Women20 for co-sharing expertise and responsibilities to tackle gender equality: experiences from the Italian presidency of G20

Sveva Avveduto, Emerita Research Director, CNR-IRPPS, Women 20, Head of Italian Delegation, Italy
Gianna Avellis, Leader Researcher in ICT, InnovaPuglia SpA, Chair Italian Research Staff Association, Women20, Italian Delegate, Italy
Giuliana Rubbia, Senior Technologist, INGV, Women20, Environmental Sustainability Engagement Group Member, Italy (corresponding author)
      giuliana.rubbia@ingv.it
      (+39) 333 – 6604060
      Via di Vigna Murata 605
      00143 Roma, Italy

Introduction

Connecting Science and Policy and improving their interactions is one of the main aims of the stakeholders in both fields. Being this not an easy task and sometimes not well understood or even opposed by one or even both sides, it is advisable to get some catalyst that can ease the process and show either to science and policy the relevant mutual benefits, and the benefits for all society and economy, this connection would bring to.

In this paper, we present some results tackling this issue, as well as in other connected development directions, during the Italian Presidency of G20 in 2021 and specifically through the work of the G20's Engagement Group, namely Women 20 (W20).

G20 is an informal international body established in 1999 and consists of the nineteen most industrialized countries in the world plus the European Union as its twentieth member. The "twenty" represent 90% of global GDP, over 80% of international trade and two thirds of the world population. The purpose of this body is to contribute to achieving economic stability, sustainable growth and the creation of a new global financial architecture reaching consensus on specific envisaged measures that can be taken in the different Countries.

In a perspective of wider inclusion and participation, the decision-making process of the G20 has gradually been enriched with the involvement of social actors, the so-called "G20 Engagement Groups".

Women 20 (W20), is the official G20 Gender Equality group aimed at influencing G20 leaders' statements and commitments, to ensure that gender issues are incorporated into G20 discussions and then translated into the leaders' Declaration as policies and commitments to promote gender equality and economic empowerment of women in all Countries[1].

W20 by bringing together representatives of non-governmental gender experts from civil society organizations, women entrepreneurs, businesses, think tanks, international organizations, research, academia, and policy makers, guided the activities carried out during the Italian Presidency of G20 in the gender equity field.

---

1 One of the harsh criticism to G20 referring to the edition held in Berlin in 2017 was that it was too much western oriented and left no space for the South that 'really did not have a place to be seen or heard and there was no conversation about poverty, structural causes of inequalities, livelihoods, women farmers, women's work in the informal economy' See: Priti Darooka, For whom the bells toll: not for feminists, or civil society, In Genere 11-5-2017
https://www.ingenere.it/en/articles/whom-bells-toll-not-feminists-or-civil-society

The themes that have shaped all the activities of W20 have revolved around the so-called three pillars indicated by Italy as the leitmotiv of 2021: People, Planet, Prosperity, all the work has been woven around these keywords in various fields: Women's Entrepreneurship and Finance, Digital Empowerment, Labour, Violence Against Women and Girls and Gender Based Violence, Environmental Sustainability, Cultural Change, Equity in Health. Moreover, it has been focused on two new cross-cutting topics: cultural changes and stereotypes, and health, in some way touching all the themes mentioned above.

Methodology

The W20 Group met several times during 2021 to discuss and prepare the so-called *Communiqué*, a sort of policy brief to deliver as a noted list of recommendations to the G20 Leaders.

W20 started with identifying main themes and keywords, with the contributions of groups of external experts in the various sectors identified by the Working Groups (WGs), then brought these themes back to the discussions with the international delegates of the various WGs, which finally made recommendations to the G20 Leaders. The WGs and the recommendation per focus area on which W20 agreed are the following:

1 Cultural Changes and Gender Stereotypes
Develop lifelong learning programs and campaigns to address gender stereotypes; Provide systematic awareness-building measures to combat sexism and gender biases.

2 Health Equity and Gender Medicine
Guarantee health and care for all; Promote free, universal, accessible, and affordable health care systems to combat COVID19 and prevent the pandemic; Develop and fund intersectional and multidisciplinary strategic plans on Gender Medicine.

3 Entrepreneurship and Finance
Ensure equal rights to ownership of assets and remove barriers to financial inclusion for all women; Facilitate access to finance, and capacity building for all, in particular for solopreneurs and microenterprises; Create policy frameworks and strategic growth initiatives; Create public procurement and access to markets initiatives; promote private and public investment.

4 Digital Empowerment
Ensure safe access to and use of digital technologies for all women and girls in all their diversity in G20 countries by 2026; Guarantee foundational digital skills for all girls and women of G20 countries, with pathways to future work and expertise in disruptive technologies by 2026; Ensure that women hold 30% of leadership roles in digital fields in G20 countries by 2026**.**

5 Labour
Increase women's employment rate and quality of work by removing structural barriers; Reduce gender pay gap and horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the labour market; Value unpaid care and domestic work in the definition of economic and social policies.

The W20 requested to create new quality jobs for women as decent work; ensure universal, free and accessible gender-responsive social protection for all women in the

formal and informal labour force; address structural barriers, including discrimination based on gender, age, disability, immigration or refugee status among others; supporting policies for disabled workers, to promote and implement governing mechanisms to foster equality in the workplace.

6 Violence Against Women and Girls and Gender Based Violence

Develop integrated and coherent public policies to ensure the right of every woman and girl to live free from violence;
Empower and support the right to freedom from violence and offer quality services for survivors; Provide safe and welcoming workplaces; Combat human trafficking and modern slavery of women.

7 Environmental Sustainability

Prevent and mitigate the effect of climate change and environmental degradation on women, provide equal opportunities in the climate, environment and energy sectors, including green, blue and circular economies for a socially just transition, build and redesign sustainable and inclusive intermediary cities and other communities.

Outputs have been collected in the "Communiqué" (July 2021), a document of recommendations to Leaders that Women20 releases on an annual basis. For each recommendation, needs, how-to, best practices and resources have been identified.

We will focus in the following paragraphs on two specific themes Digital and Environmental Sustainability giving an in depth insight of the work done and the outcomes reached.

Outcomes

Recommendations regarding Digital Empowerment

Regarding Digital empowerment, recommendations included, specifically from women and girls: ensure safe access and use of digital technologies, key competences and future job-oriented digital skills, ensure women fill 30% leadership roles in G20 countries by 2026, adopt and implement policies to prevent and contrast cyber-violence.

W20 considered crucial empowering women in designing, building and leading our shared digital future, to foster the full participation of women and girls in the digital society. We asked to promote digital citizenship by ensuring access to ICTs by all women independently of their age, education level, economic condition, provenience and geographical position and to identify and fight cultural barriers to access, connectivity, and digital skill acquisition. It is very important to promote education and training in digital skills acquisition with a lifelong learning approach; to promote women participation in the technology sector and in decision-making positions in public and private organisations; to advocate female role models in high-technology sectors and promoting positive images of women in STEAM [4] in the media; to prevent, mitigate and respond to threats that arise from AI and ICTs and address inequalities that hinder girls and women from fully participating in and benefiting from the information society.

The pandemic has hastened digital transformation, dramatically deepening gender inequalities. It is imperative to halt the digital marginalization of girls and women impacted

by this disruption, and urgently take action to ensure a just digital transformation where girls and women are fairly, meaningfully and equally engaged as digital citizens.

The following results have been achieved in form of recommendations for women digital empowerment, namely:

1) Ensure safe access to and use of digital technologies for all women and girls [6] in G20 economies by 2026 by a) removing barriers such as prohibitive costs, insufficient infrastructure, unsafe online environments and harmful gender stereotypes; b) facilitating the use of the internet, mobile telephony and other digital tools by women and girls for health, education, financial, employment and other purposes; c) developing gender-sensitive ethical guidelines on artificial intelligence (AI) and other digital technologies [5,6];

2) Guarantee foundational digital skills for all women and girls of G20 members, with pathways to future work and expertise in disruptive technologies by 2026 [3] by a) upskilling and reskilling women to address the skills shortage in digital and STEAM jobs [4]; b) providing funding and incentives to public and private sectors to provide training and career development in digital fields to women and girls; c) implementing skills programmes that promote women's financial inclusion and entrepreneurship, focused on and enabled by digital technologies to support women's economic development [4];

3) Ensure that women hold equal leadership roles in digital fields in G20 economies by 2030, including technology organisations, start-ups, policymaking and academia, by a) ensuring women are equally represented in fields of technology research and development; b) creating more visibility of women in high level positions in the ICT sector [3]; c) providing fiscal and other incentives to achieve gender-balanced leadership in the technology sector, including academia and research institutions;

4) Adopt and implement comprehensive and coordinated policies encompassing all relevant measures to identify, prevent and prosecute cyber violence and threats of violence by a) promoting awareness-raising programmes throughout society on how to prevent harmful online gender-based violence; b) legislating for prevention and punishment of online violence [7].

Recommendations regarding Environmental Sustainability

As climate change and environmental degradation increasingly affect lives and livelihoods globally, W20 discussions revolved around the importance of engaging the wealth of ingenuity and ability that lies with women leaders and experts, including grassroots women's organisations.
As above mentioned, W20 produced three main recommendations addressed to 1) prevent and mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on women, in particular, 2) provide equal opportunities in related sectors, i.e. climate, environment and energy, and 3) build and redesign intermediate cities resulting sustainable and inclusive for the communities.

Developing gender studies investigating and providing disaggregated data on the climate change's effects on women in terms of "One Health" is important; it is necessary to promote awareness about existing links between degradation of nature - such as loss of biodiversity, pollution, wildlife trafficking climate change - and deterioration of human

health, both physically and psychologically, especially for women and vulnerable sections of the population, such as the elderly and minors.

It is essential to involve women in risk management initiatives, strategies and policies, entrusting them with decision-making roles and also including indigenous women so that the different voices can be heard and the various needs met. "*Without women leaders in the climate movement, the solutions and response to the climate emergency will continue to exclude women's needs and undermine their rights. Women and girls have been leading climate action and environmental movements, but men occupy 67 per cent of climate-related decision-making roles. Climate justice and environmental sustainability depend on the leadership of women and young people*" [11].

It is also necessary to create a protocol to prevent and fight violence against women, which can increase in the event of natural disasters. "*The fight against climate change is not only a struggle to keep our planet liveable. For many women, it can be a direct cause of violence in their lives*" [10].

Equal opportunities must be given in the areas of climate, environment and energy, including green, blue and circular economies, to realize a socially just transition. Women's empowerment must be promoted, with education, development and work programs that increase literacy in particular on these issues to move towards a decarbonised economy. The integration of women in these economies must be supported, giving them a voice, visibility and leadership. For example, in some small islands "*women make up most of the workforce in coastal and maritime tourism and fisheries, the main blue economy sectors. Yet they are in the lowest-paid, lowest-status and least-protected jobs*" [9]. In research activities related to the green economy, sustainability, climate change and environmental justice, gendered innovations must be developed and integrated. Gender, inclusion and intersectional lenses must be integrated into soft law and hard law regulatory frameworks for environmental sustainability, such as non-financial reporting and social impact assessment tools. Funds are needed to support companies that shift to the green economy or sustainable businesses, to retrain and improve skills on new ways of growing, cooking, building, and in general to train and improve green, technological and sustainable skills.

Building and redesigning intermediate cities and other communities that are sustainable and inclusive require rethinking or adapting urban design and planning to needs that may be different for women and men. "*Often due to differences occurring in socially-constructed gender roles, women are predisposed towards certain travel characteristics that are distinct from those of men. These differences in travelling patterns can be due to several reasons such as variation in responsibilities, safety concerns, lesser income, and lower bargaining and decision-making powers*" [8]. One possible way is to consider a representative sample of urban plans and design models for access to jobs, education, health, public services (water, energy and internet) that is inclusive, and then apply them where possible. Incentives should be created for cities to apply gender-inclusive design in all new infrastructure improvements and in the private housing sector. It is necessary to allocate funding for new inclusive, sustainable and safe cities and to have educational resources on gender stereotypes in order to shift the focus from protecting oneself and changing travel habits, to protection as an issue which is integrated into the design of transport systems.

Conclusions and future work

We refer to the model of *Quintuple Helix* [1]*,* which adds to the classical model of Quadruple Helix (industry, academia, government and civil society) the *helix of sustainability*. The W20 Italy 2021 introduced - for the first time in the history of Women 20 - the Environmental Sustainability issue as one of the main issues to be addressed in the final Communiqué of Women20 to G20, and this aspect has definitely been incorporated and adopted in the G20 Leaders' Declaration.

The Paris Agreement, brokered by women, underpins a global economic transformation needed to both limit climate change and foster human and planetary well-being. Women are most frequently first responders to crises, including health, food and water security. Women have also proven to be agents of change in the areas of resource sustainability and driving forces behind the shift to a wellbeing economy. It is essential that W20 pushed the G20 members to engage the wealth of ingenuity and ability that lies with women leaders and experts, including grassroots women's organisations.

The G20 Leaders' Declaration delivered in Rome in October 2021, in its Article 33 "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", explicitly summarizes the central objectives of the W20 *Communiqué* taking up the themes, from STEM, to gender stereotypes, leadership and female entrepreneurship, elimination of gender-based violence, development of educational, care, health and social services[2].

Leaders expressed their commitment to implement the G20 Roadmap to rapidly improve the quality and quantity of women's work, with a particular focus on closing the gender pay gap.

For the first time, the space dedicated to gender equality has been really large, and the work of Women 20 has allowed these important results. Major difficulties encountered in the process have been mainly due firstly to the reaching of consensus within the Group that having to be expressed by 20 very different Countries has been not that easy to achieve. Secondly the side work on Sherpas and delegations to push our important issues has been very hard considering that in the G20 communiqué a very large number of different economic, work related and financial issues are given the widest space. The process took one year, i.e. a long time has been devoted, and benefitted of the use of primary data. These factors can be considered as the main ingredients of the winning strategy.

The Indonesian Presidency of W20 for the year 2022 has focussed its activities on different objectives following the claim 'Recover Together, Recover Stronger', assuming that the COVID-19 pandemic has undermined gender equality creating heavier burden for women in terms of housework and unpaid care work, needless to say in health terms for everyone but particularly for the most fragile. The objective is: 'to create an inclusive and sustainable foundation for growth, putting women and girls in all their diversity at the center of the recovering strategy'. W20 have carried out its annual analysis and prepared the Communiqué presented to G20 leaders in July 2022, and have identified therefore some common themes called cross-cutting enablers such as education, digital, data transparency and infrastructure and services, and five Priority issues 1: Non-discrimination and equality   2: Women-owned and led MSME (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) to achieve economic growth and inclusion 3: Gender equitable health response 4: Rural women, 5: Women with disabilities.

---

[2] G20 Rome Leaders Declaration
https://www.governo.it/sites/governo.it/files/G20ROMELEADERSDECLARATION.pdf

The final Communiqué[3] has been presented during the W20 summit held in Indonesia on July 19-21 2022. One of the goal we hope can be reached is the fulfilment of the objective of the Brisbane Declaration which recognizes the need to promote greater participation of women in the labor market. The declaration commits the government to reduce the Labor Force Participation Rate gap between men and women by 25 percent by 2025, an objective even more important given the pandemic effects. We are all convinced that empowerment and better welfare for women will positively spread all over the communities and the nations.

References

1. Carayannis, E.G., Barth, T.D. & Campbell, D.F. The Quintuple Helix innovation model: global warming as a challenge and driver for innovation. *J Innov Entrep* **1**, 2 (2012). https://doi.org/10.1186/2192-5372-1-2
2. Heatman, Amelia. "How four female tech executives are helping close the digital skills gender gap". *Evening standard,* March 9, 2020. https://www.standard.co.uk/futurelondon/skills/women-tech-digital-skill s-gender-gap-a4379706.html
3. EQUALS. "EQUALS Digital Skills Hub". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://equalspartnership.wixsite.com/digitalskillshub
4. DressCode. "What we do". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://dresscode.org.uk/what-we-do
5. GSMAa. "The GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021". Accessed Oct 12, 2022. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programme/connected-women/the-mobile-gender-gap-report-2021/
6. GSMAb. "10 Lessons Learnt: Closing the Gender Gap in Internet Use and Access: A report by the EQUALS Access Coalition". Accessed Oct 12, 2022. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/EQUALS-Access-Coalition-10-Lessons-Learnt.pdf
7. GSMAc. "A Framework to understand women's mobile-related safety concerns in low and middle income countries". Accessed Oct 12, 2022. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/resources/a-framework-to-understand-womens-mobile-related-safety-concerns-in-low-and-middle-income-countries/
8. Jain, Shruti. "Right to the city: Urban mobility for women empowerment in the decade of action". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/urban-mobility-for-women-empowerment-in-the-decade-of-action/
9. UNCTAD. "The blue economy is an ocean of opportunity to advance gender equality". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://unctad.org/fr/node/32493
10. UNDP. "Why climate change fuels violence against women". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://www.undp.org/blog/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women
11. UNWomen. "Claiming women space in leadership". Accessed Jul 7, 2022. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/3/compilation-claiming-womens-space-in-leadership

---

[3] https://www.w20indonesia.org/#communique