



BRICS Feminist Watch Statement for G20 2021

The BRICS Feminist Watch (BFW),¹ a global-South feminist alliance, undertakes critical feminist analyses and advocacy to promote ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable development. We are committed to bringing the voice of women from the global South into policy making spaces, upholding the economic, social, and cultural rights of women, and ensuring gender and social equality. The 2021 G20 comes during an extraordinary moment in history. The COVID-19 pandemic has sparked the deepest economic recession in nearly a century, disrupting economic activity and livelihoods, and has resulted in more than 4.57 million deaths globally.² We believe that southern voices, especially the voices of women who are the worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but are not heard, nor are taken into account in G20 global development decision-making. With the formation of G20, the G7 group was expanded to include developing countries from the global South. However, the G20 continues to operate as a G7 group with a Eurocentric approach and limited global South engagement. It is as if ‘the club’ belongs to them (G7) and they are now going to allow us (the developing countries) to participate, but we will have to follow their terms’. BFW, and several global South-based organisations, networks and movements find this aspect of G20 greatly problematic.

We recognise that:

- **Women, including gender non-conforming and trans-women, constitute a majority of the world’s poor.** Women in all G20 economies are the hardest hit by the Covid-19 pandemic as they were the first to lose employment, had little or no social security, became food insecure and do not have proper access to healthcare.
- **Women face multiple oppressions, exclusions and discriminations** on the grounds of gender identity, caste, race, class, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, ethnicity, language, disability, literacy and age. The current pandemic has further perpetuated inequalities pre-existing in our society, structure and system. However, despite discrimination and socio-economic inequalities, women are moving forward and developing their capabilities and agency.
- **Women are on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis**, as they make up the bulk of essential workers, including 70% of health-care workers. Yet, worldwide and across all regions and income groups, the pandemic has hit women’s labour market opportunities

¹ Comprised of women’s rights organizations and feminist activists from Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

² As on 04 September 2021, Worldometer

hardest. Women predominantly work in farming, fish-work and the informal sector in developing economies and these were the worst hit by the pandemic. This is likely to reverse some of the progress made in women's rights and sustainable development goals (SDGs).

- **Women are facing an unfair and unequal burden** of a triple crisis of shrinking democratic spaces, pandemic and climate change. Women disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid work at home compared to men and face higher incidences of violence within the home due to lockdowns or restrictions on their mobility in the prevention and control of COVID-19.
- **All women work, whether paid or unpaid**, but their work is invisible, unaccounted for, undervalued, and under-appreciated. They are prescribed roles to provide food, water, fuel and care for themselves and their families. Lack of access to infrastructure, energy, appropriate technology, and the impacts of the climate crisis add to this burden.
- **Women face structural barriers to access, control and ownership over resources**, causing dispossession of land and livelihoods in G20 countries. Governments are using the pandemic as an opportunity to change the laws and regulations concerning the protection of the environment, despite the water and energy crises, strongly impacting the most vulnerable – women, the disabled and the black population.
- **Women's reproductive work remains undervalued and unpaid and they continue to face discrimination at the workplace due to their parental responsibilities.** Women are liable to lose their jobs and livelihoods owing to marital status, pregnancy and maternity, especially in the informal sector, where they are forced to cut down rest and nutrition during pregnancy and after childbirth because they do not receive maternity allowances or paid leave. Data gathered across the world shows how provision and utilisation of reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health services have been disrupted, including access to sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) such as contraceptives and safe abortion.
- **Women will bear a disproportionate burden owing to global macroeconomic policy changes.** There are cuts in social spending on women's sexual and reproductive health, depriving many of access to these services as the priorities have shifted to producing or acquiring COVID-19 vaccines. Globally, women are facing a digital divide as the world of work has evolved in the context of the pandemic. Women are at risk of being further pushed into informal and precarious jobs, in addition to the structural barriers they face at workplaces.
- **Women are worst affected due to vaccine apartheid** which has deepened inequalities in accessing the types and qualities of vaccines. Big pharma's profits are being prioritised over people's health. There is no access to safe, effective and affordable COVID-19 vaccines.
- **Without the informed, meaningful and full social, political, and economic participation of women in all their diversity in decision making processes**, there can be no sustainable development. Limiting efforts to only the representation of women will not be fruitful; there is a need to ensure their diverse and active participation in all the processes within G20 spaces. There is also an under-representation of women in leadership, governance and decision-making roles in all facets of G20 countries.

Therefore, BFW calls upon the G20 governments and leaders to:

1. **Recognise all women as workers, farmers, producers, and independent economic, political and development agents**
 - Women, as workers, farmers and producers, need to be guaranteed individual unmediated access, control, ownership, and management of productive resources including

- a. natural resources such as land, water, forests
 - b. financial resources such as credit, sustainable livelihoods including decent jobs
 - c. social resources such as skills, and access to social infrastructure including energy, technology
 - d. other resources such as housing, commons, markets
 - e. and, social protection schemes including social security entitlements
- Women's traditional livelihood skills and knowledge need to be recognised, preserved, and nurtured.
 - Women's undervalued, underpaid, unpaid work and care work needs to be recognised, reduced, and redistributed.
- 2. Recognise sustainability of our planet as a serious issue.** The women's land rights movements and the BFW call for action against structural racism.
- Take collective action against changes in social norms that allow militarization and police violence against women human rights defenders;
 - Support local practices and women's traditional knowledge;
 - Defend and protect women's land and territorial rights;
 - Defend democracies and democratic spaces for civil society participation in decision-making at all levels.
 - Address current privatisation, commercialisation and financialisation of land and territories as a threat to the sustainability of this planet. Land and territories are being sold as a commodity, further destroying the biodiversity due to widespread and rampant deforestation.
- 3. Ensure protection and security of women, including gender non-conforming and trans-women, and provide equal opportunities**
- Guarantee safety from femicide and include this within the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) because, without addressing femicide or highlighting the brutalities perpetrated on, including the killing of, women in our communiqués, the issue of violence against women and girls cannot be addressed holistically.
 - Ensure the protection of women in Afghanistan who are at serious risk of being subjected to renewed violence and violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the context of conflict and major humanitarian emergency.³
 - Free world of work from gender-based violence is key since it hinders women's employment and earnings, affects their working conditions, and threatens their labour market and workplace security, inhibiting them from fulfilling their potential and achieving optimal productivity.
 - The absence of modern energy sources such as cooking gas leads not only to debt but also inflicts hidden violence on women. Close to 3 billion people cook using polluting open fires or simple stoves fueled by kerosene, biomass (wood, animal dung, crop waste) and coal. This practice results in as many as 4 million people a year⁴ dying prematurely from illnesses attributable to household air pollution caused by the inefficient use of solid fuels and kerosene for cooking. G20 needs to treat this as an important issue that is not only a reality in global South countries but is adversely affecting the health and well-being of women and children.
 - Ensure equal opportunity to realise women's potential, including through gender-equal access to quality education at all levels, the creation of policies and programmes that encourage women to study science, technology, engineering, and

³ G20 Conference on Women's Empowerment, Chair's Statement, Santa Margherita Ligure, August 26, 2021

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health>

mathematics (STEM) and pursue their professional interests and inclusive financial literacy for guaranteeing women's economic empowerment.

- Guarantee and protect bodily autonomy and universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (including access to legal and safe abortion and post-abortion care, Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), and other health services) and comprehensive sexuality education and information (including for adolescents and marginalised women) with their full and informed consent and while respecting the evolving capacity of adolescents.

4. Put gender equality at the center of all interventions of G20 and remove barriers

- Put gender equality at the heart of the efforts of COVID-19 response, preparedness to future pandemics and sustainable development policies by upholding the rights of women, girls, gender non-conforming and transgender women and not just be focused on aspects of finance and economic growth.
- Expand data to include women's unpaid care work, leadership and economic issues as important indicators of GDP to help formulate policies.
- Take steps to ensure that women are central to the more equitable and inclusive recovery that the G20 seeks, women need and the global economy demands.
- G20 needs to be accessible for the most marginalised and vulnerable communities such as the working class, migrants, indigenous, peasants, afro-descendants, lesbians, trans and queer communities for them to wield influence in the agenda-setting on policies concerning them. Develop strategies to ensure their inclusive and equal participation.
- Greater efforts need to be made to achieve G20 Brisbane 25x25⁵ gender goal setting up a 25 target for reducing the gap in labour participation 25% by 2025 but progress has been slim. There is the need to demand increasing the quality of women's employment – equal pay for equal work, women's labour market security and working conditions, especially under the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Create and support business models aimed at developing women's leadership potential (such as women's cooperatives and social enterprises).
- Provide state support for women-owned micro-entrepreneurship and Small-Medium Enterprises.

We, therefore, reiterate our demands to the G20 to-

- Conduct wide-ranging consultations with feminist groups and CSOs globally and at the country level given that the G20 space is not open for feminists in some countries. Make C20, L20 and W20 inclusive and open for feminist groups from global South beyond token delegation, including from the grassroots movements from the global, to engage with and ensure their active, informed and meaningful participation in all the processes.
- G20 countries and leaders should move beyond mere basic pandemic preparedness and resilience and keep in mind the broader concept of right to health and wellbeing of persons in communities, prioritising sexual and reproductive health rights.
- Have a track within the G20 on gender equality in order to achieve gender mainstreaming and have a committee to elaborate on and create policies and mechanisms to monitor the activities implemented within this track. Have structured monitoring and evaluation tools based on indicators to broaden and go beyond the Brisbane gender goals.

⁵ At the Brisbane Summit in 2014, G20 leaders committed to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation by 25 per cent by the year 2025 (the 25x25 target).

- Ratify and fully implement the ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment and ratify all international and regional conventions related to VAWG.
- Support and create provisions for women's rights to land and productive assets and their control and ownership over the assets to address poverty reduction, food security and gender equality.
- G20 needs to be accountable to gender-equality commitments and targets set by SDGs, CEDAW, CESC and other UN treaty bodies.
- Women need to be central to equitable and inclusive recovery from COVID-19 through vaccine equity, public investments in the care economy and introduction of gender responsive social protection mechanisms.
- G20 needs to urgently support Afghan women and girls and take immediate action to ensure that Afghan women's and girls' rights are guaranteed and to prevent further inequities against them.
- G20 should promote and strengthen the existing efforts at women's self-empowerment, financial inclusion, sustainable energy and digital literacy for gender equality.

Endorsing Organizations:

PWESCR, India

The Inequality Movement, South Africa

GenDeV Center for Research and Innovation, India

Espaco Feminista, Brazil

Feminist Land Platform, Global

IWRAW – AP, Malaysia

FEIM, Argentina