intellectual property laws and cultural heritage protection acts to prevent the commercial appropriation of indigenous knowledge, symbols, and artistic expressions, including protecting LGBTIQA+ cultural expressions and symbols from appropriation and misuse.
7. **Integration of Traditional Justice Systems:** Explore the integration of traditional and customary justice systems into national legal frameworks, particularly in matters of land disputes, resource management, and cultural heritage.
8. Facilitate **Indigenous representation in climate negotiations, education reform, and G20 cultural policy bodies.**

3. Promotion of Intercultural Dialogues

In an era of polarization, dialogue across cultures is vital for **peace, tolerance, and social cohesion**. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, Southern African Women in Dialogue and other organizations are instrumental in promoting dialogues for peacebuilding, women security, and conflict resolutions. Intergenerational dialogues impact knowledge through storytelling and promote oral traditions and history where knowledge is passed from elders to the younger generation. Funding must be made available by the G20 member states to preserve our cultural heritage and resolve disputes through dialogues.

Recommendations

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1. Institutionalize **national and local intercultural platforms**, especially in post-conflict societies to restore peace and resolve conflicts between ethnic groups.
2. **Establish G20 Cultural Exchange Platforms:** Create fully inclusive G20-sponsored cultural exchange platforms and forums that facilitate direct dialogue and collaboration between artists, scholars, and cultural practitioners from G20 and Global South nations.
3. **Community-led Policy Innovation:** Support programmatic actions that empower grassroots cultural movements to act as agents of policy innovation, using their lived experiences to shape effective and context-specific cultural policies.
4. **Interconnected Crises and Cultural Resilience:** Launch programmes that highlight how cultural erasure intersects with other crises, such as xenophobic wars within our continent, conflict, forced migration, and inequality, and position cultural resilience as a critical component of peacebuilding, within the G20 and beyond.
5. **Include Cultural Rights in Human Rights Reporting:** Encourage G20 and Global South nations to include a dedicated section on the protection and promotion of cultural rights in their national human rights reports and submissions to international bodies.
6. **Embracing LGBTQ+ rights in cultural laws:** By recognizing and protecting the diverse identities and relationships within the LGBTQ+ community, ensuring their inclusion and equal participation without discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
7. We call on governments to explicitly call for the repeal of colonial-era sodomy and public order laws that criminalize LGBTQ+ people, as a primary step towards inclusion.
8. **Develop Intercultural Competence Frameworks:** Mandate the development and integration of intercultural competence frameworks into all public service training programmes, particularly for sectors like education, law enforcement, and health.
9. **Cross-border Indigenous Rights Networks:** Support and fund the creation of cross-regional networks of indigenous and cultural rights activists to foster global solidarity and shared advocacy strategies
10. **Fund Community-Owned Cultural Enterprises like community media, arts, and diaspora initiatives;** direct a significant portion of development and cultural funding towards community-owned and -operated cultural centres, crafts and skills exchange programmes targeting youth, women and people with disabilities.

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4. Support for Language Diversity and Revitalization

Languages are **worldviews**. Their extinction erodes identity and knowledge. Protecting linguistic diversity strengthens **cultural resilience and civic participation**. It has been asserted that Swahili supports decolonizing education and aid the integration under the AfCFTA. Advocating for Swahili in the education system can promote trade and solidarity in Africa as it is the most spoken language in East Africa and Central Africa. G20 must accelerate inclusion of Swahili in education system, and make it mandatory for all countries to speak Swahili, invest in the language development and revitalization of other indigenous languages as restoration of identity.

Recommendations

1. Embed **Indigenous languages** into national education, legal, and science systems.
2. Allocate **funds for preservation, revitalization, and digitization** of endangered languages, the sign language.
3. Guarantee **multilingual education** from early childhood through higher education.
4. Adopt national language policies ensuring **access in courts, government services, and media**.
5. **Technology for Cultural Protection:** Pilot and scale up programmes that use digital tools, such as mobile apps for language preservation, easily available translations or virtual reality to document arts and cultural heritage, ensuring these technologies are accessible and community-controlled as well as the use of tourist attractions to project cultural traits of African origin, linked to Pan Africanism. Use same to create an economic vehicle that will ensure Africans are fully participating in the economic landscape of the continent and globally

5. Cultural Sustainability and Climate Change

Indigenous peoples, while compromising less than 5% of the global population, are estimated to safeguard between 50 -80% of global biodiversity on 22 % of Earth's land, according to various studies, yet receive less than 1% of climate finance directly (IPBES, 2019; Maffi, 2005; UNFCCC, 2023). This disparity does not reflect oversight but rather systematic exclusion rooted in colonial structures that persist through modern institutions. Culture and environment are intertwined. Indigenous ecological knowledge provides strategies for **climate adaptation and biodiversity protection**. In parts of Africa, community-led heritage conservation projects have successfully protected ancient rock art and sacred forests from extractive industries. These initiatives, often led by women as knowledge keepers, demonstrate the power of grassroots movements in resisting corporate encroachment and safeguarding cultural assets. They also link cultural heritage protection with climate adaptation, as traditional land

management practices are often more sustainable. This plays a big role in our fight to protect our environments from climate related changes.

Recommendations

1. Integrate **Indigenous knowledge and rituals** into climate policies.
2. Protect **sacred natural sites** as environmental zones under traditional custodianship.
3. Fund **community-led conservation and ecological restoration** programs.
4. Recognize **intangible cultural heritage** at risk from climate change in monitoring frameworks.
5. Include Indigenous ecological knowledge in **COP and G20 environmental platforms**.

6. Practicalizing the Embrace of Indigenous Peoples in the Modern Context

Symbolic recognition is not enough. Indigenous peoples must **participate fully in modern systems** without losing cultural identity. For indigenous people, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) underpin wellbeing in people, planet and futures. This includes, primary healthcare, food security, biodiversity stewardship, climate resilience, and regenerative economic practices, sustaining livelihoods of many, particularly in the Global South. Despite their societal, economic and environmental value, IKS remains underinvested, undervalued, and structurally excluded from global markets, governance and innovation ecosystems. The policy brief is calling for a shift in global policy to fully recognize and invest in indigenous Knowledge as a vital component in addressing the world's most pressing challenges, with a focus on wellbeing. This is not just about measuring wellbeing alongside traditional economic indicators. It is about rethinking what our economies are for, shifting from profit and growth as the main goals to a system that genuinely support the wellbeing of people, communities, and the planet.

Countries like New Zealand, Bhutan, Scotland, Finland and Costa Rica provide evidence that such approaches are feasible: New Zealand's wellbeing budget prioritizes social, environmental, and cultural outcomes alongside economic decisions; Bhutan measures development using the Gross National Happiness Index; Scotland evaluates policies against national wellbeing outcomes; Finland integrates social and ecological wellbeing into budgeting; and Costa Rica aligns environmental conservation with economic and social goals.

To enable this shift we are calling on the G20 leaders to establish a G20 IKS Compact anchored by a US\$5 billion fund headquartered in South Africa as a permanent legacy of Africa's G20 presidency.

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Recommendations

1. Promote **Indigenous-led innovation and entrepreneurship**, especially for youth, women, and marginalized groups.
2. Build **IKS-driven village ecosystems** combining health, entrepreneurship, culture, and circular economies.
3. Institutionalize **rights-based policies** embedding Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into health, education, environment, and economic planning.
4. Expand **digital access, healthcare, and education** without requiring assimilation.
5. Develop **equitable financing frameworks** (blended finance, social impact funds) to scale Indigenous economies.
6. Strengthen **training in STEM, policy, and innovation** for Indigenous youth.
7. Integrate Indigenous research into **national innovation systems** for epistemic justice.
8. Establish infrastructure for **IP protection and ethical commercialization** of Indigenous products.
9. Scale **regenerative Indigenous practices** for food sovereignty, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
10. Create **culturally grounded leadership programs** rooted in Indigenous values.

Conclusion

Culture is not peripheral; it is the foundation of human dignity, justice, and sustainability. The time for symbolic gestures is over. Africa's cultural wealth, Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), and creative industries can no longer remain on the margins of policy.

We call on global leaders to act decisively:

- Establish a Global Fund for IKS and Cultural Industries to secure financing for African innovation and heritage protection.
- Commit to legacy projects that build Creative and Cultural STEAM Hubs in rural communities, leaving lasting infrastructure for innovation, education, and cultural revival.
- Adopt the IKS Economies Compact, ensuring cultural wealth is transformed into wellbeing economies that uplift youth, women, and rural communities.
- Recognize culture as a standalone pillar of global governance, anchored by a Cultural Diversity Forum to track progress.
- Guarantee Indigenous voices a central role in shaping education, climate, technology, trade, and governance policies.

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This is not a plea for charity; it is a demand for justice, recognition, and equal partnership. Cultural diversity is not optional; it is a strategic necessity for peace, prosperity, and sustainability in an age of ecological, technological, and political upheavals.

The world has the resources, the influence, and the responsibility to act. Let culture lead the way, because without culture, there is no justice; without recognition, there is no peace; and without IKS economies, there is no sustainable future. The time to act is now.

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Policy Brief: Tourism for Sustainable and Inclusive Development

Endorsed
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Executive Summary

G20 economies control the majority of global tourism flows, investment, and policy frameworks. Decisive action in 2025–2027 can secure inclusive growth and low-carbon pathways for the decade ahead.

The Problem

Four systemic failures constrain tourism's transformative potential:

1. Inequality — MSMEs, women, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities and Indigenous peoples are locked out of markets, finance, and skills.
2. Climate & disaster risks — recurrent shocks disrupt destinations, workers, and supply chains.
3. Extractive models — value leaks abroad while natural and cultural assets are eroded.
4. Weak community participation — local voices are sidelined in planning and benefit-sharing.

The Benefits of Action

A G20-led shift toward regenerative, people-centred tourism will:

- Generate better jobs and fairer work standards.
- Protect heritage, biodiversity, and climate goals.
- Unlock sustainable finance and investment pipelines.
- Stabilise local economies, especially in rural and coastal regions.

The Risks of Inaction

Without reform, tourism will deepen inequality, fuel over-tourism conflicts, and erode community trust. Climate shocks will cause mounting infrastructure losses, while biodiversity decline and missed climate targets will undermine G20 growth, fiscal revenues, and social stability.

Why This Is a G20 Priority

The G20 is uniquely positioned to set the global direction. Member states can:

- Establish sustainability, accessibility, and ethics standards with global uptake.
- Mobilise blended finance and PPPs to close investment gaps.
- Align efforts with UNWTO, UNESCO, AU, and WTTC to scale proven solutions.

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- Advance seamless mobility (visas, borders, connectivity) to unlock equitable growth.

Core recommendations by the G20 Tourism Working Group Workshop under South Africa's Presidency in May 2025 identified four priorities:

PRIORITY 1: People-centred Artificial Intelligence (AI) and innovation to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-ups and MSMES.¹ (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

The Deliverable is to create an action plan to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-Ups and MSMES through AI and innovation.

PRIORITY 2: Tourism financing and investment to enhance equality and promote sustainable development.² (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

The deliverable is to host a seminar on enhancing partnerships for tourism financing and investment for sustainable development.

PRIORITY 3: Air connectivity for seamless travel.³ (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

The deliverable is to agree on the G20 Tourism report on air connectivity for seamless travel.

PRIORITY 4: Enhanced resilience for inclusive, sustainable tourism development.⁴ (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

Additional recommendations by the C20 TWG:

Priority 5 — Culture, Climate & Communities (Regenerative Tourism)

(C20 Tourism Working Group Additional Recommendation)

Priority 5 — Culture, Climate & Communities (Regenerative Tourism)

Tourism can only be sustainable if it **regenerates communities, protects heritage, and strengthens resilience to climate change**. While the four existing G20 priorities address technology, investment, connectivity, and resilience, **Priority 5 fills a critical gap**: ensuring that tourism delivers equitable benefits, safeguards culture and ecosystems, and empowers those most often excluded — Indigenous peoples, local communities, women, youth, LGBTQI+, and rural economies.

The four priorities proposed by the South African government (AI & MSMEs, Financing & Investment, Air Connectivity, and Resilience) are important but primarily focus on **systems, infrastructure, and markets**. What they miss is the **human and community dimension** of tourism — the very factor that ensures tourism is sustainable, inclusive, and socially legitimate.

¹ <https://g20.org/track-news/second-g20-tourism-working-group-holds-in-depth-discussion-on-four-priorities-for-2025/>

² <https://g20.org/track-news/second-g20-tourism-working-group-holds-in-depth-discussion-on-four-priorities-for-2025/>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

This framing makes Priority 5 not just “additional,” but **essential**: it grounds the other priorities in **social legitimacy, equity, and climate responsibility**.

The Role of the African Union / AUDA-NEPAD

To ensure implementation and continental ownership, **the African Union (AU) and AUDA-NEPAD must be central partners** in Priority 5:

- **Policy alignment:** Embed regenerative tourism into the AU’s Agenda 2063, AUDA-NEPAD frameworks on infrastructure, and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) tourism protocols.
- **Regional levers:** Drive air and land connectivity through the **Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM)** and African Union mobility frameworks.
- **Heritage corridors:** Coordinate the development of **Ancient Trade Routes** and transboundary cultural landscapes as tools for **community empowerment, heritage safeguarding, and MSME incubation**.
- **Community development:** Scale AUDA-NEPAD’s programmes on rural development, youth empowerment, and women in entrepreneurship to strengthen **community-led tourism enterprises**.
- **Financing leverage:** Mobilise African Development Bank (AfDB) and AUDA-NEPAD’s infrastructure financing windows to channel investment into climate-resilient and community-driven tourism.

By placing AU/AUDA-NEPAD at the centre of implementation, Priority 5 will not only empower African communities but also serve as a **model for global South-South cooperation** in regenerative tourism.

Why Priority 5 Matters

- **Equity & Inclusion:** Ensures that local communities, Indigenous peoples, and cultural heritage are not left behind but become **active beneficiaries and decision-makers**.
- **Climate Action:** Tackles the urgent need for climate-smart and low-carbon tourism, protecting destinations from rising risks.
- **Peace & Regeneration:** Strengthens the link between tourism, peacebuilding, rural regeneration, and cultural preservation, areas not covered in the original four priorities.

Call to Action

Endorse Priority 5 alongside the existing four G20 priorities, with the **AU and AUDA-NEPAD as strategic co-implementing partners**, and mandate **annual progress reporting** to ensure accountability and impact.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a powerful engine for inclusive growth across G20 economies, yet its full potential is constrained by persistent inequality, climate vulnerability, extractive business models, and weak community participation. This document presents a civil-society contribution to the G20 Tourism Working Group (TWG): four government-defined priorities refined for implementation, plus a priority recommended by the C20 TWG, Priority 5 on Culture, Climate, and Communities, to embed regenerative, people-centred outcomes. Together, the five priorities aim to align investment, innovation, connectivity, resilience, and culture with measurable SDG progress.

Already strong in international frameworks: the proposals draw on UN Tourism's *Goa Roadmap* and *Digital Futures* initiatives, the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism*, UNESCO World Heritage guidance, AU *Agenda 2063*, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and emerging MDB/DFI principles for sustainable tourism investment. These references ground the priorities in proven norms and tools.

Issue Analysis

Culture, Climate & Communities

The Issue Analysis is designed to unpack the systemic barriers that prevent tourism from delivering on its promise of sustainability, equity, and resilience. While Priorities 1–4 focus on enabling conditions such as digitalisation, finance, connectivity, and risk management, Priority 5 goes further by addressing the structural gaps: climate vulnerability, heritage degradation, exclusion of communities, and weak governance.

By breaking down Priority 5 into four thematic clusters — Climate Resilience, Heritage Protection, Community Empowerment, and Governance & Inclusion — the analysis provides a clear, problem-driven framework that links risks to solutions, responsibilities, and measurable outcomes.

Purpose of the Issue Analysis

The purpose of this Issue Analysis is to:

1. Identify systemic problems holding back regenerative tourism in each cluster.
2. Explain why these issues matter, not just for tourism but for G20 goals on climate, equity, and sustainable growth.
3. Highlight G20 levers — the unique influence of G20 WGs, MDBs, and ministries — to move from ideas to action.
4. Define signals and indicators that can track progress and accountability.

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5. Show linkages across priorities (P1–P5), ensuring Priority 5 complements and strengthens existing G20 tourism priorities.
6. Provide illustrative responses that are actionable, politically visible, and measurable.

Priority 5 is the **C20 Tourism Working Group's flagship recommendation**, and it covers a wide range of actions that risk becoming too detailed or fragmented if listed individually. To make the proposal **politically clear, structured, and actionable**, we organised the actions into **thematic clusters**.

This clustering ensures:

- **Logic and clarity** — actions are grouped by purpose rather than scattered, making it easier to follow.
- **Political impact** — each cluster addresses a major systemic gap left by traditional tourism models (climate, heritage, equity, governance).
- **Measurability** — outcomes are easier to define and track when linked to a coherent theme.
- **Alignment with G20 structures** — clusters map directly onto the G20 Working Groups and ministerial tracks that would carry implementation forward.

This structure ensures that the C20's additional Priority 5 is presented not just as a new "wish list," but as a strategic, evidence-based framework that directly addresses risks and demonstrates the benefits of community-centred, climate-smart tourism.

The Four Clusters of Priority 5:

1. **Climate Resilience — Building Carbon-Neutral Tourism Systems**
(cut emissions, strengthen climate-risk screening, climate-smart infrastructure).
2. **Heritage Protection — Safeguarding Culture & Indigenous Rights**
(FPIC, co-management of heritage, restoring rights, fair revenue-sharing).
3. **Community Empowerment — Turning World Heritage Sites into Livelihood Hubs**
(WHS compacts, Ancient Trade Routes programme, Community Heritage Enterprise Fund).
4. **Governance & Inclusion — Embedding Equity, Ethics & Participation**
(creative industries, decent work, digitalisation, DEIB standards, BTV scaling, Global Code of Ethics, community-led initiatives).

To frame the structural constraints that limit tourism's contribution to inclusive, climate-smart development and to indicate where G20 mechanisms can act, the clusters below are indicative; Working Group (WG) facilitators may adapt or re-group based on national and regional context.

Cluster 1: Climate Resilience — Building Carbon-Neutral Tourism Systems

Problems. Tourism generates ~8% of global emissions; infrastructure is vulnerable to climate shocks; limited SAF uptake and poor climate screening.

Why it matters. Without decarbonisation, G20 risks missing 2030/2050 climate goals; assets face growing disaster losses.

G20 levers. TWG, Energy/Transport WGs, AU/NEPAD, MDBs can mandate climate-screening, scale SAF, and mobilise green finance.

Signals/indicators. % of infrastructure climate-screened; SAF adoption rates; emission intensity per trip.

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Link to priorities. P1 (AI for tracking data), P2 (green finance), P4 (resilience), P5 (carbon-neutral pathways).

Illustrative responses. National roadmaps; SAF uptake targets; early-warning and insurance schemes; MDB-supported retrofits.

Case Studies: Case study 1: <https://www.gvi.co.uk/blog/bhutan-carbon-negative-country-world/>

Case study 2: <https://bulungula.co.za/sustainability/>

Cluster 2: Heritage Protection — Safeguarding Culture & Indigenous Rights

Problems. Cultural heritage sites face over tourism, underfunding, and exclusion of Indigenous/local voices.

Why it matters. Without FPIC and co-management, heritage sites degrade, communities lose rights, and benefits leak out.

G20 levers. TWG, UNESCO/UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, and national ministries can anchor FPIC standards, training, and revenue-sharing in tourism plans.

Signals/indicators. % of UNESCO sites under co-management; revenue share reaching Indigenous/local groups; number of training pathways created.

Link to priorities. P2 (financing heritage MSMEs), P4 (resilience of heritage), P5 (rights + benefits-sharing).

Illustrative responses. Co-managed heritage programmes; heritage-linked apprenticeships; FPIC safeguards embedded in law.

Case Study: <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/cutting-edge-indigenous-languages-gateways-worlds-cultural-diversity>

Cluster 3: Community Empowerment — Turning WHSs into Livelihood Hubs

Problems. Heritage sites concentrate visitors, leaving nearby communities excluded; MSMEs lack access to finance, branding, and markets.

Why it matters. Missed chance to turn heritage into inclusive economic hubs; overtourism worsens without community benefit-sharing.

G20 levers. TWG, UNESCO, AU/NEPAD, MDBs can finance heritage corridors, WHS compacts, and community MSMEs.

Signals/indicators. % revenue retained locally; number of MSMEs supported; overtourism dispersion index.

Link to priorities. P1 (digital tools for branding), P2 (blended finance), P3 (connectivity to corridors), P5 (livelihood hubs).

Illustrative responses. [Ancient Trade Routes initiative \(2026–2030\)](https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/982/#:~:text=Read%20more); WHS community compacts; Community Heritage Enterprise Fund.

Case Studies: Case Study 1: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/982/#:~:text=Read%20more>, Vision of life of local communities.

Case Study 2: <https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/>

Cluster 4: Governance & Inclusion — Embedding Equity, Ethics & Participation

Problems. Tourism often excludes women, youth, and persons with disabilities; ethical standards remain voluntary; MSMEs face precarious work.

Why it matters. Inequitable tourism weakens legitimacy, fuels backlash, and leaves communities vulnerable in crises.

G20 levers. TWG, Labour/Finance/Transport ministries, UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, CSOs can mandate DEIB, ethics codes, and decent work standards.

Signals/indicators. % public funds to community cooperatives; # of DEIB-compliant destinations; adoption of Global Code of Ethics.

Link to priorities. P1 (digitalisation for inclusion), P2 (finance for MSMEs), P4 (resilience for workers), P5 (ethical governance).

Illustrative responses. Universal accessibility standards; living-wage procurement; Global Tourism Climate Resilience Fund; [scaled Best Tourism Villages](#).

Case Study: <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421671>

G20 TWG Core Priorities (1–4)

Strengthening the bridge to G20 decision levers

The following four priorities were agreed by the G20 Tourism Working Group under South Africa's Presidency in May 2025. They remain the foundation of the G20's policy package. The C20 TWG endorses them and refers to the detailed [action tables in the Annex](#) for full interventions, timelines, and accountability.

To move from ideas to action, we match each priority to a specific G20 forum that can take decisions, set standards, and unlock funding.

The document sets out concise action plans, lead actors, and indicative timelines (2025–2030) for each priority. It invites the G20 to adopt clear deliverables—seminars, policy frameworks, and reporting cycles—that translate international norms into practical outcomes for destinations, MSMEs, workers, and communities across the G20 and beyond.

Priority 1. People-centred Artificial Intelligence (AI) and innovation to enhance Travel and Tourism Start-ups and MSMEs. (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

➡ [Detailed action table: see Annex C1.](#)

Priority 2. Tourism financing and investment to enhance equality and promote sustainable development. (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

➡ [Detailed action table: see Annex C2.](#)

Priority 3. Air connectivity for seamless travel. (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

➡ [Detailed action table: see Annex C3.](#)

Priority 4. Enhanced resilience for inclusive, sustainable tourism development. (G20 Tourism Working Group Recommendation)

➡ [Detailed action table: see Annex C4.](#)

Recommendation: C20 TWG Core Priority 5 (recommended to be added to Priorities 1-4 of the G20 TWG)

Priority 5: Climate, Culture & Communities

As outlined in the Issue Analysis, Priority 5 is important because it addresses the **gaps left by traditional tourism models**. It ensures that communities, especially Indigenous peoples and marginalised groups (women, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities), share in the benefits of tourism, while also safeguarding cultural heritage and tackling climate risks. By linking tourism to **equity, resilience, and regeneration**, it transforms the sector into a driver of **inclusive growth, social stability, and environmental sustainability**—making it central to the G20’s vision for solidarity, equality, and sustainability.

Deliverable (2025–2026):

Policy Framework for Regenerative Tourism including:

- WHS community compacts & Ancient Trade Routes programme (in addition to the WHS Silk Road Programme)
- Community Heritage Enterprise Fund
- Regenerative tourism certification scheme
- Annual G20 reporting on climate-neutral & community-empowered destinations

Cluster 1: Climate Resilience — Building Carbon-Neutral Tourism Systems

Action: Adopt national roadmaps to reach net-zero tourism by 2050 (sustainable aviation fuels, green buildings, renewable energy, climate-risk screening).

Deliverable: National Net-Zero Tourism Roadmaps (2025–2026) with interim reporting to G20 TWG.

Do: Conduct emissions audits; set SAF adoption targets; integrate climate-risk screening into tourism infrastructure approvals.

Lead actors: G20 TWG with Energy/Transport WGs; AU/NEPAD, national tourism, environment and transport ministries; MDBs/DFIs; private operators.

Expected outcome: By 2030, measurable emissions cuts per trip, 50% of new tourism infrastructure climate-screened, SAF adoption in all G20 aviation hubs.

Timeline:

Sep

2025 – TWG adopts Policy Framework

2026–2027 – Early-warning systems, retrofits, insurance (SIDS)

2028 – Publish carbon-neutral & resilience progress

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Cluster 2: Heritage Protection — Safeguarding Culture & Indigenous Rights

Action: Establish co-managed heritage programmes with Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), skills pathways, and revenue-sharing for Indigenous/local communities.

Deliverable: G20 Co-Managed Heritage Programme Framework (2025–2027).

Do: Develop FPIC protocols; set up co-management councils; negotiate revenue-sharing agreements; create heritage-linked skills training.

Lead actors: G20 TWG, UNESCO/UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, Indigenous councils, CSOs.

Expected outcome: By 2028, 30% of UNESCO-listed sites under co-management with Indigenous/local authorities, with revenue-sharing agreements in place.

Timeline:

Jun 2026 – WHS Compacts signed; Ancient Trade Routes designated

2026–2030 – Ancient Trade Routes programme operational

Cluster 3: Community Empowerment — Turning World Heritage Sites into Livelihood Hubs

Action 1: Sign WHS community benefit-sharing compacts; invest in MSMEs, green infrastructure, and visitor dispersion.

Action 2: Launch a G20–UNESCO Ancient Trade Routes for Community Empowerment (2026–2030) linking WHSs and surrounding communities with branding, infrastructure, and MSME incubation.

Action 3: Establish a Community Heritage Enterprise Fund for women-, youth- and Indigenous-led MSMEs with FPIC, cultural IP safeguards, and accessibility standards.

Deliverable: [Ancient Trade Routes Programme \(2026–2030\)](#) and Community Heritage Enterprise Fund (2025–2027).

Do: Draft compacts; co-design heritage corridor plans; brand Ancient Trade Routes; provide incubation support for MSMEs; establish fund governance and FPIC safeguards.

Lead actors: G20 TWG with UNESCO/UNWTO; AU/NEPAD, national/local governments; MDBs; community cooperatives.

Expected outcome: By 2030, ≥50 WHSs across G20 states function as hubs for community enterprise, ≥40% of revenue retained locally, and overtourism pressure reduced by 20%.

Timeline:

Jun 2026 – WHS compacts & route designation

Sep 2026 – ≥30% funds ring-fenced for cooperatives & creative MSMEs

Dec 2026 – DFIs launch concessional credit & innovation vouchers

Cluster 4: Governance & Inclusion — Embedding Equity, Ethics & Participation

Action: Mainstream ethical, inclusive, and community-led approaches into tourism governance and funding.

Deliverables:

- Universal Accessibility & DEIB Standards (adopted by 2026, mandatory from 2027).
- Global Tourism Climate Resilience Fund (by 2026, prioritising SIDS).
- Regenerative Tourism Certification Scheme (by 2028).

Do:

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- Dedicate ≥30% of public tourism funds to community cooperatives & creative MSMEs (with CSO oversight).
- Mandate living wage/fair work standards in tourism procurement.
- Roll out SME digital-readiness audits, AI/data toolkits, and cybersecurity standards.
- Embed Global Code of Ethics in regulation and operator contracts.
- Establish recovery compacts in crisis-affected destinations.
- Scale [Best Tourism Villages \(BTV\)](#) nationally ([See Summary: Best Tourism Villages Case Studies](#))

Lead actors: G20 TWG; national ministries (tourism, labour, digital, rural development); MDBs/DFIs; UNWTO/UNESCO; AU/NEPAD, CSOs; Indigenous/local authorities; private sector.

Expected outcome: By 2028, G20 members have inclusive, climate-resilient, and ethical tourism systems in place, with ≥30% of funds ring-fenced for communities, BTVs scaled nationally, and first regenerative tourism certification issued.

Timeline:

2026

- TWG mandates accessibility & DEIB standards
- 2026 – Fair-work procurement; concessional finance tools launched
- 2026–2027 – AI/data toolkits & cyber standards; Recovery & Social Cohesion Compacts
- 2027 – Embed Global Code of Ethics; scale BTV; early-warning systems
- 2028 – Regenerative Tourism Certification launched

Cross-cutting Governance & Accountability

- Sep 2025 → TWG creates Delivery Dashboard; Presidency issues public scorecard
- Mar 2026 → MDBs/DFIs designate focal points; commit multi-year envelopes
- From 2026 onwards → WTTC + industry publish private-sector reports; CSOs conduct community-impact audits

Cross-cutting Outcomes / Benefits

- Economic: Increased investment in community-led MSMEs, fairer revenue sharing.
- Social: Empowered women, youth, Indigenous & marginalised groups via decent work & governance.
- Cultural: Safeguarded heritage, revitalised creative industries.
- Environmental: Lower emissions, climate-resilient infrastructure, reduced overtourism.
- Political: Greater legitimacy of G20 tourism leadership; alignment with SDGs and global goals.

Supporting measures

The following Supporting Measures, structured into a clear action table format, linking actions, lead actors, rationale, and expected outcomes.

Subsection	Action	Lead Actor(s)	Why it Matters	Expected Outcomes
Supporting creative	Dedicate ≥30% of public tourism	G20 TWG, AU/NEPAD, national	Raises local value capture,	+X% of tourism funds

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industries & cultural enterprises	funds to creative-industry MSMEs (crafts, music, foodways, design) prioritising marginalised groups: women, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, persons with disabilities; create incubators and market access pathways.	finance/culture/tourism ministries, DFIs, chambers, CSOs.	diversifies products, empowers women & youth.	directed to creative MSMEs; growth in women-/youth-led enterprises; stronger cultural exports.
Strengthening MSMEs & decent work initiatives	Introduce living-wage and fair-work standards in tourism procurement; inclusion of persons with disabilities in the sector; provide concessional credit, innovation vouchers, and formalisation pathways for informal actors.	G20 TWG, employment/labour & tourism ministries, ILO, AU/NEPAD, DFIs, worker organisations.	Tackles inequality and precarious work, boosting competitiveness.	Increased share of formalised MSMEs; reduction in wage gaps; improved job security for tourism workers.
Advancing digitalization & cybersecurity	Roll out SME digital-readiness audits, shared AI/data toolkits, cyber hygiene standards; scale multilingual digital skills programmes for all (i.e inclusion of persons with disabilities).	G20 TWG, G20 Digital Economy WG, national digital/tourism ministries, UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, tech firms.	Lowers barriers to innovation and protects businesses/visitors from cyber risks.	% of MSMEs using AI/digital tools; reduced cybersecurity incidents; expanded digital skills among workers.
Accessibility & DEIB	Mandate universal design in infrastructure, attractions, and digital services; require inclusive hiring and anti-	G20 TWG, national tourism/transport/labour ministries, disability organisations, private operators.	Expands participation for persons with disabilities, older people, and excluded groups.	Universal accessibility standards adopted by 2026; increase in accessible destinations;

	discrimination policies.			higher workforce diversity.
Leveraging tourism for peacebuilding & post-crisis recovery	Create destination recovery compacts linking jobs programmes, heritage restoration, and social cohesion initiatives in crisis-affected areas.	G20 TWG with UNDP/UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, national recovery agencies, CSOs, private investors.	Restores livelihoods, reduces tensions, accelerates recovery in fragile states.	# of recovery compacts signed; % of affected communities with restored tourism activity; measurable improvements in social cohesion.
Scaling Best Tourism Villages (BTW)	Co-finance BTW applications, upgrades, and knowledge exchange; replicate recognised models nationally.	G20 TWG, national rural/tourism ministries with UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, local governments, DFIs.	Strengthens rural regeneration, decentralises benefits, preserves landscapes & culture.	# of villages awarded BTW status; rural employment growth; % of tourism revenue retained locally.
Adopting the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism	Embed the Code in national regulations, certification schemes, and operator contracts; require annual compliance reporting.	G20 TWG, national governments, UNWTO, AU/NEPAD, industry associations, CSOs.	Institutionalises ethical standards for inclusivity, equality, and responsible behaviour.	All G20 members reporting annually by 2027; increased adoption of ethical codes in industry contracts.
Enhancing climate resilience in tourism	Deploy early-warning systems, emergency protocols, climate-smart retrofits, and risk-transfer/insurance schemes; establish a Global Tourism Climate	G20 TWG, national disaster & environment ministries, UNDRR, insurers, MDBs, UNWTO.	Reduces disaster-related losses and builds long-term resilience.	Fund operational by 2026; % destinations with resilience plans; measurable reduction in disruption losses.

<p>Resilience Fund by 2026 (prioritising SIDS).</p>				
Supporting inclusive & community-led initiatives	<p>Ring-fence ≥30% of public tourism funds for community cooperatives and creative MSMEs; establish participatory governance councils and social-impact audits; adopt DEIB standards in destination governance by 2026.</p>	<p>National/local governments, G20 TWG, CSOs, AU/NEPAD, Indigenous authorities, philanthropy, private partners.</p>	<p>Keeps value local, strengthens legitimacy, and aligns development with community priorities.</p>	<p>% of funds channelled to community initiatives; increased community ownership; improved social-impact metrics.</p>

Bottom line: These are recommended executable mandates with owners and deadlines. Endorse now; monitor quarterly; publish annually.

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C20- QUALITY EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WORKING GROUP Title:

Policy Brief (Draft Three): Quality Education For Sustainable Future

Date: 23 September, 2025

To: C20 Chairperson and Sherpa; C20 Working Groups

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Executive Summary

This document outlines the systemic challenges impeding quality education, particularly in the Global South, and offers a multi-faceted approach to address them. It recognises education as a fundamental human right under international instruments such as the ICESCR, CRC, and CRPD, and stresses the need for inclusive, equitable, culturally responsive, and sustainable education systems that prioritise marginalised groups including girls, children with disabilities, displaced learners, and rural communities.

Key recommendations

- Establish inter-ministerial councils, adopting cost-of-quality frameworks, expanding sustainable funding, emphasising indigenous languages, and introducing climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Enhanced professional development, leadership pathways, incentive-linked training, inclusive community engagement, subject-specific recruitment, and prioritizing teacher well-being.
- Ratifying international human rights instruments, implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL), funding assistive technologies, and combatting stigma and discrimination.
- Coherent legal reforms, multi-level governance coordination, transparent institutions, stigma reduction campaigns, and universal, stigma-free public services.
- Combating illicit financial flows, reforming debt frameworks to prioritise education, enforcing spending floors, and implementing regulatory frameworks protecting education as a public good.
- Strengthening teacher training, bridging digital access gaps, enforcing inclusive laws, and expanding adult literacy initiatives.

The G20 is urged to adopt ambitious, measurable commitments including an ECCE Acceleration Compact and robust frameworks for financing and governance to realize education's transformative potential worldwide.

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Introduction

Quality education, as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), goes beyond mere access to schooling; it encompasses learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and effective, with relevant curricula, well-trained teachers, and appropriate resources. While significant progress has been made in increasing enrolment rates globally, disparities in learning outcomes persist, particularly in the global south.

There are several issues that impede the delivery of quality education, including insufficient provisioning and funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), inadequate training and capacitation of educators, lack of equity, inclusion and austerity measures. Addressing these systemic challenges requires a multi-faceted approach encompassing policy reform, investment, and collaborative partnerships.

Aligning with the C20 Education and Culture Working Group 2024 recommendations, this submission reaffirms the right to education as articulated in international human rights instruments, including:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Beyond the above, this working group has identified six key priorities which include **three of the key priorities identified by the G20 Education Working** which include *Quality Foundational Learning, Mutual Recognition of Qualifications and Education Professional Development*. The alignment of these key priorities reinforces the symbiotic relationship that ought to exist between states actors and civil society.

According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, while global literacy has risen from 68% in 1979 to 86% today, significant disparities persist. Approximately 250 million children lack foundational literacy skills, and 754 million adults (two-thirds of whom are women) cannot read or write with understanding. These issues are most pronounced in developing and low-income countries, with Sub-Saharan Africa having the lowest adult literacy rates.

We support education as a public good and call for culturally responsive, transformative, and

ecologically sustainable education systems that centre the lived experiences of the most marginalised, particularly girls, children with disabilities, displaced learners, and rural communities. Inclusive education bridges the transition gaps between special and mainstream schooling and addresses deep disparities between rural and urban learners.

Context

Substantial Public Financing of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

The early years of life are decisive for shaping cognitive, emotional, and social trajectories, with profound implications for productivity, educational attainment, and social cohesion. ECCE is widely recognised as one of the most cost-effective strategies for strengthening resilience and advancing equitable development. Yet, despite numerous commitments, progress remains uneven, with more than 175 million children still excluded from pre-primary education worldwide. Structural inequalities are most acute in rural areas, among girls, children with disabilities, and undocumented populations. Persistent underinvestment, fragmented delivery systems, and weak caregiver support perpetuate these disparities and undermine broader developmental goals.

ECCE must be approached as a multisectoral undertaking at the intersection of education, health, nutrition, and child protection. Effective governance requires robust inter-ministerial coordination, national councils for alignment, and enforceable policy frameworks that mandate inclusivity. In South Africa, the stark contrasts between well-resourced areas such as Sandton and disadvantaged communities such as Alexandra reveal entrenched disparities. These are compounded by language barriers and the exclusion of undocumented children. A deliberate focus on indigenous language instruction, equitable infrastructure, and climate-resilient facilities is essential to redress such systemic inequalities.

Effective ECCE delivery rests on several interdependent pillars. Governance reforms must institutionalise ECCE within national systems and build inter-ministerial accountability. Sustainable financing demands the adoption of a cost-of-quality framework that prioritises ECCE within national budgets while leveraging multilateral development banks. Human capital development is critical, requiring investment in caregiver professionalisation, expanded training programmes, and structured partnerships with community organisations. Pedagogical innovation should embed play-based, culturally responsive approaches that integrate climate literacy, social-emotional learning, and digital innovations suitable for low-tech environments.

Finally, accountability and monitoring systems (grounded in integrated child data platforms) are essential for tracking enrolment, service coverage, equity, and workforce qualifications.

Recommendations

The G20 should adopt a dedicated ECCE Acceleration Compact anchored in measurable targets and milestones. This includes:

- 1. Governance and Policy Reform:** Establish inter-ministerial councils and inclusive legislative frameworks.
- 2. Sustainable Financing:** Expand public allocations and mobilise multilateral investment.
- 3. Programmatic Priorities:** Scale parenting support, integrate ECCE with health and nutrition, and guarantee at least one year of free pre-primary education.
- 4. Equity and Inclusion:** Extend services to marginalised groups, embed indigenous language instruction, and ensure accessibility for undocumented children.
- 5. Innovation and Resilience:** Establish an ECCE Innovation Facility, develop climate-resilient infrastructure, and ensure continuity of services during crises.

ECCE is not an optional developmental priority but a structural imperative for achieving sustainable and inclusive futures. A phased roadmap, beginning with governance reforms and pilot initiatives in the first year, expanding parenting and health integration within two to three years, and achieving universal, compulsory, and climate-resilient pre-primary education within five years - offers a pragmatic yet ambitious trajectory. By positioning ECCE at the centre of national and global policy agendas, states can build the foundations of equitable human development and long-term resilience.

B. Teacher Development and Professional Dignity

Teachers are the backbone of education transformation. UNESCO's 2024 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) urges valuing and diversifying the teaching profession. Yet many face overcrowded classrooms, low pay, outdated training, and inadequate mental health support. These challenges directly impact learning outcomes. SDG 4C targets a substantial rise in qualified teachers, a gap particularly wide across sub-Saharan Africa. Equity gaps in access to quality education remain a critical challenge, with rural, urban, and disadvantaged

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communities often facing unequal access to qualified educators and learning resources, while girls, learners with disabilities, and marginalised groups are disproportionately affected. To prepare learners for future economies, teachers require continuous professional development (CPD) in climate-responsive, inclusive, and digital pedagogies, while older educators nearing retirement also need motivation and mental health support to sustain effective teaching. However, inadequate pay, job insecurity, and the absence of confidential mental health services undermine teacher effectiveness, limiting their ability to identify and support learners' well-being. Although the SIAS policy provides a framework for learner support, its impact is restricted by limited teacher awareness and capacity. Supporting teachers as knowledge co-creators, rather than mere curriculum deliverers, enhances pedagogical innovation and learner outcomes. Globally, countries investing in teacher leadership, continuous professional development, and well-being support have demonstrated improved educational outcomes. Addressing systemic inequities requires integrating community engagement, mental health, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability into both pre-service and in-service teacher training.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

To strengthen quality education for future sustainability, G20 and national ministries should **prioritise investment** in:

1. Strengthening Leadership and Mentorship Pathways in Teaching, equipping teachers with the relevant tools and knowledge
2. Linking Teacher Incentives to Professional Development Milestones
3. Improving Pre-Service Teacher Education Quality and Accessibility
4. Fostering Community Engagement and Parental Partnerships: Train teachers to build strong relationships with families and communities.
5. Leveraging Data and Feedback Systems for Teacher Development.
6. Embedding Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Training
7. Ensuring Subject-Specific Teacher Placement and Recruitment.
8. Prioritising Teacher Well-being and Mental Health Support and
9. Governance reform: Establishing a Continental Teacher Professional Standards Framework

C. Inclusive Education for All

Inclusive education is central to achieving SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 10, and SDG 16, and aligns with the CRPD, CRC, ICESCR, the Salamanca Statement, the Maputo Protocol, CESA 2025, and Agenda 2063. It requires removing barriers in the form of physical, cognitive, linguistic, socio-economic, digital, and attitudinal. Learners with disabilities, neurodiverse learners, religious minorities, and those facing poverty, displacement, or rural disadvantage must be explicitly included. Inclusive systems must reflect diversity, uphold dignity, and equip learners for equitable participation in society.

While global frameworks endorse inclusive education, implementation remains uneven. Equity gaps persist across urban/rural divides, and disability. Education systems often fail to reflect learners' lived realities or do not support alternative pathways for neurodiverse and non-traditional learners.

Educators lack training in inclusive pedagogy, and assistive technology is underfunded. There is also insufficient data (desegregated data) to inform planning, especially disaggregated by disability and geography.

Recommendations

1. Policy and legal priorities:

- G20 governments to ratify and enforce international instruments including but not limited to the CRPD, ICESCR, CRC, and AU mandates. Protect learners from discrimination based on disability, neurodiversity, or socio-economic status.
- Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks- embed non-discrimination, accessibility, and inclusion in education laws. Ensure enforcement mechanisms bridge policy and practice.

2. Programmatic actions:

- national ministries must implement UDL across curricula and pedagogy. Promote inclusive literacy, mother-tongue learning, and flexible assessment. Provide assistive technologies, differentiated assessments, and resources.
- train educators on literacy inclusion, disability, and neurodiversity. Build professional

networks to share inclusive practices. Promote early career counselling and peer education.

3. Investment priority: fund inclusive infrastructure, literacy, assistive tech, and co-curricular access. Track budgets to ensure resources reach marginalised learners.

Inclusive education is a non-negotiable foundation for resilient, just, and sustainable societies. By placing literacy, psychosocial well-being, and holistic participation at the heart of inclusion, while recognising the dignity, rights, and potential of learners with disabilities, neurodiversity, and those facing poverty or conflict, we build stronger, more equitable futures. Ensuring no learner is left behind requires bold policy action, targeted resources, and an unwavering commitment.

D. Integrated Governance for Social Justice

Integrated governance refers to a collaborative, inclusive, and coordinated approach to decision-making that transcends silos between government sectors, civil society, private enterprises, and international institutions. It focuses on aligning policies, laws, and resources to address inequality, protect human rights, and promote equitable opportunities for all.

Across the world, deep-rooted inequities, exacerbated by globalisation, climate change, armed conflicts, harmful substance use or abuse and economic instability - demand governance models that are both holistic and participatory. Global frameworks such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasise that social justice cannot be achieved without cross-sector collaboration, strong institutional accountability, and meaningful participation from marginalized groups.

Global Best Practices

- Nordic Countries integrate social welfare systems, progressive taxation, and strong labour protections with democratic participation to reduce inequality.
- South Africa's Constitution embeds social justice and equality principles, guiding

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governance reforms aimed at redressing historical injustices.

- UN Women's Global Initiatives coordinate with governments worldwide to address inequality through multi-sectoral strategies.
- UNAIDS, the Central Drug Authority Act(CDA) and Community Oriented Primary Care (COPC) principles, this policy brief proposes a coordinated, equity focused framework to promote long term sustainability, peace and inclusive development.

Recommendations:

1. **Policy Coherence and Legal reform** – Social, economic, and environmental policies must be interconnected, avoiding contradictions that could undermine equity. G20 member states must prioritize evidence-based legislative reform, aligning education and health with international human rights standards.
2. **System Integration and Multi-level Collaboration across sectors** – Establish cross-sectorial governance frameworks that align health, education, social protection, nutrition and justice systems coordination between local, national, regional, and global actors ensures that solutions are context-specific yet globally informed.
3. **Governance reforms:** Ensure Good Governance -Transparency and Accountability – Institutions must uphold open communication, combat corruption, and measure outcomes against clear equity targets.
4. **Programmatic actions:** Education, Relevant Knowledge and Stigma Reduction – Launch inclusive education campaigns to combat stigma including homophobia and transphobia, and literacy in communities.
5. **Equitable and Non-discriminatory Access to Services** - Ensure universal, stigma-free access to Public Institutions. Provide comprehensive harm reduction services Treatment and Rehabilitation centres, Community Health Centres including NSP, OAMT, HIV/TB and Hepatitis care- both in community and custodial settings.

Integrated governance for social justice offers a pathway toward more equitable societies by ensuring that decisions are collaborative, inclusive, and evidence-driven. While the challenges are significant, global experiences show that when governance systems align across sectors and scales, they can create lasting structural change. Achieving this requires political will, civic engagement, and a shared commitment to fairness and human dignity. We support the C20 vision of centering care, justice, equity and participation in global governance. The G20 must take bold, coordinated action to realize education's

potential as a transformative tool for sustainable development and social justice.

E. Budget Justice - Pro poor and inclusive Budgeting

Public education systems worldwide face severe fiscal pressures that threaten the realisation of Sustainable Development Goal 4. In accordance with the G20 Presidency's theme of "Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability," countries must coordinate to prioritise education investment over debt servicing and create sustainable financing mechanisms for inclusive education systems.

- **Fiscal Space Constraints and Debt Burden**

Developing countries face severe fiscal constraints that limit education investment. Interest payments in Sub-Saharan Africa increased from 1.3% of GDP to 3.2% between 2008 and 2023, directly competing with education spending that declined from 3.9% of GDP to 2.9%. This debt-education trade-off undermines long-term development prospects and perpetuates intergenerational poverty.

- **Tax Justice and Revenue Generation**

Tax evasion by transnational corporations costs developing countries an estimated \$480 billion annually through tax haven abuse. These revenue losses could fund comprehensive education systems multiple times over. Current international tax architectures favor wealthy nations and multinational corporations at the expense of public education financing in the Global South.

- **Market-Driven Education Risks**

In contexts of limited state capacity, private sector education initiatives may exacerbate inequities through market-driven approaches that disadvantage the most marginalised learners who cannot afford fees and are often more vulnerable to other forms of discrimination. Without transparent and accountable regulatory frameworks, education privatisation risks undermining the principle of education as a public good.

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Recommendations

- 1. Programmatic actions:** Combat corporate tax evasion and implement progressive taxation to unlock the \$480 billion annually lost to illicit financial flows to support education funding.
- 2. Governance reforms:** Reform G20 debt frameworks to provide immediate fiscal relief for developing countries through expanded eligibility and streamlined debt-for-education swaps.
- 3. Investment priorities:** Enforce minimum education spending floors with targeted investment in foundational learning, teacher training, and digital infrastructure.
- 4. Legal and Policy priorities:** Establish strong regulatory frameworks to protect public education from privatisation while ensuring responsive budgeting prioritises marginalised learners.

F. Global prioritisation of the Reading and Literacy Revolution Agenda

Literacy is central to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), enabling inclusive education, social justice, economic growth, and informed citizenship. In the G20 context, it is both an education priority and a driver of sustainable development. Global literacy has improved from 68% in 1979 to 86% today, yet stark inequities persist. Sub-Saharan Africa records adult literacy rates below 35% in countries like Chad and South Sudan. India alone has 287 million illiterate people, while women, refugees, and people with disabilities across Latin America remain disproportionately excluded. In South Africa, one-third of children finish Grade 2 without recognising the alphabet, and 78% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning. Urgent action is needed to expand early learning, close the digital divide, and strengthen teacher training to achieve G20 education commitments.

The poor global literacy progress is reflective of deep inequities. Poverty, disability, and rural isolation continue to limit access to education. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia face the most severe literacy gaps, disadvantaged groups across regions remain excluded. The digital divide intensifies these disparities; only 14% of children in Africa have internet access, leaving millions without the digital skills needed for modern economies. Teacher shortages worsen the challenge: an estimated 2.4 million more teachers are required by

2030, many lacking training in literacy pedagogy or inclusive practices. Limited access to diverse, culturally relevant texts contributes to “learning poverty,” while 750 million adults worldwide remain illiterate, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of exclusion. Urgent, coordinated action is essential to reverse these trends.

Recommendations

- 1. Governance Reform** – Strengthen G20 accountability and align national strategies with SDG 4 on literacy and inclusion.
- 2. Investment Priorities** – Scale early childhood literacy, enhance teacher training, and ensure basic digital infrastructure (10 Mbps, 1:3 learner-device ratio).
- 3. Legal & Policy Instruments** – Enforce inclusive education laws and mandate telecom support for educational access.
- 4. Programmatic Actions** – Provide local-language reading materials, teach digital/media literacy and climate resilience, and expand community adult literacy programs.

The global literacy crisis threatens the achievement of SDG 4 and undermines G20 commitments to inclusive growth. Literacy is both a human right and a foundation for sustainable societies. Action is urgent: investing in ECD, teacher training, digital equity, and inclusive policies will enable learners and communities to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

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Policy brief: Employment Opportunities and Retention

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Executive Summary

Unemployment in the Global South is very high and where there are improvements, they are very slow and almost insignificant. Lead by South Africa, Southern Africa has the highest unemployment rate in the world at 25% and South Africa is at 33.2 unemployment as of June 2025 (StatsSA, 2025).

The C20 Working Group on Employment and Retention has identified a number of areas which are of particular concern where we call for urgent action: 1) Civil Society's inclusion in the Tripartite+ structure; 2) Promote the Decent Work agenda and what it means for the global South; 3) Link employment opportunities, education, skills development and training; 4) Increased investment in rural communities; 5) Promote Public Private Partnerships to grow employment and absorb youth into new jobs; 6) Promote robust Public Employment Programmes; and 7) Diversity, equity and inclusion of women, youth, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ communities.

These priorities aim to strengthen inclusive labour market policies, promote decent and sustainable employment, retain workers in decent jobs and ensure that no one is left behind in the global pursuit of economic justice. They call on G20 leaders to adopt a holistic approach that values public-private partnerships, centres social dialogue including civil society voices, and prioritise targeted investment in rural development, informal economies, and marginalised groups.

Introduction

The OECD Employment Outlook 2025 report noted that OECD-wide unemployment had reached 668 million in May 2025 (ref). Having been at or below 5.0% for more than 3 years, the OECD-wide unemployment rate stood at 4.9% in May 2025 and is projected to remain near this low level through 2026. In the Global South (including most of Africa), unemployment, underemployment, and precarious work continue to undermine economic justice and inclusive development. South Africa, as a case in point, is often cited for its progressive post-1994 legislative framework intended to redress historical inequalities through fairness and social justice. Yet, more than 30 years into democracy, inequality remains the highest globally. South Africa is one of the most unequal country in the world and has one of the highest rates of income inequality globally (World Bank, ref). The

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inequality is still shaped by race, geographic location, gender, and intergenerational poverty (Diaz Pabon, Leibbrandt, Ranchhod, and Savage, 2021).

Unemployment in the Global South according to International Labour Organisation (ref):

- On SDG8, Africa is the worst performing region with 83% of the population in informal employment and 87% of women are in informal employment. Unemployment rate is at 11% across the continent with South Africa the worst at 33.2% followed by Swaziland at 28% unemployment rates.
- For Asian Pacific, SDG8 is one of the region's worst-performing goals. Around two-thirds of workers are informal and nine in ten countries excluded workers from the right to join a trade unions.
- Informal employment remains high in Latin America and Caribbeans as the informal employment rate has remained constant over the last decade at around 52%.
- The MENA region has the second highest unemployment rate in the world with 26.3%, far exceeding the global average of 14%. Informal employment represents more than 62% of all jobs in the region.

In addressing inequality, marginalisation and unequal access to opportunities Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are key actors as they are the interface in the provision of much needed support in communities in social services, health, psycho social, work and employment and other services. Due to their proximity to rural, township and informal communities, they are uniquely positioned to articulate the needs of workers and marginalised populations, particularly in contexts where formal mechanisms of representation may fall short.

Recommendation Priorities

To address the entrenched structural inequalities, labour market exclusion, and growing precarity faced by workers, especially in the Global South, bold and context-responsive action is required. The following priority areas, recommendations and call for actions from the C20 Working Group on Employment Opportunities and Retention are grounded in the lived experiences of communities,

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insights from civil society, and the imperative to realise Sustainable Development Goal 8 on decent work and inclusive growth.

Priority 1. Tripartite+ Structure and Social Dialogues

1. Introduction

The current Tripartite structure, composed of Government, Employers/Business, and Trade Unions, has historically served as the leading platform for employment and labour policy dialogue. While this model has been effective in contexts with high levels of formal employment, it leaves a significant gap in representation across the Global South.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including NGOs, cooperatives, and micro-enterprises, represent the majority of people who are either unemployed, underemployed, or engaged in informal work. Their exclusion from social dialogue processes undermines both inclusivity and legitimacy. CSOs must be formally recognised as equal social partners in a Tripartite+ structure.

According to ILO (2023), 85.8% of workers in Africa are in informal employment, and 68.2% in the Asia-Pacific region are informally employed. In South Africa alone, 11.7 million people are unemployed or discouraged job seekers (Stats SA, Q1 2024, - update ref). Trade unions, by design, represent formally employed workers, leaving the majority of the workforce without structured representation.

The existing Tripartite model reflects less than half of the real economy in most Global South countries. In the absence of CSOs, policymaking risks becoming increasingly disconnected from the lived experiences of the majority population.

CSOs play a critical role in ensuring inclusive and legitimate policymaking by representing marginalized groups such as unemployed youth, women, informal workers, rural communities, and persons with disabilities. Their participation grounds policies in the realities of both formal and informal economies, thereby enhancing legitimacy, accountability, and public trust. As intermediaries between governments and communities, CSOs translate policy frameworks into

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local action while channelling grassroots needs back into policy processes. Crucially, advancing Sustainable Development Goal 8 on “Decent Work for All” requires the active involvement of CSOs to address informal and precarious work.

2. Policy Recommendations

- Institutional recognition should be advanced by amending labour and social dialogue frameworks to formally embed the participation of civil society organisations as a fourth pillar.
- Civil society organisations should be actively engaged through structured social dialogue platforms, including policy roadshows, public consultations, and community-driven policy pilots.
- To ensure meaningful and sustained participation, governments and international organisations should provide adequate financial and technical resources that strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations to contribute effectively to dialogue processes.

3. Call to Action

The Tripartite+ model is not just an innovation, it is a necessity. Without the inclusion of Civil Society Organisations, the voices of the majority in the Global South remain excluded from the very policies that affect their livelihoods.

We call upon the G20 processes to formally recognise CSOs as social partners, Establish communication channels for CSO participation at all levels; Invest in the capacity of CSOs to meaningfully engage in employment and labour policymaking and as essential actors in implementing labour and economic policies.

Inclusion of civil society is inclusion of the majority. Their exclusion is the exclusion of the majority.

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Priority 2. Decent Work Agenda

1. Introduction

The Decent Work Agenda aims to ensure that all people, everywhere, can work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and human dignity. Decent work provides a foundation for fair, productive, and inclusive societies and it is a crucial driver for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially SDG 8. It stimulates economic development and resilience by enabling individuals and families to meet their needs and contribute to the local economy and by promoting equal pay and reducing discrimination, the agenda helps to lower social and economic inequalities.

The International Labour organisation's Decent Work agenda is however not a reality for a large majority of people in the Global South as reflected in a number of ILO reports (ref).

Challenges to the Decent Work Agenda include economic instability and weak regulations, which leave workers unprotected in the informal sector and vulnerable to exploitation, lack of social security, and limited awareness of labor rights. Rapid technological shifts, the rise of precarious work like platform employment, and issues like youth unemployment and insufficient investment in new sectors further complicate efforts to ensure productive employment and social protection for all. Additionally, institutional capacity for effective enforcement, cultural barriers, and discrimination against marginalised groups present significant hurdles to implementing decent work practices globally.

The increasing role of technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalization, introduces new challenges and requires evolving legal and regulatory frameworks to protect workers' rights in the digital age. Likewise, integrating climate justice into labour laws is necessary to protect workers from climate impacts and promote a just transition to a greener economy.

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2. Recommendations

Promoting Employment Creation:

- This involves creating more jobs and ensuring that the jobs available are high-quality, productive, and inclusive, especially for vulnerable groups like youth and persons with disabilities.

Enhancing Social Protection:

- This pillar aims to expand access to social security and safety nets to alleviate poverty and inequality, ensuring that workers and their families are protected.

Guaranteeing Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work:

- This strategy focuses on upholding core labour rights, such as prohibiting forced labour and child labour, promoting safe working environments, and ensuring equal pay for equal work.

3. Call to action

- Ensure compliance with the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Decent Work Agenda through deliberate government policies with specific target dates set for reducing deficits (gaps).
- Extend the Decent Work agenda to the informal economy, not solely by seeking to formalise the informal economy but also to ensure that informal workers experience decent work standards and government subsidies to help reduce wage gaps and inequalities.
- Acknowledge that labour markets and economies operate differently across contexts/countries and especially differently across the Global North and the Global South, seeing a larger informal economy in most Global South countries.

Priority 3: Linking Employment with Education, Skills Development, and Training

1. Introduction

Education and training systems in many countries remain disconnected from labour market demands, producing graduates who lack the digital, green, and entrepreneurial skills required for emerging industries (OECD, 2023). Technical and vocational institutions are underutilized as engines of innovation and often struggle to keep pace with industry-driven curricula and workplace-based training opportunities (UNESCO, 2022). This misalignment particularly disadvantages women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities, who face limited access to equitable training and are excluded from growth sectors such as renewable energy, ICT, and agro-processing (ILO, 2020).

2. Policy Recommendations

A. Align Education Systems with Labor Market Demands

- Mandate continuous curriculum alignment with evolving industry needs, focusing on digital, green, and entrepreneurial skills (ILO–OECD, 2025).
- Establish national observatories to track skills demand and forecast future labour market trends (World Bank, 2022).
- Introduce entrepreneurship education as a compulsory subject from junior levels (ages 13–21), moving beyond embedding it within subjects like EMS (South African DBE, 2025).
- Draw lessons from Germany's dual education system, which combines classroom learning with apprenticeships to reduce youth unemployment (OECD, 2023).

B. Strengthen TVET and Higher Education Institutions

- Elevate TVET colleges and universities as regional innovation hubs, co- developing programs with industry stakeholders (UNESCO–World Bank–ILO, 2022).
- Expand scholarships, subsidies, and learnerships for marginalized groups, particularly women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities (OECD, 2023).
- Incentivize industries to co-design curricula, provide apprenticeships, and offer workplace-based training linked to qualifications (UNESCO, 2022).

- Learn from India's Skill India Mission, which has trained millions in trades such as plumbing, electronics, and tailoring (G20, 2023).

C. Promote Inclusive and Equitable Access to Training

- Establish rural training hubs linked to cooperatives and agricultural extension services to boost local job creation (OECD, 2023)
- Mainstream gender equity policies in skills development to address women's disproportionate representation in NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) statistics (ILO, 2020).
- Institutionalize Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to integrate informal workers into formal certification systems (ILO, 2019).
- Broaden access to entrepreneurship training, beyond universities and TVET colleges.
- Provide training in business planning, marketing, financial literacy, and digital tools.
- Offer mentorship, networking, and access to microfinance or startup capital.
- Deploy online and blended learning models to reach remote and marginalized populations.
- Create mobile-friendly training platforms for developing countries.
- Support the use of MOOCs, micro-credentials, and digital badges for employability (Coursera, edX, Alison examples).

3. Call to Action

A. Governments

- Commit to market-responsive education reform, embedding digital literacy, entrepreneurial thinking, and problem-solving from primary to higher education.
- Provide funding for innovation hubs, TVET centres, and community-based training facilities, particularly in rural areas.
- Ensure accountability through robust monitoring of education-to-employment outcomes.

B. Educational Institutions

- Integrate career guidance and counselling services to help students identify strengths and career goals.
- Design industry-relevant curricula with both technical and soft skills.

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- Foster industry partnerships for internships, job placements, and applied research.

C. Industries

- Offer internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students and graduates.
- Partner with institutions to co-develop training programs that reflect current labor market needs.
- Support entrepreneurship by mentoring and funding start-ups, especially from disadvantaged backgrounds.

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Priority 4. Increased Investment in Rural Development

1. Introduction

Governments must develop policies that encourage more deliberate investments and employment creation efforts in rural and peri-urban areas through overall adopt a Rural Employment and Development Framework under G20 guidance and integrate rural employment indicators in labour data systems. Investment to Rural Development should have performance indicators across government and Private sector Institution to curb massive rural to urban migration.

Key Areas for Investment:

- Infrastructure Development: Investing in rural infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and digital connectivity, is crucial for improving access to markets, services, and opportunities. And create on going maintenance work for sustained quality infrastructure.
- Agricultural Productivity: Supporting rural farmers through training, technology, and access to finance can enhance agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods. Invest in Organic Programs – Promote sustainable agriculture, improve livelihoods, and contribute to a more equitable and environmentally conscious food system. Empower and Support Civil Society Organisations to venture into agriculture as implementers.
- Social Services: Investing in rural healthcare, education, and social protection programs can improve the well-being and quality of life for rural communities.
- Education and skills development: Recognizing the existence of youth in rural areas through programmes appealing to them, e.g. futuristic careers in the economy, culture and environment. Build quality vocational and artisan training centres in rural communities.
- Enterprise and Industry Development: Green economy initiatives like reforestation projects in rural areas, promoting economic growth while reducing environmental risks. Tangible and consistent support to rural industrial activities is critical. Create rural innovation hubs to support startups in crafts, tourism, and agro-processing.
- Land Reform and Spatial Planning: Secure land tenure, sustainable land use and rural-urban trade linkages. Traditional Authority Integration is key, work with traditional councils to co-manage land and development decisions

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- Community-Led Mapping: Engage local residents, traditional leaders, and youth in mapping land use, resources, and infrastructure
- Financial inclusion: Access to banking is critical
- Royal Wisdom Registry (Case – find ref) – Indigenous Knowledge for Sustainable Futures: This is about creation of a national IKS repository accessible for research, education, and policy development. Each Kingdom will act as a central hub for the documentation of IKS in key thematic areas, including: Traditional Food Systems, Indigenous Agricultural Practices, Herbal and Traditional Medicine, Rainwater Harvesting Techniques, Cultural Crafts and Rituals
- Establish Cultural Heritage Zones: Preserve sacred sites, indigenous knowledge landscapes, and traditional practices within spatial plans.

2. Policy Recommendations:

- Inclusive and Sustainable Agriculture: Promote sustainable agricultural practices, reduce post-harvest losses, and support smallholder farmers to enhance rural livelihoods and food security. Agri-Villages & Co-ops - cluster farming communities around shared facilities for processing, storage, and distribution. Promote Agri-parks and agro-processing zones to stimulate rural economies
- Digitalization and Innovation: Leverage digital technologies to improve access to markets, services, and information for rural communities, and support innovation in agriculture and rural development.
- Public-Private Partnerships: Foster partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society organizations to mobilize resources, expertise, and investments for rural development.
- Women's Empowerment: Involve women in decision-making in all activities related to rural development and promote equal opportunities for women and men.
- Access to Markets: Increase access to markets, affordable financial services, and business advisory services for rural populations.
- Integrate Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning in the projects to track progress: together these help make evidence-based decisions, improve accountability and adapt strategies in real time.

- Climate Resilience & Environmental Stewardship: Invest in climate-smart agriculture, water harvesting, and soil conservation, support community-based natural resource management initiatives
- Rural Enterprise & Innovation Fund: Rural Innovation Fund, Rural Knowledge Exchange Programmes (Cross-pollination), Provide seed capital, mentorship, and incubation for rural entrepreneurs, Incentivize green and circular economy projects in agriculture, tourism, and crafts.

3. Call to Action:

- Increased Funding: Advocate for increased funding and resource allocation for rural development initiatives, including infrastructure, agriculture, and social services.
- Policy Support: Encourage policy makers to create an enabling environment for rural development, including supportive policies, regulations, and incentives.
- Global Cooperation: Encourage global cooperation to address rural development challenges and promote sustainable development.
- Capacity Building: Build the capacity of rural communities to effectively implement adaptation programs to climate change and enhance their resilience.
- Inclusive Decision-Making: Foster inclusive decision-making processes that involve rural communities, women, youth, and indigenous peoples.
- Sustainable Resource Management: Promote sustainable natural resource management, including ecosystem conservation and community-based programs
- Transform marginalization of rural communities into opportunities, poverty into prosperity, and isolation into inclusion
- Skills Development & Human Capital Investment - Launch rural skills academies focused on agriculture, construction, artisan development, water and sanitation, ICT, and renewable energy.

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Priority 5. Public-Private Partnership and SMME Development

1. Introduction

Whilst there are synergies between the Private and Public Sector at macro (big business) level. There is lack of the same for medium, small and micro enterprises, this lead to SMEs being disadvantaged when policies are discussed. Cooperatives are even further disadvantaged and do not participate in policy discussions and they end up being recipients of policies that do not serve or advance their interests. Governments in the Global South and Africa in particular are not properly subsidizing growth sectors and as such end up importing goods that could be manufactured in their countries.

By institutionalizing collaborative investment strategies, subsidizing priority sectors, and fostering innovation, nations can cultivate resilient job markets and inclusive growth.

2. Policy Recommendations

- Sustainable job creation and long-term employment retention require deliberate, structured partnerships between governments and the private sector.
- Strategic investment in industries with high employment potential, such as agriculture, agri-processing, manufacturing, mining, etc, underpinned by supportive policy environments and targeted incentives.

3. Call to Action

- Prioritise youth owned enterprises for support and development.
- Support enterprises owned by women and those owned by persons with disabilities.
- Support minority communities including LGBTQA+ in enterprise development.
- Support enterprise development through targeted policies, access to finance, mentorship, and infrastructure, to empower young people to become job creators rather than job seekers. This approach not only catalyses employment creation but also diversifies economic participation and reduces competition in saturated job markets.

Priority 6. Public Employment Programme

1. Introduction

Public Employment Programmes (PEP) as an anchor for new employment opportunities that are sustained and result in decent work and that government policies or public employment are geared towards creating an enabling environment for sustained employment. As a cross-cutting approach PEPs must ensure the inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and rural communities, and align training with green economy opportunities and Just Transition strategies. There are opportunities to increase spending on Employment Creation by governments as social protection and systematically replace unemployment grants with increase support for opportunities that create public goods and development so that people can receive remuneration work.

2. Policy Recommendations

- Design Public Employment Programmes (PEPs) to focus on long-term employability rather than short-term relief, differentiating programme types according to labour market proximity and linking them to productive investments.
- Ensure that PEP financing links infrastructure development, equipment financing and tools of trade to prolong opportunities and retention.
- Formalise exit pathways by linking PEP participants to micro-enterprises and co-operatives.
- Balance wage and non-wage components in PEPs, improve coordination to avoid duplication, standardize recruitment guidelines, and strengthen transparency and anti-corruption measures.

3. Call to Action

- Cross learning with G20 Countries who are successfully implementing Public Employment Programmes like India to learn on how to scale up PEPs like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (MGNREGA), which is employing over 85 million people in Rural Communities.
- Governments should in countries with very high unemployment like South Africa should PEPs to half unemployment by 2035.

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- Legal Framework as is the case in India should be targeted to address vulnerable communities and groups.
- PEPs should be used to reduce NEET to acceptable level and half the percentage of youth who are Not in Employment, Education and Training by 2035.
- Learn together on formula and best practises for sustainable PEP that lead to sustained Employment
- Use data tracking and evaluation systems to monitor outcomes and guide improvements.

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Priority 7. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

1. Introduction

Several international human rights treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have placed the ‘right’ to work at the centre of these treaties to ensure equal access to work opportunities for all and especially for people with disabilities. However, in previous years access to work opportunities for people from minority racial groups, women, persons with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community continues to be a challenge for many governments despite policies or international human rights treaties advocating for the inclusion of marginalised groups of people in society.

“Persons with Disabilities are among the largest minority groups in the world: 1.3 billion people, 16% of the population, live with a disability, and approximately two-thirds of persons with disabilities live in G20 countries. Research shows that persons with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries are often ‘poorer than their nondisabled peers.’ Even in developed countries, persons with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty. Rights of persons with disabilities have been advanced through the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Moreover, in 2016, the G20 committed to align its work with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS), which commit to disability inclusion and leaving no one behind.”(G20, 2023).

Achieving employment equity across all sectors of employment should be the priority of governments, the private sector, civil society organisations in all populations. Guided by available data indicating gaps that exists between gender groups, special efforts should be made to fast track inclusion of women, people with disabilities and the LGBTQ+ community. In this regard, the following recommendations are made:

2. Policy Recommendations

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(Overlap in some of the recommendations)

A. Diversity in the workplace

- Governments should ensure workplaces create inclusive spaces and fair opportunities for women, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals, and implement diversity and inclusion initiatives such as bias training and flexible work arrangements including remote or hybrid work and compressed workweeks.
- Reasonable accommodations where necessary should form part of each organisation, taking into account the individuals employed within the organisation to support them in their areas of need with the aim of keeping people at work and most importantly provide job satisfaction.
- People should be given opportunities for growth within these organisations, and there should be independent consultants who can assist organisations in determining the workforce capacity levels of each individual and assess and identify areas of need for either further development, training or promotion.
- Training institutions should empower and train people with disabilities and those from marginalised groups about their rights to equal work opportunities and equip them with skills that correlate with their level of education and training to match the skills required in the most appropriate open labour market job opportunities possible
- Promote inclusive hiring and employment equity plans with clear sector targets and include targets for women, youth and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Establish a national and global, enforceable disability-inclusive employment strategy that integrates rights-based hiring, targeted mentorship, public and private sector accountability, and inclusion.

B. Gender Equality

- Ensure inclusion of gender friendly activities that also take into consideration role of women as mothers in their communities and ensure employment is created in close proximity to Early Learning Centres.
- Decentralize access to enterprise hubs to reduce geographic inequality, ensuring women, youth, and persons with disabilities can participate fully.

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- Provide secure land rights and microfinance options to support youth, women and disabled entrepreneurs.
- Apply gender- and disability inclusive hiring policies, audits, and quotas to increase representation of marginalized groups.

C. Inclusion in work related opportunities and job creation activities

- Women, people with disabilities and the LGBTQA+ individuals should form part of decision-making groups in organisations to ensure representations and maintain that their voice be heard when decision making processes take place
- Private initiatives such as competitions geared towards uplifting entrepreneurship, should ensure that their call to action also highlights the need to have not only people from marginalised racial groups, but should include and highlight the need for people with disabilities and individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ to participate.
- Foster robust cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination among government departments, private sector entities, and civil society organizations to ensure that fiscal strategies actively promote and fund joint initiatives, shared data platforms, and integrated service delivery models that break down silos and ensure a holistic approach to disability inclusion.
- Link social protection mechanisms to economic participation, recognizing the additional costs persons with disabilities face in seeking employment and skills development.
- Legal obligations to employ persons with disabilities must be enforced with clear monitoring systems. Reasonable accommodation (both disability- and industry-specific) should be compulsory to ensure equal footing in retention, advancement, and leadership roles. Workplaces must be free from discrimination in line with the CRPD, supported by training programmes for employers and policies that promote inclusion of women and youth with disabilities in higher-level and leadership posts.
- Enforcement of legal obligations to employ persons with disabilities and provide reasonable accommodation (disability and industry-specific) to ensure retention of such staff and career advancement on equal footing with others.
- Comprehensive social security coverage, including health insurance, pensions, and unemployment benefits, should be extended to persons with disabilities in both formal and informal sectors through subsidised contributions or simplified enrolment systems.

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- Disability-inclusive design should be embedded into all digital systems and AI development, with persons with disabilities as co-creators and decision-makers. National hubs and accelerators should fund disability-led technology and enforce digital accessibility standards (WCAG). Governments, private sector, and civil society should collaborate on sustainable financing models to promote disability-inclusive innovation, ensuring fiscal strategies support joint initiatives, integrated service delivery, and open-source accessible technologies.

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Policy Brief : Equitable Health for All

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Executive Summary

The world today faces fundamental polycrises that are eroding trust in global governance and threatening health systems across the world. As the G20, representing over 80% of global GDP, convenes under South Africa's Presidency, it carries a unique responsibility: to realign global decision making for health with equity, resilience, and justice at its core. The C20's Equitable Health for All (EHA) Working Group urges G20 leaders to act decisively, ensuring policies and financing protect lives and livelihoods, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

To this end, the G20 must:

- Strengthen health systems by investing in primary health care and workforce retention for universal health coverage.
- Advance regional manufacturing and research and development (R&D) for health as well as guarantee financing for equitable technology transfer.
- Address the NCD and mental health crisis by integrating prevention and care into UHC strategies, and financing rights-based approaches.
- Integrate Indigenous knowledge through evidence-based regulation, research, financing, and equitable access pathways.
- Secure sustainable health financing by expanding fiscal space, reforming debt frameworks, and supporting global health mechanisms such as the Global Fund.
- Ensure inclusive governance by embedding civil society participation and accountability across all G20 health and financing commitments.

The G20 must act now to deliver Equitable Health for All.

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Introduction

Health is a fundamental human right and a cornerstone of sustainable development, yet half of the world's population is not fully covered by essential health services. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified long-standing structural inequities in health systems, and new threats—including climate shocks, economic crises, and conflicts—continue to widen the gap between those with access to care and those without. As the G20 nations convene under South African leadership, this is a critical moment to reimagine global health systems rooted in equity, resilience, and justice.

The *Equitable Health for All* Working Group (WG1) brings together civil society and community voices to ensure that health remains a G20 priority. As civil society, we play an indispensable role in advancing health rights by bridging the gap between global commitments and lived realities, brokering knowledge and ensuring reforms are grounded in equity and justice. We call on G20 leaders to act on their collective responsibility to advance the right to health for all, particularly for people in low- and middle income countries (LMICs).

This year, the Working Group focused on five priority areas:

1. Building resilient health systems through Universal Health Coverage (UHC), Primary Health Care (PHC), and the retention of the health workforce
2. Advancing Diversified Health R&D and Manufacturing for Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics for Priority Diseases
3. Stemming the tide of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including mental health
4. Positioning Traditional Medicine as a Community-Anchored Health System Response
5. Sustaining domestic and global financing for health, with equity, national ownership and accountability at the core

These priorities are interconnected and inseparable. Equitable and predictable financing builds resilient

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health systems. A supported health workforce makes UHC achievable. G20 health priorities must embrace the full diversity of health knowledge systems that sustain populations worldwide. Inclusive innovation and pluralistic knowledge systems strengthen community trust and expand accessibility. Mental health and NCD services ensure health systems remain comprehensive and responsive to people's needs.

Given their global influence and resources, G20 countries have a responsibility and a unique opportunity to lead the way in building resilient, equitable, and sustainable health systems.

The policy proposals that follow represent a collective vision for structural transformation. They retain the voices and expertise of civil society and communities across the world and call for bold, measurable actions to deliver health justice.

1. Building Resilient Health Systems through UHC, PHC, and Retention of the Health Workforce

Health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) are under immense strain from climate shocks, economic crises, conflict, and declining donor support. These pressures hit the most marginalized hardest—women, girls, LGBTQ+ persons, people with disabilities, Indigenous and migrant communities—, eroding access to rights-based health services. Additionally, discrimination and pathologization **exacerbate health disparities** for LGBTIQA+ individuals, creating significant barriers to accessing HIV services, mental health support, and gender-affirming care due to stigma, fear, and lack of provider competency. (elaborate)

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of over-medicalized systems, revealing gaps in protection for frontline workers and inequities in access to care. Today, many countries face impossible trade-offs between servicing debt and fulfilling health commitments.

Reclaiming Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a human right requires political will, sustainable financing, and governance rooted in accountability and participation. Primary Health Care (PHC), envisioned at Alma-Ata and reaffirmed in Astana, remains the foundation of resilient systems. Equity

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explores an holistic observation of human rights, confronting social and economic contributors to what remains an exacerbated and glaring gap in health access experienced by intersex couples. Identified are social pressures for populations subjected to conversion therapies - harmful practices that violate human rights, body autonomy and integrity, gendered expression and cause severe lasting psychological and physical traumas, thus violating foundations of human rights and liberties. These realities must be considered in the framework of lived narratives condemned for the discriminatory and socially unacceptable practices that they present. PHC must be community-driven, rights-based, and gender-responsive, addressing structural barriers such as discriminatory laws and gender-based violence, while also integrating essential surgical, obstetric, trauma, anesthesia (SOTA), emergency, and critical care services.

A resilient system also depends on protecting and valuing the health workforce. Women—70% of the sector—remain largely underpaid, overworked, and excluded from leadership. Community health workers, often unpaid, are central to PHC yet overlooked. A gender-just approach must recognize, protect, and fairly compensate health workers while ensuring leadership pipelines and protections against exploitation.

Civil society, feminist movements and affected communities must be co-architects of health systems. Without confronting embedded racism, patriarchy, and ableism, resilience will remain out of reach. Embedding a rights and justice lens is not an add-on but a prerequisite for truly universal, equitable health.

Policy recommendations for the G20:

1.1 Close Health Equity Gaps by Financing Community-Led Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

The inequitable distribution of health resources has left millions without access to care, particularly in marginalized communities. G20 countries must:

- Invest in publicly financed, community-led, digitally enabled health systems to reduce donor dependency and strengthen equity.
- Mobilize progressive domestic financing (e.g., fair taxation) and reduce out-of-pocket spending. • Prioritize vulnerable groups through equity-focused policies and community accountability mechanisms to ensure investments meet real needs and build trust in health systems, especially for

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underserved populations.

- Embed the right to health in global and national legal frameworks with clear budgets and transparent reporting on equity outcomes.¹

1.2. Strengthen Primary Health Care (PHC) through Inclusive and Integrated Investment

To enhance health outcomes and equity, allocate at least 30% of national health budgets to Primary Health Care (PHC) to build a robust, inclusive, and integrated health system. Prioritize the integration of services such as nutrition, HIV, tuberculosis (TB), communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), surgery, obstetric care, trauma care, and mental health into PHC frameworks. Ensure these services are people-centered, culturally appropriate, and gender-responsive, addressing the diverse needs of all populations, including the LGBTQI+ community.

To support this, implement targeted training programs to sensitize and equip healthcare workers with the skills to deliver competent, informed, and non-discriminatory care, particularly for SRHR services tailored to LGBTQI+ individuals. Additionally, incorporate emergency, critical, and operative care into national PHC strategies to ensure comprehensive, accessible, and equitable health services for all.

To promote inclusive healthcare, we recommend that the G20 ensure non-discriminatory access to LGBTIQA+-inclusive care, including gender-affirming and HIV services, while mandating and funding competency training for all healthcare workers on LGBTIQA+ health. Additionally, the G20 should integrate and fund dedicated mental health support services for LGBTIQA+ communities and enact and enforce explicit bans on 'conversion therapy' and non-consensual, medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children.

- Scale digital health solutions in underserved areas, ensuring strong protection for equity, privacy, and data rights.
- Promote equity, participation, and accountability in health governance, and prioritise community engagement in domestic and international health investments

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¹ See the proposed Framework Convention on Global Health (FCGH) as an example of a new international legal framework that includes the right to health in national and global systems. This includes universal access to quality services, public accountability, and empowering communities to realise health rights. (Also see 5.1.)

1.3. Prioritise the Protection and Retention of Global Health Workers

End the health workforce crisis by investing in protection, pay, and equity. Health workers are overburdened, underpaid, and leaving the sector in alarming numbers. G20 nations must:

- Guarantee decent work and fair pay, aligned with WHO labour standards, especially for women and community health and care workers.
- Provide social protection, mental health support, childcare, and rural incentives to reduce attrition and burnout.
- Advance equity in health worker education and opportunities by reforming bursary policies for the children of health workers and implementing ethical international recruitment agreements aligned with the WHO Global Code of Practice, ensuring retention, fair treatment, and protection of source-country health systems from brain drain.

1.4. Eliminate Harmful Debt Dependencies Through Fair Global Health Financing

Many LMICs face the impossible choice between servicing debt and funding health. The G20 must:

- Reframe health as a Global Public Good by advocating for health spending to be treated as non-commercial, protecting health budgets from austerity, urging multilateral institutions to reduce or eliminate interest on health loans, and increasing access to grants that strengthen national ownership and long-term fiscal capacity.
- Promote innovative financing such as debt-for-health swaps, solidarity taxation, IDA21 funds, and SDRs.
- Enable participatory and accountable financing, co-created with marginalized communities, and ensure private actors adhere to human rights standards.² See UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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1.5. Tackle Corruption and Demand Transparent, Accountable Health Governance

Corruption continues to siphon vital resources away from public health systems. The G20 should:

- Mandate independent forensic audits, prosecutions of corruption, and recovery of misused funds to reinvest in health services.
- Fund community-led budget tracking to monitor spending and expose misuse in real time.
- Require public reporting and accountability on commitments such as the Abuja Declaration and Maputo Plan of Action, making fiscal integrity a pillar of health system resilience.

2. Advancing Diversified Health R&D and Manufacturing for Vaccines, Therapeutics and Diagnostics for Priority Diseases

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep structural vulnerabilities in global and regional health systems, particularly in LMICs. In Sub-Saharan Africa, where countries import 70–90% of medicines despite a high disease burden, this dependency exacerbates vulnerabilities in both pandemic response and the management of endemic health challenges such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

Building on lessons from COVID-19 and recent outbreaks such as mpox, Ebola, and Marburg, governments must now advance diversified research and development (R&D), and manufacturing ecosystems that are regionally distributed, locally responsive, and globally connected. With over 600 pharmaceutical manufacturers in Africa, but limited policy, financing, and regulatory support compared to ecosystems in India and China, there is a clear opportunity to leverage the South African G20 Presidency to catalyse action.

A strong G20 commitment to regional manufacturing can expand access, strengthen supply chain resilience, and bolster health security, while also driving industrialization, creating jobs, and supporting economic diversification in line with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and G20 priorities for sustainable development and resilience.

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Policy recommendations for the G20:

2.1. Establish a G20–LMIC Health Manufacturing Compact

Despite growing momentum in LMICs, regional manufacturing faces barriers such as limited policy coordination, fragmented financing, and lack of demand certainty. The G20 should:

- Create a formal cooperation platform bringing together G20 members, LMICs (including the African Union), global health institutions, and industry partners.
- Coordinate on technology transfer, market incentives, and regulatory harmonization to accelerate regional production of vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics for both pandemic and endemic diseases.
- Integrate transparent progress tracking, leveraging existing platforms like the Regional Vaccine Manufacturing Collaborative (RVMC) and IPPS, to assess gaps and guide investments.

2.2. Create a Global Health Manufacturing Financing Platform

Access to capital to scaling up regional health manufacturing requires global solidarity, planning, and coordination. G20 countries must:

- Launch a blended financing mechanism, pooling resources from G20 members, multilateral development banks (e.g., AfDB, World Bank, IFC), and private equity networks.
- Provide de-risking instruments and concessional capital to incentivize private investment and build sustainable regional manufacturing hubs.
- Leverage successful models like the Pandemic Fund to ensure rapid mobilization of financing during health emergencies.

2.3. Reform Global and Tech Transfer Landscape in Africa

The current global health architecture limits the ability of LMICs to benefit from innovation and participate in the development of technologies they need most. G20 leadership is needed to:

- Champion flexible IP and technology transfer mechanisms under the Pandemic Agreement, supporting voluntary licensing, patent pooling, and tech-sharing initiatives such as WHO's mRNA Technology Transfer Hub.

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- Strengthen regional R&D ecosystems by aligning research agendas with local health needs and building partnerships between researchers, manufacturers, and regulators.
- Prioritize TB and HIV innovations, including financing for late-stage TB vaccine trials, next generation therapeutics, and rapid diagnostics, ensuring these tools are affordable, accessible, and deployed rapidly in LMICs.

3. Stemming the Tide of NCDs Including Mental Health

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as adult and childhood cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory illnesses, oral disease and mental health disorders, account for 74% of deaths globally or approximately 41 million people each year. Of these, 77% occur in low- and middle income countries (LMICs), where access to preventive services, diagnosis, and care remains severely limited. The escalating burden of NCDs undermines sustainable development, impoverishes families, weakens health systems, and threatens economic growth.

Mental health disorders remain severely underrecognized and underfunded, yet they account for a significant share of the global disease burden. Depression ranks as the leading cause of disability worldwide. Dementia stands as the fifth leading cause of NCD-related death, and suicide is among the top causes of death for young people. In many LMICs, more than 75% of people with mental health conditions receive no treatment.

The aggressive promotion of harmful products, such as tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed foods, alongside regulatory capture and conflicts of interest in policymaking, further fuels NCD risk.

Meanwhile, air pollution has become the second leading risk factor for global disease burden and climate change exacerbates NCD risks through food insecurity, heat stress, and disruption of health systems.

Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, G20 leaders must act now to stem the tide of NCDs, strengthen integrated health systems, and ensure accountability for progress.³ See in particular, SDG 3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

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Policy recommendations for the G20:

3.1. Strengthen Public Health Policy and Fiscal Measures

The rise of NCDs – driven by social and commercial determinants of health, weak enforcement, and under investments in prevention, early diagnosis, treatment, and care – demands bold policy solutions and fiscal action. G20 countries must:

- Implement WHO-recommended “Best Buys”, including tobacco and alcohol taxes, front-of-pack labelling, and restrictions on the marketing of unhealthy foods.
- Increase excise taxes on sugar-sweetened and non-nutritive sweetened beverages and mandatory investment of revenues in NCD prevention programs.
- Establish legal protections and regulatory mechanisms to protect public health policies from commercial interference.
- Endorse a G20 Declaration on Accelerated NCD Action tied to SDG 3.4, with measurable targets and timelines.
- Create a G20 NCD Financing Mechanism, modelled on global health financing facilities, that are grounded in equity, country-led ownership of programming, and meaningful involvement of key populations and CSOs to support NCD prevention and care implementation in LMICs.
- Strengthen G20 accountability frameworks to include NCD prevention and management metrics.
-

3.2. Integrate NCDs into UHC

Integrating NCDs effectively into UHC benefit packages eliminates financial barriers, improves outcomes, and helps reach underserved communities with critical care. The G20 must:

- Fully integrate essential NCD services into UHC policies and in national health benefit packages and remove financial barriers to NCD care, following the WHO NCD "PEN" protocols and integration of mental health into PHC.
- Include essential oral health services in national UHC benefit packages, drawing on the WHO Global Oral Health Action Plan (2023–2030), aligned with PEN-plus and PHC delivery platforms.

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- Promote task-shifting and community-based models for screening and chronic care, particularly in underserved areas.
- Adopt the "One Lung" approach to integrate communicable and non-communicable disease services.
- Expand affordable access to essential diagnostics and medicines, in line with WHO Model Lists.

3.3. Advance Rights-Based, Inclusive Governance

Meaningful participation, intersectional policy approaches, and inclusive data are essential to address inequities in NCD care and outcomes. G20 countries must:

- Institutionalize the participation of people living with NCDs, including those with rare diseases and civil society in health planning, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms. • Adopt intersectional approaches that address gender, disability, race, genetic predisposition and social and income inequities in NCD burden and access to care.
- Support data disaggregation by age, gender, genetic predisposition and socioeconomic status to inform policy, monitor equity, and ensure no one is left behind.
- Ensure continuity of care across the life-course by putting safeguards in place for people who "age out" or otherwise transition out of formally recognised priority groups.
- Champion local and community-driven solutions by supporting CSO engagement, capacity building, and direct access to funding for NCD advocacy and service delivery.

3.4. Promote Health-Promoting Environments and Multisectoral Action

Healthy environments and cross-sectoral collaboration are essential to prevent NCDs and promote well-being. The G20 must:

- Prioritize urban health interventions such as safe active transport, clean air, and green spaces.
- Align NCD policies with climate and sustainability goals, e.g., reducing emissions from food systems and fossil fuel use.
- Facilitate multisectoral governance mechanisms, including health, agriculture, finance, education, and labour sectors, to coordinate NCD action plans.

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4. Positioning Traditional Medicine as a Community-Anchored Health System Response

Traditional Medicine, rooted in Indigenous Health Knowledge Systems (IHKS), is a high-trust, low-cost, community-based asset that supports UHC and resilient primary healthcare. IHKS and African Natural Medicines (ANM) provide primary care for 60-80 percent of Africa's population, particularly in rural, low-income, and underserved areas, with Indigenous Health Practitioners (IHPs) delivering holistic care addressing physical, psychological, spiritual, and ecological wellbeing.

Despite their importance, IHKS and ANM remain systemically excluded from mainstream health, leaving vulnerable groups and rural populations disproportionately affected. Integrating IHKS into national strategies is critical to expanding universal health coverage and strengthening equitable, resilient community-anchored care. It also enables the operationalisation of a One Health approach, linking human, animal, and environmental health, while positioning indigenous practitioners as innovation ready co-creators of locally grounded wellbeing solutions. Progress on institutionalising IHKS remains limited,⁴ with commitments lacking sustained political will, budgetary allocations, or structural reforms.⁵ With South Africa's G20 Presidency providing a historic opportunity to elevate African health priorities, the G20 must establish a G20 Africa Compact on IHKS with a dedicated fund to empower Indigenous-led initiatives, advance ANM, foster R&D and innovation, and strengthen IHKS value chains. The multistakeholder Compact should recognise Indigenous agency, and prioritise codification and innovation by IHPs. Governments must reform legal, financing, and institutional frameworks and mainstream IHKS, delivering culturally relevant, holistic, and people-centred care that advances equitable health for all, strengthens climate-resilient systems, and supports sustainable development for communities and nations.

⁴ Structural barriers impeding the full integration of Traditional Medicine include: (1) outdated or culturally restrictive legal and regulatory frameworks, (2) chronic underinvestment and invisibility in research, innovation, and financing agendas, (3) misclassification and lack of labour protections for IHKS practitioners, (4) weak data governance, market access, and intellectual property protections, and (5) limited public budget allocations.

⁵ African governments and international partners have repeatedly affirmed their support for Indigenous

knowledge systems and traditional medicine through instruments such as: WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy (2014–2023), United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007), African Union Plan of Action on Traditional Medicine (2001–2010, extended to 2020), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Nagoya Protocol, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 3, 10, 13, 15, and 17), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (Aspiration 1 & 5), One Health Joint Plan of Action (FAO, WHO, UNEP, WOAH, 2022), Brazil G20 2024 (Health Policy Priorities on Integrative and Traditional Health Systems).

Policy recommendations for the G20:

4.1. Strengthen Legal and Regulatory Protection for IHKS and Traditional Medicine Value Chains

Institutional safeguards and culturally aligned, and enforceable laws are needed to secure legal protection, support ethical governance, and ensure sovereignty. As part of the Compact, the G20 must urge national governments and regional bodies to:

- Establish culturally aligned legal instruments recognizing IHKS practitioners and ANM as formal health system contributors.
- Harmonize policies to eliminate gaps and misclassification.
- Protect communal intellectual property, implement equitable benefit-sharing aligned with the Nagoya Protocol, and fund legal support for communities to enforce rights over Indigenous knowledge.

4.2. Integrate IHKS and ANM within National Health Systems

IHKS and ANM are central to primary healthcare yet remain marginalized in policy, workforce planning, and training. G20 governments, working with national governments, academic institutions, IHPs, and communities must:

- Mainstream IHKS into national health policies, primary care and universal health coverage planning, and emerging technology-enabled and digitalisation strategies.
- Include Indigenous practitioners in referral systems, workforce planning, and training programmes.
- Develop Indigenous IHKS curricula collaboratively with universities and Indigenous Health Practitioners.
- Support government–community collaboration hubs (“codification districts”) to embed IHKS in health planning, monitoring, and One Health initiatives.

4.3. Secure Sustainable Financing and Foster Innovation, Market Access, and Practitioner Development

Chronic underinvestment limits IHKS as a driver of equitable health, innovation, and ecological sustainability. The G20 must catalyse partnerships to:

- Establish a dedicated G20 IHKS Fund to support codification districts, practitioner development, R&D, and Indigenous-led innovation initiatives.
- Develop diverse financing instruments, including national funds, blended capital, and innovation platforms, to support practitioners, research, community-led enterprises, and market access.
- Integrate IHKS into public health financing and leverage climate, biodiversity, and health funding to strengthen medicinal agroecology, Indigenous-led enterprises, and locally governed innovation systems.

4.4. Institutionalize Inclusive Governance, Knowledge Systems, and R&D

To sustainably embed IHKS and Traditional Medicine in national development strategies, the G20 should commit to mobilising political will and financing for institutionalisation. Regional bodies and national governments must:

- Establish Indigenous-led councils and inclusive decision-making platforms.
- Implement Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) protocols for all Indigenous knowledge initiatives.
- Develop research hubs, centres of excellence, and digital platforms for ethical documentation, R&D, knowledge transfer, and innovation that centre Indigenous innovation and ecological stewardship.
- Ensure accountability through civil society review, Indigenous-led monitoring, and regular reporting.

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5. Sustaining Domestic and Global Financing for Health

Globally, sustainability for health financing is under threat. International aid is increasingly unpredictable and remains fragmented, with funding often channelled through programmes that are insufficiently integrated into domestic health systems. At the same time, domestic resource mobilisation remains constrained by debt obligations, narrow tax bases, and competing budget demands—leaving many LMICs unable to meet basic health financing thresholds or invest in long-term system resilience and equity-oriented health systems.

Meanwhile, the growing role of private-sector actors has outpaced the development of accountability frameworks, raising urgent questions about equity, transparency, and rights-based oversight.

In this context, G20 countries, which are responsible for the majority of global health financing, have both a responsibility and an opportunity to champion a reimagined global health financing architecture that is equitable, sustainable, and participatory. The C20 outlines a comprehensive financing agenda: one that shifts away from vertical, donor-driven models and centres on justice, solidarity, and community-led accountability.

Policy recommendations for the G20:

5.1. Establish a binding global health governance framework

Fragmented governance and weak accountability mechanisms continue to fuel inequality in health access, quality, and financing. To realise the right to health universally and sustainably, G20 leaders, WHO, and UN Member States must:

- Advance the Framework Convention on Global Health (FCGH) as a legally binding global instrument embedding the right to health in domestic and international systems. •
- Institutionalise accountability, shared governance, and equity as central to health financing. •
- Ensure disability inclusion and rural access are codified as obligations within financing frameworks

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5.2. Institutionalise Equity Through Participatory, Rights-Based Financing

Too often, health financing decisions are made without the input of communities and fail to reflect the needs on the ground. To ensure fairness, effectiveness and accountability, national governments, especially Ministries of Finance and Health, must:

- Align financing with national equity programmes co-developed through inclusive consultations with women, rural communities, and marginalised groups.
- Establish permanent civil society and community oversight mechanisms at national and sub national levels.
- Require gender- and disability-disaggregated audits of all health financing flows.

5.3. Ensure Accountability in Public and Private Sector Health Investments

The absence of strong oversight for health investments risks deepening inequality and eroding public trust. G20 leaders and national governments must:

- Apply the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights to all private-sector actors in health financing and delivery.
- Mandate transparent reporting with enforceable penalties for non-compliance.
- Reform international aid to prioritise equity, sustainability, and system-wide strengthening over disease-specific fragmentation.
-

5.4. Advance Fiscal Justice and Mobilise Domestic Resource Mobilization for Health

In many LMICs, fiscal constraints, often driven by debt burdens, narrow tax bases, and rigid donor frameworks, limit domestic investments in health. To advance fiscal justice, the G20 governments with partners like the IMF and World Bank must:

- Adopt national fiscal strategies to sustainably finance UHC, pandemic preparedness, and climate-resilient systems.
- Expand progressive taxation and earmark 15% of national budgets for health in line with the Abuja Declaration.
- Redirect untied donor funds to support integrated system strengthening.

5.5. Fund the Future of Public Health: Urgent Global Action Needed

Chronic underfunding and donor fatigue are threatening the sustainability of hard-won gains in global health. G20 leaders must take urgent action to fund the future of public health is needed, which should include:

- Support the 8th replenishment of the Global Fund to achieve its \$18 billion investment target.
- Increase flexible, predictable financing to WHO to reinforce its global leadership.
- Support Global Health Initiatives in line with the 2023 Lusaka Agenda.
- Implement a 0.2–0.4% global wealth solidarity tax on individuals with net assets above US\$100 million to finance health and humanitarian responses.
- Integrate health into climate finance mechanisms, safeguarding rural and climate-vulnerable populations.

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Title: C20 Policy Brief – Working Group 12: Science, Research & Innovation Investments

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Executive summary

Under South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency, Science, Research, and Innovation Investment (SR&I) is recognized as central to sustainable development, resilience, and global health equity. Through SR&I Working Group meetings and the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy, key deliverables have been advanced, informed by civil society perspectives emphasizing equity, community agency, and South–South collaboration. Despite growing global R&D investment, access remains unequal. We urge G20 leaders to commit to a framework that ensures inclusive governance, targeted financing, and regionally anchored partnerships, embedding participation, justice, and equity at the heart of research and innovation for tangible benefits to all communities.

Problem Statement

Science, Research, and Innovation Investment (SR&I) is essential for tackling global challenges, including pandemic preparedness, antimicrobial resistance, climate resilience, and equitable access to health technologies. However, a persistent innovation–access gap continues to limit the benefits of SR&I for historically marginalised populations, rural communities, women, people with disabilities, and countries in the Global South. This inequity undermines global resilience and inclusive development. The C20 calls on G20 leaders to address this gap by supporting community-driven, inclusive SR&I investments that enhance equitable access, strengthen regional innovation ecosystems, and foster South–South collaboration.

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Key Recommendations

- 1. Institutionalise Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR):** Embed CBPR as a core methodology across G20 SR&I agendas to ensure research is inclusive, locally relevant, and community-driven.
- 2. Close Innovation–Access Gaps:** Ensure that historically marginalised populations benefit from SR&I by promoting equitable financing, technology transfer, and fair distribution of innovations.
- 3. Strengthen Regional Innovation Ecosystems:** Prioritise dedicated G20 investments to bolster research infrastructure, capacity, and knowledge networks in the Global South.
- 4. Advance Regulatory Harmonisation:** Facilitate timely, safe, and equitable access to health products and technologies through harmonised regional and international regulatory frameworks.
- 5. Mainstream Inclusion:** Integrate gender, disability, and rural perspectives into all SR&I investments, governance structures, and policy frameworks to ensure equitable participation.

Call to Action: By adopting these measures, G20 leaders can establish a pandemic-resilient, inclusive, and equitable global health architecture that delivers tangible benefits for all communities.

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Introduction

South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency has strategically positioned Science, Research, and Innovation (SR&I) at the forefront of its agenda, convening three SR&I Working Group meetings in parallel with the G20 Initiative on Bioeconomy. These high-level engagements hosted at the University of the Free State (February 2025), the University of Mpumalanga (May 2025), and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (September 2025) have advanced the ten deliverables established during the inaugural session and laid a strong foundation for the forthcoming G20 Research and Innovation Ministerial Declaration.

In parallel, the C20 SR&I Working Group, fully constituted in June 2025, has elevated civil society perspectives, advocating for a research and innovation agenda that prioritises equity, community agency, and South–South collaboration. This collective vision is firmly grounded in regional and international frameworks, including the African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024), the World Health Organization's Local Production and Technology Transfer agenda, and the draft G20 Leaders' and Ministers' Declarations on Research & Innovation.

Science and innovation are critical drivers of sustainable development, resilience, and preparedness. Yet, despite rising global R&D investments, inequities in access remain pronounced. G20 leadership under South Africa's Presidency has a unique opportunity to ensure that scientific breakthroughs and technological innovations extend beyond privileged populations, delivering tangible and equitable benefits to all, particularly historically marginalised communities. Achieving this requires closing the innovation–access gap through targeted financing, inclusive governance models, and regionally anchored partnerships that embed participation, justice, and accountability at the core of global research and innovation.

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We emphasise that SR&I investments must be accessible, relevant, and responsive to the needs of marginalized populations, including those affected by poverty-related and neglected diseases. By committing to a framework that integrates equity, inclusion, and community-led approaches, G20 leaders can ensure that SR&I not only advances scientific excellence but also drives meaningful social impact and global health equity.

Issue Analysis

1. Innovation Capacity & Infrastructure Gaps •

- Institutionalise Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) across G20 SR&I agendas to strengthen locally relevant innovation ecosystems, including rural areas and sectors such as agro-tech, off-grid energy, and rural health technology.
- Address gender disparities in STEM by promoting inclusion of women in leadership, research roles, and clinical trials, and develop gender-responsive SR&I policies to remove systemic barriers for women researchers.

2. Technology Transfer & Equitable Access

- Close innovation-access gaps for marginalized populations through equitable financing, technology transfer, and open-source innovation models.
- Prioritise disability-inclusive design, assistive technologies, and accessibility considerations throughout SR&I outputs to ensure equitable participation.

3. Financing & Partnerships for R&D

- Strengthen regional innovation ecosystems in the Global South through dedicated G20 investment, innovative financing mechanisms (e.g., blended finance, public-private-philanthropic partnerships), and support for research on poverty-related and neglected diseases.

4. Governance Reform & Civil Society Engagement

- Advance regulatory harmonisation and ethical frameworks for digital and AI driven innovations, addressing bias, IP rights, and equitable use in LMICs.
- Expand civil society participation in SR&I governance to ensure accountability, relevance, and community-driven research priorities.

5. Cross-Cutting Threats & Opportunities

- Integrate considerations for antimicrobial resistance (AMR), climate-resilient innovation, and digital ethics into all SR&I investments.
- Ensure interventions proactively address emerging global health, environmental, and technological challenges through inclusive, forward-looking research agendas.

Call to Action: By implementing these measures, G20 leaders can foster a pandemic resilient, inclusive, and equitable global SR&I architecture that delivers tangible benefits for all communities, especially historically marginalized populations, women, persons with disabilities, and rural communities.

Recommendations

To advance inclusive, equitable, and resilient Science, Research, and Innovation (SR&I) globally, we propose the following priority actions, clearly identifying lead responsibility across G20, national governments, multilateral organisations, civil society, and the private sector:

a. Institutionalise Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

Lead responsibility: G20, civil society, national governments, multilateral organisations

- Integrate CBPR into SR&I policy frameworks to ensure research and innovation are community-led and locally relevant.
- Fund capacity-building initiatives for civil society organisations, end-users, and key populations to participate meaningfully in SR&I governance.

b. Strengthen Global South Innovation Ecosystems

Lead responsibility: G20, national governments, private sector

- Invest in R&D infrastructure, talent retention, and rural innovation hubs to reduce geographic and capacity gaps.
- Promote South–South knowledge-sharing platforms to enhance collaboration and reduce dependence on extractive North–South IP regimes.

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c. Ensure Equitable Access & Technology Transfer

Lead responsibility: G20, WTO, WIPO, national governments

- Support open-source innovation, local manufacturing, and technology transfer mechanisms that expand access to lifesaving products.
- Mainstream disability- and gender-responsive design across all technology development to ensure inclusive innovation.

d. Advance Regulatory Harmonisation

Lead responsibility: Regional economic communities, WHO, G20

- Strengthen regional regulatory bodies, digital tools, and mutual recognition agreements to expedite safe product access.
- Provide regulatory science training and twinning arrangements to build capacity across LMICs.

e. Mobilise Innovative Financing

Lead responsibility: G20 finance ministers, multilateral banks, philanthropic sector

- Establish dedicated funding streams for neglected diseases, diagnostics, and pandemic preparedness.
- Leverage blended finance and public-private partnerships to diversify resources and enhance sustainability.

Conclusion:

By adopting these measures, G20 leaders can ensure that SR&I investments are inclusive, equitable, and strategically aligned with global health and development priorities. This

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approach will strengthen resilience, empower historically marginalised communities, and foster a research and innovation ecosystem that delivers tangible benefits to all.

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Policy Brief Summary Table

Thematic Area	Recommended Actions	Lead Responsibility	Expected Impact
Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrate CBPR into SR&I policy frameworks- Fund capacity building for civil society, end-users, and key populations 	G20, civil society, national governments, multilateral organisations	Research and innovation are community-led, locally relevant, and inclusive
Global South Innovation Ecosystems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in R&D infrastructure, talent retention, rural innovation hubs- Promote South–South knowledge-sharing platforms 	G20, national governments, private sector	Strengthened regional innovation capacity; reduced dependency on North–South IP regimes
Equitable Access & Technology Transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support open-source innovation, local manufacturing, and technology transfer- Mainstream disability- and gender-responsive design 	G20, WTO, WIPO, national governments	Improved access to lifesaving products; inclusive and equitable innovation
Regulatory Harmonisation			

Innovative Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen regional regulatory bodies, digital tools, mutual recognition agreements- Provide regulatory science training and twinning arrangements 	Regional economic communities, WHO, G20	outcomes Timely, safe, and equitable access to products; strengthened regulatory capacity in LMICs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish dedicated funding for neglected diseases, diagnostics, and pandemic preparedness. Leverage blended finance and public-private partnerships 	G20 finance ministers, multilateral banks, and the philanthropic sector	Sustainable, diversified financing for priority SR&I areas; enhanced pandemic preparedness

Call to Action:

Adopting these measures will empower G20 leadership to foster an inclusive, equitable, and resilient global SR&I ecosystem that strengthens health systems, supports historically marginalized communities, and delivers tangible societal benefits worldwide.

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Policy Brief: C20 WG13 - Digital & Inclusive Economies

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Introduction

The global South is living through a defining moment. Africa, in particular, is facing the intersecting crises of inequality, climate change, and rapid technological transformation. Yet, we have never been so emboldened and equipped to find solutions rooted in solidarity, equality, legitimacy, and sustainability. This policy brief reflects the deliberations of a globally representative civil society Working Group on Digital and Inclusive Economies (WGDI) under the C20 South Africa. This brief is a result of deliberations born from a broad spectrum of voices that have identified specific avenues for the Department of International Relations and other relevant ministries to take immediately, leading us closer to digital and inclusive economies that leave no one behind.

As the digital revolution accelerates, it must have a bottom-up effect, where the proliferation of modern technology should first benefit and uplift the most vulnerable through prioritising connectivity and training on how to maximise access to digital resources. This brief proposes a curated list of feasible policy changes that can lead to steps to connect rural and indigenous communities by leveraging current international relations to foster digital and private sector collaboration, creating inclusive communities that benefit everyone and endure over time. Our recommendations call for a reframing of the measurement of growth to test growth by the degree to which it promotes inclusive, just, and resilient development. These proposals are informed by previous G20 commitments, particularly the 2024 Rio Leaders' Declaration and the 2025 Seville Commitments, and build upon the legacy of the Brazilian and Indian C20 presidencies.

The challenge

Current economic systems continue to reproduce inequality within and between countries. Many nations in the Global South face mounting debt burdens, exploitative global trade and tax practices, and limited fiscal space for inclusive public investment. At the same time, digital technologies, which could act as levers for empowerment, are primarily shaped by and serve the interests of entities outside our regions. Digital exclusion, extractive data practices, and a limited public digital infrastructure threaten to widen inequality.

Persistent discrimination in all its forms continues to exacerbate global inequalities and hinder economic and social development. In the Global South, these inequities intersect with economic structures to marginalise entire communities. Groups historically excluded, specifically indigenous populations, face systemic barriers to connectivity, let alone accessing finance, digital resources, and economic opportunities.

Without urgent intervention, we risk deepening a model that is unjust, extractive and unsustainable. As civil society, we advocate for solidarity-driven cooperation that recognises that, in practice, sustainable development involves the interdependence of the planet, people and profit. Within this interdependence,

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the economy is an integral part of society, and society, in turn, relies on the environment. This indicates that economic growth occurs within a complex web of social connections. As such, profit-making should not come at the expense of social and environmental sustainability.

Recommendations

The aim of this policy brief is to catalyse that shift by addressing an aspect of inclusivity that prefaces any other policy shift. By connecting rural and indigenous communities, individuals will be empowered to access opportunities introduced by digitalisation, increase efficiency in existing economic models, and add value by realising new sustainable avenues for growth within these communities.

Inclusive Economies

Prioritise inclusive economic policies that centre the needs and agency of marginalised groups.

- Ensure accessibility to digital platforms that promote local economic structures.
- Skills transfer in the form of readily accessible training in native languages on how to optimise use of digital tools. Providing Support initiatives that leverage AI tools:
 - targeted support for the development of assistive and inclusive green local technologies:
 - These can be identified through expos and innovation hubs.
- Design economic interventions that value care work, enable the translation of skills, and foster sustainable livelihoods in sunset industries.

Digital economies

a. Develop digital public infrastructure

i. Create a Sovereign-Backed “Rural & Indigenous Connectivity” SPV + Bond Facility

Purpose: raise upfront capital (regional digital infrastructure bonds) to finance last-mile networks, satellite backhaul, community access points, assistive tech and local content hubs — bonds structured so future digital services tax (DST) receipts or spectrum auction proceeds partially service debt.

Key private partners to engage early:

- Telecom operators (incumbent and regional challengers) for network build & operations.

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- Satellite / LEO providers (e.g., partnership with companies deploying LEO constellations or HTS satellite operators) for immediate backhaul to remote areas.
- Infrastructure investors and regional pension funds for bond buy-in.
- Fintechs & mobile money platforms (for service monetisation & local revenue flows).

Financing levers:

- Partial guarantees/grants from DFIs (AfDB, World Bank, KfW).
- Senior commercial tranches sold to institutional investors.
- Use DST ringfence + spectrum receipts as credit enhancement.

ii. Launch a Public-Private “Community Connectivity Accelerator”

Purpose: incentivise private actors (telcos, ISPs, social enterprises) to roll out community-owned connectivity and local content in indigenous languages with subsidies, tax incentives and a guaranteed revenue-share mechanism.

Key private partners:

- Mobile network operators (for wholesale capacity) and tower companies.
- Local ISPs and small wireless ISPs (for last-mile, community networks).
- Content & assistive tech developers (edtech, audio content in indigenous languages, screen-readers, low-bandwidth apps).
- Impact funds and telecom-focused venture funds (to invest in pilots and scale winners).

Financing levers:

- Capex subsidies from SPV bonds + tax credits for private co-investors.
- Performance-based availability payments (public per-coverage or per-user support).
- Small grants from cultural funds for indigenous language content + DFIs for scaling.

iii. Mandate a 3% National DPI Budget Line + Fast-Track Enabling Regulations

Purpose: institutionalise sustained funding and a regulatory environment that lowers investment friction for private partners and protects sovereign digital sovereignty.

Key private partners:

- Large multiunational organisations, towercos, cloud providers, platform companies with Africa strategies.
- Global infrastructure funds and regional pension funds.
- Technology firms with local development capabilities (for local content & assistive tech).

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- Social enterprises and local SMEs to ensure distribution & community ownership.

Financing levers:

- Direct national budget (3% target) + matching private capital (1:1 or 1:2 preferred leverage).
- Tax incentives and accelerated depreciation for DPI capital expenditures.
- Utilisation of government guarantees to encourage private lending where appropriate.

b. Digital identity systems

Digital identity systems, as a key component of digital public infrastructure (DPI) and digital governance, must be rights-based, inclusive, and voluntary.

- Biometric identification must be undertaken on a privacy-by-design basis, allowing citizens to develop trust in the systems and adopt the new technology. Access to essential services should not depend solely on digital ID, and non-digital alternatives must be guaranteed.
- These DIS can also be the foundation to addressing data abuse, particularly for stateless persons, undocumented individuals, displaced persons, and historically marginalised communities.

c. Digital literacy and skills development

Endorse the Global Digital Skills Compact, co-designed with grassroots civil society, which aims to provide AI fluency and digital and financial literacy training to 10 million girls and youth in rural and peri-urban areas by 2030, encompassing all marginalised populations, including children, persons with disabilities, women, and survivors of technology-related violence. This must include persons with disabilities, with disability-specific curricula, assistive technology integration, and training delivered in accessible formats, including national sign languages and open captioning. Digital upskilling and reskilling efforts must include, be led and co-created with persons with disabilities to avoid further marginalisation. Curricula must include digital rights, safe technology use and accessible design principles. Skills development initiatives must include accessible learning materials and delivery platforms that cater to the needs of persons with disabilities.

d. AI governance and public participation

- Institutionalise deliberative mechanisms (e.g., citizen assemblies) in AI policymaking.
- Establish independent oversight bodies with representation from civil society.
- Ensure that ethical AI development prioritises public benefit, equity, and human rights at its core.
- AI governance frameworks must integrate disability-inclusive principles and ensure participation of persons with disabilities in all stages of design, implementation and oversight. This includes

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safeguards against algorithmic bias, transparency in automated decision-making and the use of universal design and accessible data practices to prevent digital exclusion

e. Technology and knowledge transfer

Reaffirm G20 commitments to open innovation and technology transfer. Establish South-South cooperation platforms for digital innovation. Ensure digital accountability frameworks include mechanisms to monitor accessibility compliance, safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities and enable redress where digital services exclude or discriminate.

f. Data justice and digital sovereignty

Require native led innovation products to locally process data and information to uphold data protection. Develop regional data protection laws that are grounded in community rights and African and Diaspora values. Ensure children, People of African Descent, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable populations benefit from their data and are protected from exploitative use. Capacitate and adequately resource data protection authorities to enable them to not only perform their duties but also be at the cutting edge of issues within their functional areas. Advocate for the inclusion of disability rights representatives in global governance forums on emerging technologies to ensure inclusivity for this rights-based policy design and implementation.

g. Accountability of tech corporations

Establish comprehensive accountability mechanisms for tech companies across their supply chains, particularly regarding labour rights, e-waste, and the extraction of critical minerals. This includes carbon taxes on data centres, with revenues ring-fenced for renewable energy transitions, and extraction taxes on critical minerals, accompanied by mandatory local value addition requirements. These fiscal instruments ensure that the environmental and social costs of digital transformation are internalised rather than externalised to vulnerable communities.

Digitally innovative technologies driven by artificial intelligence (AI) must undergo critical and ethical review, as well as community validation, before being implemented and scaled up for societal use. Such reviews must assess biases in training data and model output to avoid perpetuating inequalities, ensure transparency in AI decision-making for accountability, and adhere to local privacy and data protection regulations by complying with laws such as the Protection of Personal Information Act, No. 4 of 2013 (POPI Act). Without ethical safeguarding, scaling AI-driven technologies risks amplifying harm, perpetuating societal inequalities, alienating marginalised communities, and eroding civic and public trust.

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h. Information integrity

Promote and systematise transparency and accountability of digital platforms. Invest in healthy information ecosystems by implementing content moderation safeguards, promoting algorithmic transparency, and launching media literacy campaigns. Ensure content moderation and media literacy efforts are inclusive of persons with disabilities, including those with sensory, cognitive and communication disabilities, to protect their right to access and share verified information online.

i. Safety and Inclusion by Design in the digital space

In Africa, the digital platform has become the new frontline for the exploitation of children, with online abuse often facilitated by transnational networks that transcend borders. Children are increasingly exposed to grooming, cyberbullying, sextortion, exposure to harmful content, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images - harms that not only violate their rights but have long-term psychological, social, and educational consequences. In some African countries, nearly a fifth of children under 17 reported receiving unsolicited online requests to talk about sex or sexual acts, with one-third of those in South Africa going on to meet the person face-to-face, highlighting both the scale of the risk and the urgent need for systemic intervention.

As digital economies grow, safety and inclusion must be embedded by design. We call for urgent action to integrate child online protection into all national and regional digital policies, grounded in survivor-led insights and a justice-centred approach. This must include harmonised cross-border legislation, accessible and child- and disability-friendly reporting mechanisms, inclusive digital environments, and increased investment in awareness and capacity-building for children, caregivers, educators, and frontline workers.

Governments and technology companies must move beyond reactive measures and work collaboratively to co-create protective digital infrastructures with historically excluded groups, including children with disabilities and survivors of online harm. We urge Member States to adopt and implement the AU Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, which outlines ten strategic goals, among them, strengthening criminal justice systems, fostering corporate accountability, investing in prevention and reporting infrastructure, and establishing a continent-wide child online safety fund.

This is not a call for charity, but a demand for justice. A just and inclusive digital economy must be built on the safety, dignity, and human rights of children, recognising that their lived experiences and leadership are essential to shaping secure and equitable digital futures for all.

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Digitally enabled economies

j. Standards and regulations of digital tools

Create globally recognised, equity-focused standards for digital tools used in education, health, governance, and finance. This includes establishing and endorsing a Global Artificial Intelligence Yearly Assessment mechanism as a universal ethical auditing protocol to certify digital tools in education, healthcare, finance, and governance. The assessment should include community feedback, algorithmic audit trails, equity metrics, universal accessibility standards, and digital rights compliance. In developing equity-focused standards for digital tools, particularly in education, health, governance and finance, it is essential to embed persons with disabilities in the design, testing and evaluation of these tools. Standards must include accessibility-by-design protocols and enforceable requirements for inclusive user interfaces to ensure usability by persons with varying disabilities from the outset.

k. Digital government for inclusion

Invest in digital public services designed for universal access and accessibility, with a focus on participatory, transparent, and accountable digital governance, particularly in regions where the informal sector is a major economic driver. This includes upskilling public sector incumbents to process and leverage data for improved public service delivery. Digital government solutions should be developed through co-creation processes with historically excluded groups, including persons with disabilities. This includes ensuring that digital public services are available in accessible formats (e.g. sign language video interfaces, screen reader compatibility, captioning), and that digital literacy training is accessible to all population groups.

I. Support for inclusive innovation ecosystems

Fund women, youth and disability -led tech enterprises across social tiers. Embed persons with disabilities in the design, governance, and evaluation of innovation ecosystems. - Funding and capacity building initiatives should intentionally target innovation by persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. This means providing grant and procurement opportunities, accessible mentorship platforms and removing structural barriers to participation in tech ecosystems, including communication accessibility, adaptive technology and digital infrastructure.

m. Sustainable digital development

Promote and invest in design for longevity in digital infrastructure, reduce tech waste, and ensure digital development aligns with environmental justice goals. Sustainability must be considered alongside equity. Digital infrastructure projects should incorporate disability-inclusive sustainability indicators, including e-waste management practices that support accessible device recycling and distribution to low-income populations with disabilities.

The purpose of the recommendations listed above is to contribute to the body of knowledge of shifting from GDP to well-being economies. Those that centre on human development, with measurable indicators aligned across health, education, social protection, and ecological sustainability.

This transition requires parallel reforms in public finance frameworks, gradually shifting from GDP-based fiscal targets to well-being-oriented budgetary allocations as these indicators mature and gain international recognition.

Conclusion

Our recommendations reflect a vision for a just transition towards digital and inclusive economies that work for all. Grounded in solidarity, driven by equality, and committed to sustainability, these proposals demand not only bold policymaking but also a reimagining of power, ownership, and participation in the global economy. We call on the G20 and its member states to heed these calls, not as charity, but as a matter of justice. We are not asking to be included in someone else's economy. We are building the economy of the future together.

This future economy must be co-created with historically excluded groups - including persons with disabilities - whose lived experiences, innovations and leadership are critical to shaping inclusive, accessible and sustainable systems. Their full participation is not optional; it is essential to ensuring economic justice for all.

Unlike abuse that happens due to physical contact, online exploitation and abuse draws perpetrators from across the globe, hence the need for cross-border collaborations in tackling the problem, from policies that protect children, to child-friendly reporting options available, harmonised sentencing laws to hold perpetrators to account. Technology is a rapidly evolving field, and hence, there is an urgent need to escalate learning and sharing of best practices in prevention and response measures across countries and incorporating the lived experiences of young adults who have gone through this to ensure support systems and other mechanisms are aligned with the realities and experiences of victim/survivors.

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There is an urgent need to ensure that national policies align with broader frameworks for preventing online exploitation. Investing in children, caregivers, and parents' awareness and training on how to remain safe online is paramount

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G20 Civil 20 Working Group 14 | EJT - ECS!

Energy Just Transition, Environment and Climate Sustainability!

Policy Brief Three [3].

Advancing Energy Just Transition | Environment and Climate Sustainability.

PREPARED BY:

**The G20 | Civil Society 20 Working Group [WG]14:
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Executive Summary:

Despite ambitious declarations, current climate trajectories suggest a world headed for 2.6°C of warming, far above the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C threshold. Inaction and fragmented efforts risk deepening global inequalities and unleashing irreversible damage to our ecosystems and economies.

The impacts disproportionately affect women, youth, indigenous peoples, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ groups. South Africa's G20 Presidency presents a historic opportunity to champion justice, social safeguards, and a people-centric climate, as well as a Energy Just Transition rooted in solidarity, equality, and sustainability.

The sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC-AR6 2023] reiterates that anthropogenic greenhouse gas [GHG] emissions have exacerbated global warming, pushing global mean temperature above pre-industrial levels by 1.1°C. GHG emissions continue to increase due to unsustainable energy and land use practices, as well as unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Further, the report warns that without urgent action, the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement is likely to be breached.

This brief, reflecting civil society priorities, outlines the key considerations for the Energy Just Transition, Environment, and Climate Sustainability during the South African G20 Presidency. It advances the current theme of "solidarity, equality, and sustainability" and acknowledges the African Union Agenda 2063 as the continent's blueprint and vehicle for sustainable development, climate resilience, and green industrialization.

Moreover, it builds on declarations of the previous three G20 Presidencies [Indonesia, India, Brazil] and urges the G20 to champion equitable and inclusive climate action, as the group represents ~85% of the global GDP and two-thirds of the population and is well-placed to lead on development-focused energy transition.

This policy brief, grounded in intersectional analysis including desktop research, case studies, focus group discussions [FGDs], expert interviews, and consultative webinars, offers key recommendations to advance an inclusive and justice-people centric environment and climate sustainability.

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Recommendations:

These recommendations cover the broad aspects of Governance Reforms, Legal and Policy Instruments, Investment Priorities, and Civil Society Programmatic actions. These aspects have been further elucidated in the Recommendations of this policy brief.

1. Energy Security and Sovereignty:

Establish binding G20 governance frameworks for critical minerals to eradicate energy poverty and accelerate universal access to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy—channeling revenues into tripling renewable energy capacity and doubling energy efficiency by 2030.

2. Inclusive and Rights-Based Transition:

Ensure inclusivity in the transition by upholding Free, Prior, and Informed Consent [FPIC], technology, knowledge sharing, and capacity building for climate and energy planning, integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems [IKS], and embedding gender-responsive frameworks, while supporting direct and indirect workers, value chains, informal economies, women, and vulnerable groups.

3. Sustainable Financing:

Advance reparative, equitable, and non-debt-creating finance, promote access to transition capital. Further, support the joint development of low-carbon technologies and frameworks to enable MSME diversification and decarbonization—underpinned by strong accountability, transparency, and community participation.

4. Environment and Biodiversity Conservation:

Adopt international treaties to scale up community-led conservation and ecosystem restoration, eradicate toxic substances such as plastics, pesticides, and mercury through a global moratorium, and advance organic alternatives alongside sustainable waste management strategies. Enforce policies against capitalist extractivism, including ocean mining, to safeguard biodiversity, oceans, and the quality of water and air.

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1 Introduction

Climate change has devastated communities globally, with developing nations bearing the heaviest burden. Between 1993 and 2022, 9,400 extreme weather events caused over 765,000 deaths and USD 4.2 trillion in economic losses according to the Climate Risk Index. Recent disasters illustrate this crisis: floods in Central Texas killed 135 people, and 102 died in South Africa's Eastern Cape Province during June-July 2025.

South Africa has faced cyclones, floods, and mudslides that expose infrastructure vulnerabilities and disproportionately impact poor, rural, and Black communities—particularly women who face intensified food insecurity, displacement, and health risks. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report warns that water stress, heat stress, and desertification will persist even if global warming is limited to 1.5°C. For developing countries, climate impacts compound existing challenges, including energy poverty and unemployment.

Current environmental disruptions—shifting rainfall, rising temperatures, and extreme weather—are reshaping ecosystems and livelihoods globally. Unlike historical climate shifts that occurred over millennia, today's unprecedented changes unfold within decades, driven by fossil fuel combustion, deforestation, mining, and industrial agriculture. Climate policies must address the full spectrum of barriers and potential vulnerabilities that people with disabilities, women, and historically excluded marginalised communities face, and risk reinforcing or creating new barriers. There is an urgent need for research that includes first-hand experiences of people with disabilities, allowing policymakers to create inclusive solutions that go beyond technical or economic responses. For this, their participation is needed so that policies have direct relevance for the actual experience of these communities.

Fossil fuels dominate the energy landscape, accounting for ~80% of global primary energy and contributing ~75% of GHG emissions and ~90% of CO2 emissions, despite renewables meeting 30% of electricity needs. As of 2024, 737 million people globally [650+ million in Africa] lack electricity access, while 2 billion lack clean cooking facilities.

The solution requires an Energy Just Transition [EJT]—an equity-focused shift to renewable systems embedding social justice, participatory governance, and equitable benefit distribution. However, implementation faces barriers including inadequate planning, financing gaps, over-indebtedness, and social inequalities, particularly in the Global South. A poorly managed transition could be as devastating as climate change itself, making the G20's leadership crucial for ensuring a just, people-centric energy transformation that protects vulnerable communities and workers while achieving universal clean energy access.

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Climate disasters deepen inequalities because of the disproportionate way in which they affect marginalised communities such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ groups. In climate-induced disasters, the crisis of social reproduction, the daily and generational labour of sustaining life, becomes a focal point. Women bear the brunt of unpaid care work, which intensifies during climate emergencies. Climate finance contributions and advocacy must therefore be geared towards meeting the needs and interests of the most marginalized communities.

Much as science has advanced our understanding of current climate realities and origin, the fact remains that the impact of climate change on our lives will be unbearable, irreversible, and environmentally unsustainable if temperatures rise to a global average of 2 degrees Celsius.

2. Issue Analysis:

Despite 30 years of global climate treaties, G20 member states consistently fail to meet targets, with only a handful having legally binding net-zero commitments. Progress is hampered by conflicting interests prioritizing profit over environmental protection and marginalized communities, plus inadequate stakeholder consultations between decision-makers and affected populations.

Climate disasters exacerbate historical inequalities rooted in colonialism, capitalism, racism, and sexism, disproportionately impacting poor communities lacking adaptive resources. The climate crisis interconnects with poverty, unemployment, and inequality, requiring integrated solutions addressing social, gender, and economic justice rather than isolated environmental approaches. It is of utmost importance that the budget and resource mobilisation for climate disasters in each country make provision for historically excluded groups such as people with disabilities, single women households, the elderly, rural women, people in informal settlements, households run by orphaned children, and LGBTQ+ communities. Climate change deepens inequalities and disproportionately impacts various social groups, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, rural communities, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ groups. This calls for intersectional climate justice and the institutionalization of feminist-responsive climate governance, given that women shoulder the heavy burden of household social reproduction.[1]

[1] Some of the regional and international instruments and commitments to consider include the UNFCCC [1992], Paris Agreement [2015], Sendai Framework [2015–2030], CBD & Kunming-Montreal [2022], ILO Guidelines on Just Transition [2015], CEDAW GR37 [2018], AU Climate Change Strategy [2022–2032],

Africa Renewable Energy Initiative [AREI], SADC Climate Change Strategy [2015], SADC Protocol on Energy [1996] with a special emphasis on the NCDs.

In climate-induced disasters, the crisis of social reproduction, the daily and generational labour of sustaining life, becomes a focal point. Women bear the brunt of unpaid care work, which intensifies during climate emergencies. Much as science has advanced our understanding of current climate realities and origin, the fact remains that the impact of climate change on our lives will be unbearable, irreversible, and environmentally unsustainable if temperatures rise to a global average of 2 degrees Celsius.

While SDGs 13, 14, and 15 provide frameworks for climate justice, they face threats from capitalist extractivism that degrades ecosystems and undermines indigenous knowledge. In South Africa's Marikana mining community, residents report severe environmental and health impacts, including chromium-polluted water, toxic air quality, miscarriages, skin rashes, and respiratory problems linked to mining activities.

Indigenous communities face appropriation of their knowledge and intellectual property by researchers while being excluded from decision-making. They demand respect for Indigenous Knowledge Systems [IKS] and Intellectual Property Rights [IPR], protection of environmental defenders, socio-ecological audits for extractive projects, and the right to say 'NO' or 'YES' to new mining operations targeting critical transition minerals.

G20 states must recalibrate commitments toward climate science and equity imperatives for a fairer, greener global economy.

The Key Priority Areas for the C20 WG 14

Figure 1: The diagram below presents a summary of the key priority areas for the Energy Just Transition, Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group.

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3. Summary of the Priority Areas - Environment and Climate Sustainability:

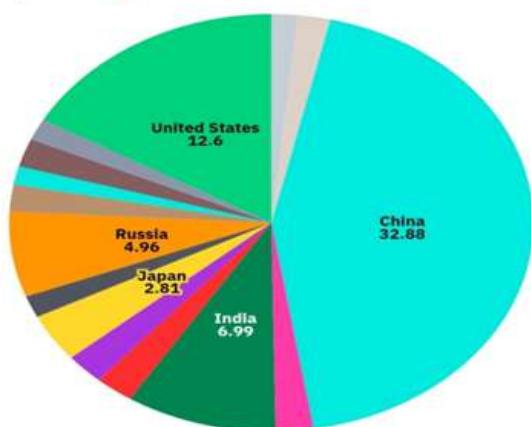
South Africa's G20 environmental priorities highlight imperative action to safeguard biodiversity and ecosystems amid escalating climate threats. Key concerns include land degradation, desertification, and drought driven by unsustainable mining and agriculture, which jeopardize food security and disenfranchise rural women. Oceans face mounting pressure from pollution, plastic waste, and industrial exploitation, while freshwater resources are strained by climate change, population growth, and mining demands. Air pollution and weak climate governance threaten global health, and toxic chemicals from mining and agriculture contaminate ecosystems. South Africa also, unequivocally, advocates for climate finance reform that moves beyond concessional loans and debt to reparations and grants; genuine just transitions to fight existential energy poverty, and the protection of indigenous knowledge systems. This calls for inclusive governance and sustainable development rooted in equity and ecological integrity. As a flagship G20 Legacy Project, the Rhino Renaissance Campaign epitomizes South Africa's commitment to reversing biodiversity loss by restoring rhino populations, empowering local communities, and reasserting global leadership in conservation through coordinated national action and innovative wildlife protection strategies.

Despite annual global treaties and cooperation for the past three decades to reduce carbon emissions, member states fall short of meeting their yearly targets and global goals, as illustrated and summarized in the World Economic Report, 2025, as follows:

CO2 Emissions by Country, 2022

The top 15 countries by their percentage contributions to global CO2 emissions

China (32.88%)
United States (12.6%)
India (6.99%)
Russia (4.96%)
Japan (2.81%)
Iran (2.71%)
Germany (2.48%)
South Korea (2.47%)
Saudi Arabia (2.46%)
Canada (2.45%)
Mexico (2.44%)
Turkey (2.43%)
Brazil (2.42%)
South Africa (2.41%)



Source: [Worldometer](https://www.worldometers.info)

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Globally, 14 out of 15 of the largest emitters are G20 countries, and only a handful of G20 countries have legally binding net-zero targets with detailed transition plans. Climate Transparency [1] reports that while numerous countries have stepped up their efforts to cut emissions in their Nationally Determined Contributions [NDCs], the collective level of ambition remains insufficient to meet the 1.5°C global warming threshold. The seminal Global Stocktake on NDCs was adopted at COP28, and in 2025, Countries party to the Paris Agreement are expected to present their updated reflective reports at COP30. At the time of writing, only three countries, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, had updated their NDCs.[2] South Africa's cabinet has adopted the NDCs, although they are still subject to public consultations.

In their 2025 NDCs, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and South Africa each underscore the urgency of climate action while grappling with distinct national challenges. Argentina's NDC 3.0 accentuates a just transition, integrating human rights, equity, and biodiversity goals, while calling for stronger oversight and decentralised energy systems. Brazil's updated NDC presents a bold vision for 2035 rooted in "Climate Justice," anchored by its Pact for Ecological Transformation and a commitment to end deforestation by 2030, with absolute emissions caps and a shift toward a regenerative bioeconomy. Mexico's strategy positions climate action as a pathway to prosperity, focusing on inclusive development, rural electrification, and clean transport, with sectoral dialogues shaping its socially inclusive NDC 3.0. South Africa's NDC integrates adaptation, mitigation, and loss-and-damage frameworks, which set clear targets for 2026–2035 and reinforce its commitment to a net-zero transition by 2050, all while navigating climate vulnerabilities and equity concerns.

Generally, there is still a lack of maximum consensus on 'who, where, and how' of climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. This is due to clashing interests that put profit for the few at the expense of the protection of natural resources, marginalised, and the working-class poor. Furthermore, there are inadequate national and global consultations among stakeholders - the decision-makers, duty-holders, and the affected communities. This paralyses sustainable solutions to address climate change and environmental sustainability.

The goal is to reduce risks from the harmful effects of climate change, such as sea-level rise, more intense extreme weather events, food insecurity, land degradation, ill-health, water, and air pollution. G20 Member States must recalibrate their commitments and investments in line with the climate science and equity imperatives to reduce emissions and in shaping a fairer and 'greener' global economy.

[1] See Climate Policy Implementation Check briefs. <https://www.climate-transparency.org/implementation-check>

[2] See Climate Policy Implementation Check briefs. <https://www.climate-transparency.org/implementation-check>

4. Summary of the Priority Areas - The Energy Just Transition

The Energy Just Transition [EJT] agenda presents a multidimensional challenge that demands coordinated action across energy systems, social structures, and economic frameworks. At its core, the transition seeks to reconcile climate imperatives with the realities of energy poverty, employment disruption, gender inequality, and industrial transformation, while ensuring that infrastructure and innovation are equipped to support long-term resilience. The key priority areas for the EJT Working Group include Energy Security and Climate Change; Universal Access to Clean, Affordable, and Sustainable Energy by 2030 | Eliminating Energy Poverty; People and Worker Centric Transition; Gender and Social Inclusion for Energy Justice; Industrial Decarbonisation with inclusion of MSME; Sustainable Infrastructure; Technology and Innovation; Financing and Governance

Fossil fuel reserves remain dominant but are finite and geopolitically concentrated, creating vulnerabilities in global supply chains. The transition to renewable energy creates a new dependency on critical minerals essential for clean technologies. Electric vehicles require 6x the mineral inputs of conventional cars, while wind plants need 9x more minerals than gas-fired plants. Global renewable capacity grew 15% in 2024, primarily solar-driven. However, achieving the UNFCCC commitment to triple renewable capacity by 2030 requires 16% annual growth—a challenging acceleration from current levels.

Africa possesses 60% of global solar potential but accounts for only 1% of installed capacity, well below the African Union's 300GW target for 2030. The transition also increases mineral dependency for lithium, cobalt, and rare earths. The top three producers control over 75% of global output. Since 2010, mineral requirements per power generation unit have risen by 50%. Renewable deployment faces additional constraints, which include high land footprints [for utility-scale installations] and intermittency issues [requiring storage solutions]. Additionally, transport electrification through EVs and green hydrogen accelerates critical mineral demand.

Linked closely to these challenges is SDG 7, which calls for universal access to clean, affordable, and sustainable energy by 2030. However, energy poverty remains entrenched, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The IEA projects that USD 30 billion annually will be required until 2030 for universal electricity access, with USD 20 billion [67%] specifically allocated to sub-Saharan Africa. The 2023 New Delhi G20 Declaration committed to triple global renewable power capacity and double energy efficiency improvement

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rates by 2030, and in 2025, the Dar es Salaam Declaration, endorsed by 48 African countries, committed to expanding electricity access. Despite policy momentum, SDG 7 progress remains critically uneven across regions. For instance, while Egypt and Algeria have close to 100% electricity access, there are countries in Africa that have less than 25% electricity access, such as South Sudan [6%], Democratic Republic of Congo [22%], Chad [12%], and Niger [20%], to name a few. The SDG 7 Tracker Report 2025 underscores the need for fundamental shifts in production, distribution, and consumption of energy, underpinned by investments, enabling policies, innovation, and collaboration among governments, the private sector, international organizations, and civil society. The G20 must address the USD 20 billion annual financing gaps in sub-Saharan Africa while ensuring equitable access progression across the 94-point disparity range in African electricity access rates.

Globally, an estimated [67 million](#) people are employed in the energy sector [including energy supply, power sector, end-use efficiency, and vehicle manufacturing], with approximately 8.2 million in oil and 4.1 million in natural gas. In India, an estimated 13 million people are engaged in the coal ecosystem. According to [Vasudha Foundation's Power Outlook Series](#), 17% are part of the formal workforce, while 83% are engaged informally. Around half a million people are engaged as mine workers across ~350 coal mines. Further, South Africa's coal value chain supports over 120,000 direct jobs and countless indirect livelihoods. Therefore, a people and worker-centric transition is essential to ensure reskilling and upskilling of the current workforce employed in the fossil-fuel economy and conventional energy systems. The principle of "no one should be left behind" must be the backbone of the transition journey, especially for informal workers and those employed across the value chains of the various sectors.

According to [the International Renewable Energy Agency \[IRENA\]](#), women make up about 32% of the renewable energy workforce, compared to 22% in the broader energy sector, indicating that while women are better represented in renewables, they still face barriers in technical and representation roles. Additionally, over 60% of women in 'brown' energy jobs face significant skill gaps and job losses when attempting to transition to green roles, reflecting systemic barriers rooted in [unequal access to STEM education, unpaid care burdens, and limited leadership opportunities](#). Moreover, women make up only 15% of the global mining workforce across the top 100 mining companies and are working across the value chain of the fossil-fuel industries. With limited representation and few gender-sensitive safety nets, women—already carrying disproportionate care responsibilities—are highly vulnerable to transition risks. Energy transitions must address gender gaps and community marginalization by embedding women's leadership, participation, and access to finance, assets, and skills, while recognizing wider social and economic impacts.

Industry accounts for [approximately 20% of direct global CO₂ emissions](#), largely from heavy manufacturing and fuel combustion. Decarbonizing industry, particularly industrial energy and electrification, is vital for the global climate goals. It is important to note that within the industrial sector, [Micro, Small, and Medium](#)

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[Enterprises \[MSMEs\]](#) contribute up to 70% of total employment worldwide, especially in emerging economies. About 40% of formal MSMEs in developing countries face a [financing](#) and technical gap. Targeted financing, technology transfer, and capacity-building initiatives are needed to ensure that these enterprises are not left behind. Therefore, mainstreaming just transitions in high-employment value chains, especially those with strong MSME participation, is crucial.

Existing infrastructure in both developed and developing countries is increasingly unable to withstand the rising frequency and intensity of climate disasters such as floods, droughts, and hurricanes. Failures in infrastructure cause severe losses of life, livelihoods, and economic assets. Building sustainable, climate-resilient infrastructure, therefore, forms the physical backbone of this transition. It is essential for energy and urban expansion, particularly in the Global South, where pressures to meet development needs and withstanding environmental shocks are greatest.

Technology and innovation are key engines of this transition forward. Clean energy systems and industrial processes must be adaptable, affordable, and relevant to local contexts. Therefore, technology transfers that “fit the local context” will be essential for self-reliance and economic development of the Global South. Preserving and promoting indigenous and traditional technologies is also vital, as these often embody low-carbon and sustainable principles. Examples include passive solar design in India’s Himalayan states, which reduces heating and cooling energy needs, and biogas digesters that convert organic waste into energy. The G20 could facilitate global sharing of such knowledge and foster peer learning through exposure visits.

Climate financing needs to be widened to go beyond a mitigation-centric approach and to include the aspects of justice and transition risk reduction. Within the broader framework of climate finance, emphasis is needed on equitable, accessible, and non-debt-creating transition finance. Further, it will be beneficial to establish dedicated funds for underrepresented regions, vulnerable groups, and women, as well as to create mechanisms for participatory budgeting and monitoring.

In 2024, the [International Monetary Fund estimated](#) that Emerging Markets and Developing Economies [EMDEs] in Asia-Pacific alone would need USD 1.1 trillion annually for climate mitigation and adaptation; however, actual investments fall short by over USD 0.8 trillion. In 2022, only one-third of funds to developing countries were grants, with the rest in loans that add to the existing financial burden. Least developed countries spent [USD 59 billion on debt servicing in 2022, twice the USD 28 billion](#) they received in climate finance. Financing frameworks must also account for the costs of power plant repurposing, mine restoration, and worker transition support. Dedicated funds for these purposes are essential, alongside participatory budgeting and monitoring mechanisms to ensure accountability. Further, a well-designed governance framework can steer the transition in a way that upholds the rights and needs of all stakeholders, especially

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those most vulnerable to its impacts. An effective governance strategy for a just transition will require participatory decision-making, transparency, and accountability.

5. Recommendations:

Building on the issue analysis, it is clear that a successful Energy Just Transition depends on translating commitments into concrete, inclusive, and accountable actions. The following recommendations seek to align energy transition needs, global climate commitments, with social and economic justice by prioritising universal access to clean energy, protecting the rights and livelihoods of workers and communities, advancing gender equality, and ensuring equitable financing and governance. These recommendations aim to help G20 members and partners shape transition pathways that are fair, inclusive, and sustainable.

5.1 Governance Reforms

5.1.1 G20 Member States must domesticate climate commitments into binding instruments, with inclusive indicators across energy, land, water, and air, with peer review mechanisms to monitor progress on Nationally Determined Contributions [NDCs].

5.1.2 Integrate the needs of women, youth, rural communities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and LGBTIQ+ groups in climate and energy policies at all levels with their active participation

5.1.3 Institutionalize feminist-responsive climate governance and recognize the burden of unpaid care work on women in responding to climate-induced disasters.

5.1.4 Eradicate energy poverty by accelerating universal access to clean, affordable, sustainable energy for all by 2030.

5.1.5 Promote inclusivity in transition by supporting direct and indirect workers, value chains, informal economies, women, and vulnerable groups.

5.1.6 Advance sustainable climate and EJT finance and governance through equitable, accessible, and non-debt-creating mechanisms, while strengthening accountability and transparency for robust transition and community participation.

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5.2 Legal and Policy Instruments:

5.2.1 Uphold Free, Prior, and Informed Consent [FPIC] in all climate, including energy projects, and respect Indigenous intellectual property rights.

5.2.2 Integrate Indigenous knowledge into biodiversity, mitigation, energy, and adaptation policy and legislative frameworks.

5.2.3 Shift from loan-based climate finance to transparent, equitable, accessible, non-debt-creating, and cancellation; reparative funding and taxing the super-rich; establish dedicated funds for underrepresented regions, vulnerable groups, and women.

5.3 Universal Access to Clean, Affordable, and Sustainable Energy by 2030 | Eliminating Energy Poverty:

5.3.1 Support countries in tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030 through technology transfer, typology development, financial and knowledge-sharing, including regional grid integration [e.g., One Sun One World One Grid].

5.3.2 Phase out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies by 2030 fairly and equitably without compromising energy access and SDG7. Enhance energy security by tripling renewable energy and doubling energy efficiency by 2030.

5.3.3 Develop a fair, equitable, and transparent framework for critical minerals to prevent exploitation of local communities and ecosystems.

5.3.4 Embed Energy Sovereignty principles in all transition pathways and support African countries in achieving 100% electricity and energy access by 2030 through technical, financial, and capacity-building support for decentralized renewable energy and clean cooking.

5.3.5 Create a comprehensive framework to protect workers from unintended consequences of low-carbon transitions, including a dedicated fund for transition risks in both the Global North and South.

5.3.6 Adopt gender-responsive policy frameworks at every stage of EJT planning and ensure representation in decision-making to promote women's leadership and entrepreneurship.

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5.3.7 Promote inclusive sustainable water management in mining and agriculture to conserve freshwater for domestic use and ecosystems.

5.3.8 Develop integrated air quality systems and enforce legally binding frameworks to reduce emissions from transport and industry.

5.3.9 Implement inclusive land policies to empower women farmers through collective ownership and market access.

5.3.10 Enforce a G20 moratorium on ocean mining and safeguard coastal communities, including compensation for oil spills and inclusive consultations on blue economy proposals.

5.3.11 Adopt the Minamata Convention and ban hazardous substances like mercury and pesticides; enforce stricter controls on plastic waste and promote organic alternatives in artisanal gold mining and agriculture.

5.4 Investment Priorities: Sustainable Infrastructure and Technological Innovation:

5.4.1 Scale up community-led conservation and ecosystem restoration; enforce policies against capitalist extractivism to safeguard people, oceans, and the planet.

5.4.2 Channel resources towards G20 legacy projects such as the Rhino Renaissance Campaign to protect endangered species globally.

5.4.3 Jointly develop low-carbon technologies and frameworks to support MSME decarbonization, diversification, and access to capital.

5.4.4 Invest in climate-resilient infrastructure that accounts for physical and transition risks, prioritizing decentralized solutions to all historically excluded and marginalised communities.

5.4.5 Prioritize technologies for impact over scale, such as energy storage solutions.

5.4.6 Promote circular economy principles [3Rs: recycle, reuse, reduce] 5Rs: refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle through training and technological innovation, especially for critical minerals and metals.

5.4.7 Create financing channels that support both infrastructure and social protection, including 'green' skilling, reskilling, and upskilling.

5.4.8 Allocate national budget resources to train human and environmental rights activists in water and air quality monitoring and include all stakeholders affected, regardless of their gender, gender identity, rural or urban location, origin, age, or mobility, in water and air quality monitoring.

5.4.9 Invest in climate-smart agriculture and time-saving technologies to free up women's time for economic activities.

5.4.10 Support strategic research and public awareness on biodiversity, ocean, circular economies, and marine spatial planning.

5.5 Civil Society: Programmatic Actions:

5.5.1 Train environmental activists and communities to monitor and hold duty bearers accountable for implementing ratified policies and treaties – hold power to promise!

5.5.2 Promote knowledge-sharing on sustainable practices and build capacity on biodiversity using intersectional approaches across the G20.

5.5.3 Mobilize sustained funding for community-based organizations addressing gender-based violence and economic empowerment in mining-affected and marginalized communities.

5.5.4 Build capacity for environmental activists, duty holders in government, and affected communities, especially historically excluded and marginalised communities, to monitor water, land, air quality, and health impacts, especially in areas affected by industrial mining activities.

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6. Call to Action:

South Africa's G20 Presidency offers a timely opportunity to catalyze a new era of environmental diplomacy hinged on a bold and justice-people-driven agenda that is inclusive, resilient, and rooted in equality and solidarity.

The climate crisis cannot be resolved without confronting the structural foundations of environmental capitalism, racism, and sexism. The EJT agenda is not a singular challenge but a constellation of interlinked issues and requires a holistic framework that integrates energy security, universal access, green skilling, gender equity, fair finance, resilient infrastructure, and context-sensitive innovation.

Only through such an integrated approach can the transition be truly just in delivering climate action that uplifts communities, strengthens economies, and safeguards the planet. Only through such an integrated approach can the transition be truly just in delivering climate action that uplifts all communities regardless of economic status, ability, origin, age, gender, gender identity, strengthens economies, and safeguards the planet for all who live on it

The G20 Ministerial Meeting to be hosted for the first time on African soil offers a historic opportunity to shift power, restore dignity, and place the needs of the 90% at the center of global climate governance. Future generations will judge us by our courage to act—not our intentions.

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Final Policy Brief: WG 4 POVERTY ALLEVIATION & FOOD SUSTAINABILITY

Endorsed: October 2025

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Executive Summary

South Africa holds the presidency of the Group of 20 (G20) from December 2024 to November 2025 with the theme Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability. This marks a historic milestone, as South Africa is both the only African country within the G20 and the first from the continent to preside over this global forum.

Poverty alleviation and food security has been identified as one of the high level priorities of South Africa's G20 Presidency. This is informed, firstly, by South Africa's Constitution that puts poverty eradication as top priority in addressing past legacies created by past and repressive apartheid regimes and food security for all and, secondly, the high levels of global food insecurity, which exacerbate inequality and hinder growth and development that the G20 countries collectively aim to achieve.

Context and Strategic Proposal

As the G20 confronts converging crises—including hunger, malnutrition, environmental degradation, and volatile financial markets—South Africa has tabled a pivotal proposal: the creation of a dedicated **G20 Task Force on Food Security**. The Working Group fully endorses this initiative, recognizing its potential to catalyze coordinated, evidence-based action.

Scope of the Task Force

The proposed Task Force will undertake in-depth studies and priority mapping across three critical domains:

- **Systemic Interlinkages:** Exploring how hunger, malnutrition, biodiversity loss, environmental damage, and climate change intersect and reinforce one another.
- **Market Dynamics:** Assessing how global trade and commodity-price volatility influence domestic food prices and household resilience.
- **Policy Innovation:** Identifying regional responses that build locally rooted resilience while addressing transboundary drivers of food-system fragility.

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Building on G20 Legacy

This initiative draws on lessons from prior G20 efforts—such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the Deccan High-Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition—to shape regionally tailored strategies that reinforce food-system resilience.

C20 Contribution: Three Pillars of Action

Within this broader G20 framework, **Working Group 4 of the C20** will contribute a concise policy brief organized around three integrated pillars:

1. Integrated Social Protection:

Linking cash-transfer programmes to improved nutrition and health outcomes.

2. Climate-Smart & Gender-Responsive Agriculture:

Supporting smallholders—especially women and youth—with resilient inputs, training, and market access.

3. Inclusive Value Chains & Digital Finance:

Reducing post-harvest losses and expanding access to mobile-based credit and insurance.

Strategic Focus and Impact

To ensure continuity and coherence, Working Group 4's scope will center on **poverty alleviation and food sustainability**. By 2028, the following key objectives will be reviewed and worked through pilot regions, this brief aims to:

- Reduce extreme poverty by implementing strategies to reduce poverty and improve living standards at least 20 % in target communities through nutrition-linked social protection.
- Guarantee sustainable access to a diverse, nutritious diet for 50 million vulnerable people.
- Increase smallholder yields by 15 % via climate-smart inputs and gender-responsive training.

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- Cut post-harvest losses by 30 % through strategic infrastructure and cold-chain investments. This will also promote practices that enhance productivity while protecting the environment.
- Expand digital financial inclusion to 70 % of participating smallholders, opening affordable credit and savings pathways.

Past G20 outcomes related to food security and nutrition, such as the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty and the Deccan High Level Principles on Food Security and Nutrition will be considered.

Context and Rationale

According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), global hunger rose sharply from 2019 to 2021 and persisted at nearly the same level for to2023. About 733 million people faced hunger in 2023. This means the world is not on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, Zero Hunger.

The global prevalence of undernourishment in the world in 2023 was reported to be 9.1%, persisting at nearly the same level for three consecutive years after risen sharply in the wake of the Covid -19 pandemic. Progress was made towards reducing undernourishment in some subregions of the world, but hunger is still on the rise in Western Asia, the Caribbean, and most subregionsof Africa, with 20.4% prevalence of hunger in Africa, which is far above the world's average. The African continent remains off track to meetthe food security and nutrition SDG tagets and the Malabo Declaration targets of ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2025. As a leading forum for global economic and financial cooperation, the G20 is well placed to pursue coordinated action to tackle the ongoing food insecurity crisis while complementing other global and regional efforts.

Bringing together the G20 members and partners, the Task Force on Food Security will ensure coordinated action to enhance food security by gocusing on interventions, measures, and institutions to address high and volatile food prices. These are expected to include the macroeconomic stabilization measures, financial gaps, and conflict-and-climate related interventions that are needed to improve the resilience of food systems and access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. Among others, the Task Force will place a sharp focus on high food prices, which have a negative impact on access to food, especially in developing countries and particularly among the most vulnerable segments of the population.

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In doing the above, we wish to state upfront that our brief will encapsulate and underpinned by the following :

- **Global Snapshot:** More than 600 million people suffer from chronic hunger, and nearly one in ten live on less than \$1.90 a day. Sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest rates of extreme poverty and undernourishment.
- **Drivers of Vulnerability:** Conflict, climate change, and volatile food prices erode household purchasing power and diminish agricultural yields. Smallholder farmers—who produce up to 70 % of the world's food—face barriers to credit, inputs, and technical services.
- **Policy Gap:** Existing ; Only a minority of governments link cash transfers to dietary quality, and less than 20 % of smallholders have formal access to digital financial services.
- **C20 Alignment:** Our mandate supports the G20's "Leave No One Behind" pledge and directly contributes to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

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Contextualizing the Crisis for Policy Action

Global hunger remains alarmingly high, with 733 million people affected in 2023 and undernourishment persisting at 9.1%—a plateau sustained since the COVID-19 pandemic. Sub-Saharan Africa faces the highest burden, with hunger affecting 20.4% of the population, far above the global average. These figures confirm that the world is not on track to meet SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), nor the Malabo Declaration targets of ending hunger and malnutrition by 2025.

This crisis is compounded by entrenched poverty: nearly one in ten people globally live on less than \$1.90 a day. In Africa, extreme poverty and food insecurity are deeply interlinked, driven by systemic vulnerabilities such as conflict, climate shocks, and volatile food prices. These factors erode household purchasing power, disrupt agricultural productivity, and disproportionately impact smallholder farmers—who produce up to 70% of the world's food yet remain excluded from formal financial systems, technical support, and resilient value chains.

Policy responses remain fragmented and insufficient. Only a minority of governments link social protection to nutrition outcomes, and less than 20% of smallholders have access to digital financial services. This reflects a broader policy gap: interventions often fail to address structural inequalities, reinforce food sovereignty, or build resilience in local food systems.

As a leading forum for global economic cooperation, the G20 is uniquely positioned to catalyze transformative action. The Working group and the Task Force on Food Security must prioritize coordinated, equity-driven interventions that:

- Address high and volatile food prices through macroeconomic stabilization and targeted safety nets.
- Strengthen inclusive food systems by investing in smallholder access to finance, inputs, and markets.
- Promote integrated approaches that link poverty alleviation with nutrition, climate resilience, and community-led governance.

Working Group 4 will champion these priorities, guided by the G20's "Leave No One Behind" pledge and a commitment to SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Our mandate is to elevate policy solutions

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that restore dignity, resilience, and sovereignty to those most affected by hunger and poverty—especially in Africa and other vulnerable regions.

These interlocking challenges—fragmented social protections, climate-induced crop failures, systemic exclusion of women and youth, crippling infrastructure gaps, and a persistent digital divide—form the critical barriers that our policy brief must address. By understanding these root causes, we can design targeted, integrated responses that break the cycle of deprivation and build truly resilient food systems. This below is indicated as follows:

- **Fragmented Protection Systems:** Cash-transfer schemes, school-feeding programs, and nutrition education rarely coordinate, diluting their collective impact on household food security.
- **Climate-Related Yield Losses:** Increasing drought frequency and erratic rains reduce staple-crop yields by up to 30 % in many regions, pushing vulnerable families deeper into poverty.
- **Exclusion of Women & People living with disabilities, LGBTQA+ Youth:** Despite representing over half of smallholder farmers, women and young people often lack land rights, collateral, or digital IDs required to access credit and training.
- **Post-Harvest Infrastructure Gaps:** Poor storage and rural transport networks cause up to 40 % of harvested crops to spoil before reaching markets, eroding incomes and food availability.
- **Digital Divide:** Limited mobile connectivity and financial literacy prevent smallholders from leveraging digital advisory services and mobile-money platforms that could enhance productivity and market linkages.

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Key Objectives

This policy brief seeks to build on and complement the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty established under the Brazilian G20 Presidency. While the Global Alliance focuses on a national and programme level, the Task Force under South Africa's Presidency will look at food security and systems through two pillars (regional and global levels). The Task Force's efforts will be supported by several key reports from leading international organizations and experts under both the regional and global pillars, which will inform the Task Force's deliberations.

Therefore, the South African G20 Presidency will link the Food Security Task Force's work to the existing frameworks and information systems.

- a. Reduce extreme poverty by implementing strategies to reduce poverty and improve living standards at least 20 % in target communities through nutrition-linked social protection.
- b. Guarantee sustainable access to a diverse, nutritious diet for 50 million vulnerable people.
- c. Increase smallholder yields by 15 % via climate-smart inputs and gender-responsive training.
- d. Cut post-harvest losses by 30 % through strategic infrastructure and cold-chain investments. This will also promote practices that enhance productivity while protecting the environment.
- e. Expand digital financial inclusion to 70 % of participating smallholders, opening affordable credit and savings pathways.

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Policy Recommendations

Working Group 4 on Poverty Alleviation and Food Sustainability is committed to bridging the persistent divide between food security and macro-financial stability, driving integrated solutions across regional and global ecosystems. Based on the above we advance these policy recommendations :

- Reduce extreme poverty by implementing strategies to reduce poverty and improve living standards at least 20 % in target communities through nutrition-linked social protection.
- Guarantee sustainable access to a diverse, nutritious diet for 50 million vulnerable people.
- Increase smallholder yields by 15 % via climate-smart inputs and gender-responsive training.
- Cut post-harvest losses by 30 % through strategic infrastructure and cold-chain investments. This will also promote practices that enhance productivity while protecting the environment.
- Expand digital financial inclusion to 70 % of participating smallholders, opening affordable credit and savings pathways.

Other elements of policy recommendations include the following:

Agriculture Investment & Innovation

- Revitalise Extension services: to support small holder farmers with real time data, early warning systems and market information
- Establish agri-hubs in rural areas that will focus on soil health, water efficiency and indigenous crops
- The "One-Stop Rural Service Hubs" and all service delivery points to be mandated as safe spaces for LGBTIQA+ individuals, with staff trained on SOGIESC sensitivity to encourage uptake and ensure they are not excluded from these vital services as part of the right to benefit from scientific progress.

Integrated Social Protection

- Expand grant portability by increasing access for child support and old age grants
- Digitize social registries by having the databases linked with health and education systems to improve targeting and reduce duplication

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- Include accessibility to LGBTIQA+ persons. This requires alternative verification methods for those without formal IDs or fixed addresses and ensuring application processes are safe and non-discriminatory in line with the principle of equality.

Regulatory Reform & market stabilization

- Reform Agri-markets – modernize fresh produce markets and introduce systems to reduce middleman and improve farmer margins
- Accelerate land reform by streamlining land redistribution with clear tenure rights and post settlement support

Climate Smart & Gender Responsive Agriculture:

- Climate Risk Mapping: use of satellite data and local knowledge to identify vulnerable zones and prioritize investments in Climate Smart Agriculture
- Fast track financing for women – led farms
- Leveraging the Climate Change bill to integrate agriculture with National Adaptation Planning

Inclusive Value Chains & Access to Finance

- Tailored to local needs
- Blended Finance Platforms – combine government guarantees with private capital to fund small holder cooperatives and agriprocessors
- To create pathways for LGBTIQA+-led informal sector workers and cooperatives to access support, training, and market linkages, providing alternatives to survival sex work and promoting economic inclusion.

Expand digital marketplaces to connect farmers directly with buyers, input suppliers and logistics

- Issuing of local procurement mandates for local schools, hospitals to source a percentage of food from small holder farmers

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Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation

In the final analysis a well executed comprehensive implementation interventions, as well Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL) framework will be developed. This interventions will entail driving integrated, regionally grounded solutions that align food security with macro-financial stability—reducing poverty, enhancing nutrition, and strengthening resilience across global food systems.

Priority Deliverables & Implementation Strategy

Policy Recommendation	Implementation Focus	Timeline
Reduce extreme poverty by 20%	Deploy nutrition-linked social protection in target communities, integrating cash transfers with health and food access	2025-2028
Guarantee nutritious diets for 50 million	Scale community-based nutrition programmes, link to agricultural and social protection systems	2025-2027
Increase smallholder yields by 15%	Provide climate-smart inputs, gender-responsive training, and extension support	2025-2027
Cut post-harvest losses by 30%	Invest in strategic infrastructure, cold chains, and agroecological practices	2025-2028
Expand digital financial inclusion to 70%	Enable mobile-based credit, savings, and insurance for smallholders, especially women and youth	2025-2027

Delivery Mechanisms

- Regional pilots
- Multi-stakeholder platforms engaging civil society, governments, and financial institutions
- Technical assistance and policy dialogues to support national uptake
- Annual G20–C20 joint reviews to assess progress and recalibrate strategies

Feedback, Learning & Accountability

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- **Community Voice:** Embed participatory M&E tools to ensure grassroots feedback informs decision-making
- **Transparency:** Publish open-access dashboards and annual synthesis reports to G20 Sherpas and relevant ministerial tracks
- **Cross-Regional Learning:** Facilitate peer exchange between pilot regions to share innovations and challenges
- **Policy Uptake Tracker:** Monitor integration of recommendations into national and G20-level frameworks

- **Governance Mechanism:** *Quarterly multi-stakeholder platforms involving ministries of agriculture, health, finance, smallholder associations, private sector and civil society.*
- **Core Indicators:** *Quarterly tracking of extreme poverty headcount, child stunting and wasting rates, average smallholder yields, post-harvest loss percentages, and digital finance uptake.*

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Stakeholder Engagement

One of the implementation strategies is the identification of strategic stakeholders and their roles. Through this it is expected that partnerships and collaborations will be established. This will ensure that community engagement will be fostered and encouraged.

The G20 Task Force on Food Security, under South Africa's 2025 G20 Presidency, is laying the groundwork for a multi-stakeholder engagement platform that brings together governments, civil society, and the private sector to tackle poverty and food insecurity. The stakeholders include:

- **Community Advisory Councils:** Village-level committees that co-design interventions and provide real-time feedback.
- **Regional Coordination:** Align with AU, SADC and ECOWAS on subsidy harmonization and cross-border market facilitation.
- **UN & Donor Partnerships:** Leverage technical expertise and co-funding from FAO, WFP, World Bank and bilateral partners for data, capacity building and scale.

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WG 7

C20 2025 Policy Brief 3rd Version

WG7 Sustainable & Resilient Communities and Disaster Risk Reduction

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Submission Date: 19 September 2025

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Background and Executive Summary

In the recent years Cyclone Freddy, a climate Change crisis first developed off Australia and travelled almost 5,000 miles across the Indian Ocean, making landfall twice in south-east Africa, bringing torrential rains, high winds and killing more than 700 people across Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe and Malawi, including 16 on-board a Taiwanese-flagged ship. In Malawi Between 2015 and 2024, the country experienced these six major disaster events that led to the declaration of state of disasters: severe floods in 2015; El Niño and Southern Oscillation (ENSO) phenomena-induced drought in 2016; catastrophic events caused by Tropical Cyclones Idai and Kenneth in 2019; the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021; Tropical Storm Ana and Cyclone Gombe and cholera outbreak in 2022; Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023 and El-Nino-induced prolonged dry spells in 2024. These disasters have disrupted essential services, caused loss of lives and damaged property and crop fields. As a result, the country's economic landscape has been destabilised due to increased damage and losses from the alternating disasters. The cumulative effect of these shocks, for which Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNAs) have been undertaken, is estimated at US\$1.19 billion, while the recovery cost is estimated at over US\$1.70 billion. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic and cholera outbreaks have further compounded these challenges. As it dissipated, meteorologists said Cyclone Freddy was the longest-lasting and most travelled tropical cyclone ever recorded this is one of the climate change challenge but their more that in year in and out are happening across the global affecting communities and economies including live hoods.

In Africa, disaster risk is not distributed equally. Structural inequality, colonial geographies, and environmental injustice converge to place people with disabilities—especially in rural areas and informal settlements—at some of the highest risk during floods, fires, droughts, and other climate-related shocks. Yet their realities remain largely invisible in national disaster frameworks and global risk governance. And while South Africa faces significant disaster risk challenges, influenced by a combination of natural hazards and socio-economic vulnerabilities. The country is highly susceptible to climate-induced disasters, including droughts, floods, and wildfires, which have intensified with climate change, impacting communities, agriculture, and water resources. For instance, the 2022 floods in KwaZulu-Natal affected over 40 000 people, highlighting the growing severity of such events. This frequency poses a serious threat to development, disrupting livelihoods and undermining economic growth, especially in rural and underserved regions.

Input Area

Setting the Scene

- The draft covers DRR governance, early warning, resilient infrastructure, response logistics, recovery and risk financing; however, disability inclusion is not embedded across these pillars.

- Participation is encouraged broadly, but there are no formal roles or budgets for organisations of persons with disabilities in DRR decision-making and oversight.
- Monitoring and peer review reference Sendai alignment, yet disability-disaggregated indicators and accessible grievance channels are not specified.

Issue Analysis - Framing the core challenge/problem

- Self-representation is a governance requirement under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the African Disability Protocol. Without a seat at design and decision-making tables, persons with disabilities are left behind; equitable participation requires intentional measures and resources.
- Early-warning and public-risk communication are not guaranteed to be multi-sensory, redundant and last-mile effective (radio, SMS/USSD, cell broadcast, visual beacons, sign-language video, plain-language).
- Infrastructure and designated shelters lack explicit universal-design requirements and independent accessibility audits; evacuation routes and transport remain inaccessible, especially in informal settlements and rural high-risk zones.
- Response protocols and drills do not specify inclusive evacuation, safeguarding of assistive devices, accessible transport and trauma-informed psychosocial support; annual inclusive drills are not mandated.
- Risk financing and adaptation funds are proposed without a ring-fenced disability-inclusive allocation or community-managed funds for initiatives led by organisations of persons with disabilities.
- Recovery and reconstruction standards do not require accessible rebuilding or household energy continuity for life-sustaining medical and assistive devices.
- Cross-border evacuation and displacement management lack accessible registration, information, distribution and services in camps and host communities.
- Monitoring lacks disability-disaggregated Sendai indicators, an annual public disability-inclusion scorecard, and accessible complaint mechanisms.

Recommendation Sections – Outlining Priority Actions

- Translate principles into machinery: designated seats and budgets for organisations of persons with disabilities in DRR governance; multi-sensory early-warning requirements; universal-design conditions for infrastructure; and an indicator set tied to peer review.

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- Create a ring-fenced allocation within DRR and adaptation finance for disability-inclusive projects, prioritising community-managed funds and initiatives led by organisations of persons with disabilities.
- Mandate inclusive response protocols and annual drills; require accessible grievance channels and public dashboards for monitoring.

G20 South Africa Presidency Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Priorities

The priorities of the G20 DRR WG were designed in response to the findings of the Mid-Term Review of the Sendai Framework and intended to accelerate implementation of the Sendai Framework. The South African Presidency acknowledges the work done by India and Brazil's presidencies in strengthening the work of the DRR WG and would like to retain all six priorities agreed upon under those presidencies. The deliverables will build upon the Ministerial Declaration of the WG under the Brazilian Presidency. In addition, during its presidency, South Africa would like to guide all six priorities through the overarching theme of Solidarity and Global Cooperation as in;

- **PRIORITY 1: ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES AND REDUCING VULNERABILITIES**
- **PRIORITY 2: GLOBAL COVERAGE OF EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS**
- **PRIORITY 3: DISASTER RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE**
- **PRIORITY 4: FINANCING FOR DRR**
- **PRIORITY 5: DISASTER RECOVERY, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION**
- **PRIORITY 6: ECOSYSTEMS-BASED APPROACHES FOR DRR/NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS**

Recommendations Summary Table Format:

Summary of Issue	Evidence/Context	Suggested Recommendation	Priority
No formal participation for organisations of persons with disabilities	Participation principles exist but are not operationalised for these organisations.	Create two standing seats for organisations of persons with disabilities in WG7 bodies and national DRR councils; publish membership and attendance; fund participation and reasonable accommodation.	High

Summary of Issue	Evidence/Context	Suggested Recommendation	Priority
Early-warning systems not accessible or last-mile effective	Risk communication lacks multi-sensory, redundant delivery and community messenger networks.	Guarantee multi-channel, multi-sensory alerts (radio, SMS/USSD, cell broadcast, visual beacons, sign-language video, plain-language messaging) with periodic last-mile testing and public reporting.	High
Infrastructure and shelters lack universal design	Designated shelters, routes and transport remain inaccessible, especially in high-risk zones.	Adopt universal-design standards and phased upgrades for evacuation routes, transport and shelters; prioritise informal settlements and rural high-risk zones; require accessibility audits pre- and post-funding.	High
Response protocols and drills not inclusive	Evacuation, reunification and psychosocial support do not accommodate disability needs; drills are not inclusive.	Mandate inclusive evacuation protocols, safeguarding of assistive devices, accessible transport and trauma-informed psychosocial support; require at least one inclusive drill per year.	High
No ring-fenced disability-inclusive DRR finance	Funds exist without allocations that ensure equitable reach.	Ring-fence at least 15% of DRR and adaptation finance for disability-inclusive projects and initiatives led by organisations of persons with disabilities; prefer non-debt instruments and community-managed funds.	High
Recovery and reconstruction not accessibility-assured	Standards do not guarantee accessible rebuilding or energy continuity for life-sustaining devices.	Include accessibility criteria in recovery-readiness assessments; require household energy continuity (batteries/generators) for disability-critical equipment; monitor compliance.	Medium–High
Displacement and cross-border protocols not accessible	Registration, information, distribution and services in camps/hosts exclude persons with disabilities.	Adopt accessible registration and service-delivery protocols in displacement settings; harmonise cross-border evacuation with accessibility requirements.	Medium–High

Summary of Issue	Evidence/Context	Suggested Recommendation	Priority
Monitoring lacks DI metrics and grievance channels	Peer review does not track disability outcomes; complaints are not accessible.	Adopt disability-disaggregated Sendai indicators and publish an annual Disability Inclusion Scorecard; establish accessible complaint mechanisms with oversight by organisations of persons with disabilities.	High
Community monitoring not led by organisations of persons with disabilities including Civil Society Actors and Organisation	Community monitoring is encouraged without specific leadership by these organisations.	Fund monitoring initiatives led by organisations of persons with disabilities, Civil Society Organisations (Actors) and community science (air, water, health) with accessible tools and public dashboards.	Medium

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