

Research Paper

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New Frontiers in Gender-responsive Governance

Five Years of the W20

Summary

- 2018 marks the fifth anniversary of the first grouping of the W20, the engagement group of the G20 that focuses on gender-inclusive economic growth and advocates for gender equality across the G20 agenda. Formally launched under the Turkish G20 presidency in 2015, the W20 is made up of women from business, international organizations, civil society, think-tanks and academia across the G20 member states.
- This paper takes stock of the critical steps in the development of the W20 over the last five years, examining its background, rationale and foundations, and identifying the areas of economic governance where it has so far contributed the most – and those where more action is needed. The W20 has filled a gap, it but needs to carefully assess its coherence with the UN agencies, the private sector, the G7 and other G20 engagement groups.
- The establishment of the W20 has contributed to defining new frontiers for economic governance and shifting the traditional approach from gender-neutral to gender-responsive. Whereas in 2013 gender in the G20 was considered a marginal issue better dealt with by ministers for equal opportunities, now gender equality and women's economic empowerment are part of the mainstream economic dialogue. The next step is to ensure more structural and monitored policy reforms at the G20 level.
- Already, the W20 can count among its achievements the '25 by 25' female labour force participation commitment adopted at the G20's Brisbane summit in 2014, and the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) and Business Women Leaders' Taskforce, both agreed at the Hamburg summit in 2017.
- The W20 is constrained in its policy impact by limited engagement with the finance track and a lack of consistent resourcing levels. Addressing these issues would strengthen its role as a credible player in shifting global economic governance while contributing to good gender-responsive domestic policies.
- Progress on gender equality has been too slow and too peripheral to drive change in the relatively short term – over one generation, for example. G20 governments must therefore embrace active, credible policies to bring more women into the labour market, improve access to education and finance, close the pay gap, invest in social infrastructure – especially childcare and assistance for the elderly – and support female entrepreneurs. These domestic policies need to be internationally coordinated so that action and benefits can be widespread.
- A feminist, inclusive agenda at the G20 level should highlight the current empirical evidence of women's exclusion from the benefit of their economic activity, both in G20 members and beyond. The W20 should also focus on efforts to remedy the lack of women's representation in G20 processes and in economic governance as a whole.

Introduction

2018 marks the fifth anniversary of the first grouping of the W20, which brings together women from business, international organizations, civil society, think-tanks and academia from G20 member states. The W20 was established under the aegis of the G20 with the purpose of making international economic governance – the domain of the G20 – more gender-responsive, in recognition of the need to correct the stark gender inequalities in the economy, in the labour market, in the distribution of resources – including education – and in many legal arrangements. These inequalities infringe on basic human rights, and hinder economic activity and productivity growth by preventing many women from fully participating in the formal economy – and in the case of the informal economy by not adequately counting their contribution. By choosing for the first time to focus on these crucial gender-equality issues at the strategic level, the G20 leaders implicitly agreed to make this premier economic forum accountable for taking women seriously and improving their lives.

This paper takes stock of the critical steps in the development of the W20 over the past five years. It focuses on both the positive and the less successful outcomes brought forward by the W20, assessing whether and how the commitments made by the G20 on gender equality and gender-inclusive economic growth have been turned into policy goals and policy measures. The paper starts by considering the background, rationale and foundations of the W20, and identifying the areas of economic governance where it has so far contributed the most and the areas where more action is needed. It then discusses the engagement group's structure and organization, arguing that its establishment has helped define new frontiers for economic governance and shift the traditional approach from gender-neutral – or gender-blind – to gender-responsive. Next, it outlines the steps necessary in order to strengthen the role of the W20 as a credible player and to shift global economic governance while contributing to good gender-responsive domestic policies. In conclusion, the paper reflects on the W20's impact on the dynamics within the G20, in helping to ensure that international policy cooperation and peer pressure should help narrow the gender gap and remove inequality.

Why the W20? Background, rationale and foundation

Gender inclusiveness means sound economics

In late 2013, when the idea of creating an engagement group focused on bringing gender into the G20's mainstream economic and financial agenda started to take shape, the G20 was still struggling with the impact of the devastating global financial crisis that had erupted in September 2008. The G20 itself had been brought to the international stage in November 2008, when the leaders of the most advanced economies and the largest developing countries gathered in Washington, DC to discuss a coordinated response to the crisis. Before that, the group had been confined to the annual meeting of the member states' finance ministers, without any direct involvement of their leaders.¹

¹ The G20 was created on the back of the Asian financial crisis of 1997. See further Cooper, A. F. and Thakur, R. (2013), *The Group of Twenty (G20) Global Institutions series*, Abingdon and New York: Routledge.

The G20 made an effective contribution to resolving the crisis – notably at the London summit in April 2009, but somehow struggled – and still does – to function as an equally effective permanent steering committee for the global economy.² The plan to support the world economy and repair the losses caused by the crisis, announced in Pittsburgh in September 2009, looked increasingly like wishful thinking *vis-à-vis* the weak and patchy post-crisis recovery.³ To maintain its credibility as the premier forum for global economic and financial affairs, the G20 needed more coordinated policy action to steer the world economy out of the ‘mediocre normal’, and to trigger more robust growth and a full recovery.

New ideas were needed to rethink economic growth. Bringing more women to the formal labour market and measuring the contribution to GDP from unpaid domestic activities such as care for children and the elderly – mostly performed by women – became policies worth exploring. As the authors of this paper made clear in the recommendations to the G20 after the first gender-equality-focused Australian National University (ANU)–Chatham House Policy Forum,⁴ investing in gender equality and closing the gender gap are a matter not only of fundamental human rights but of sound economics.

Initially, the idea of expanding the G20 agenda and making it more diverse and more gender-responsive did not get universal support. For some G20 ‘purists’, as well as for countries concerned about the political backlash that an explicit focus on gender equality might generate among some domestic constituencies, there was no point in expanding the G20 agenda to include issues that could not be strictly classified under international macroeconomics and finance, or connected to traditional – and gender-neutral – economic issues.

But in the G20 each presidency was keen to work on matters that resonated with domestic constituencies, and this resulted in the rapid expansion of the agenda from each year to the next. Indeed, ever since it was set up as a leaders’ forum in 2008, the G20 had progressively shifted its agenda from a financial and economic focus, as a coordinated response to the global financial crisis, to issues such as food security, financial inclusion, climate change and inequalities – all of which affect long-term prosperity and welfare. This expansion, it was felt, risked resulting in a lack of focus and a working agenda that would be increasingly difficult to manage in an effective way given the one-year time frame for each host. And it was not only a matter of managing the agenda, but also of implementing past commitments and tracking their impact.

The G20 expands the agenda

However, the G20 had the ambition to move beyond its role as crisis-resolution committee and to become the beacon for global economic governance. It thus had to rethink its remit within a wider context and broaden its action. In particular, it had to stop treating economic policies as neutral –

² Cooper, A. F. (2010), ‘The G20 as an improvised crisis committee and/or a contested ‘steering committee’ for the world’, *International Affairs*, 86: 741–57.x.

³ In Pittsburgh the G20 leaders pledged to support ‘strong, sustainable and balanced’ growth, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2009/2009communique0925.html> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁴ Harris Rimmer, S. and Subacchi P. (2014), Recommendations to Sherpas from the ANU–Chatham House Policy Forum: ‘Investing in Gender Equality at the G20 Leaders Summit from Australia to Turkey’, Canberra, 24 September, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20151002RecommendationsSherpasGenderEqualityProject.pdf (accessed 1 May 2018).

in terms of their societal impact – and consider how international cooperation and coordination could offer the right incentives to ‘nudge’ people, organizations and governments to change their behaviour. Changing behaviour embraces a wide spectrum of policy areas, from climate change and environmental conservation to inequalities, poverty and discrimination. So if the G20 was serious about promoting policies to support economic growth, then why not look at the gender gap in the labour market and set the goal of increasing the number of women in formal employment (i.e. paid work), especially in countries with an ageing population? This would entail broadening the goal of promoting ‘strong, sustainable and balanced growth’ (to which the G20 leaders had committed at the Pittsburgh summit) to include the concept of ‘inclusiveness’ – ‘strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth’. Correcting the stark inequalities in economic opportunities for women therefore had the potential to generate more growth. The benefits of bringing more women into the formal economy are clear. It has been estimated that global GDP could grow by as much as \$28 trillion, or 26 per cent, by 2025 if female participation in the labour market is increased to full parity with male participation.⁵

But change is slow, and significant gender inequalities persist in all G20 member states, even among those that score relatively well in terms of women’s participation in the formal labour market, pay gap, women’s legal rights and economic empowerment. In 2012, for example, Saudi Arabia and India were assessed as lagging far behind other G20 nations in a comparative poll that rated quality of health, freedom from violence, participation in politics, workplace opportunities, property rights, access to resources such as education, and freedom from trafficking and slavery. Canada was ranked the best G20 country in which to be a woman.⁶

Even taking into account significant differences among countries – with Scandinavian countries being the most female-friendly of all – women are paid less than men (on average across the 28 member countries of the European Union, women’s gross hourly earnings in 2016 were 16.2 per cent below those of men⁷), and are under-represented in leadership positions in many companies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁸ Furthermore, women work longer hours, as they take care of family members and are often excluded from the labour market; in some countries they have limited – or no – property rights or access to finance.⁹ The World Bank notes that in 18 economies, men can legally prevent their wives from working. Worldwide, 1.7 billion women have no access to a smartphone, while fewer women – 58 per cent – have a bank account than men (65 per cent).¹⁰

⁵ McKinsey Global Institute (2015), *The power of parity: How advancing women’s equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth*, https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/McKinsey/Global%20Themes/Employment%20and%20Growth/How%20advancing%20womens%20quality%20can%20add%2012%20trillion%20to%20global%20growth/MGI%20Power%20of%20parity_Executive%20summary_September%202015.ashx (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁶ Trustlaw (2012), ‘G20 Countries Best and Worst for Women’, <http://news.trust.org/item/20120613010100-sk134/?source=spotlight> (accessed 5 Nov. 2018).

⁷ Eurostat (2018), ‘Statistics Explained: Gender pay gap statistics’, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics (accessed 23 Oct. 2018).

⁸ Subacchi, P. (2017), ‘Gender inclusiveness is key to achieving the G7’s goals’, Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale (ISPI), 25 May 2017, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/gender-inclusiveness-key-achieving-g7s-goals-16523> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁹ World Bank (2016), *Women, Business and the Law 2016: Getting to Equal*, <http://wbl.worldbank.org/~media/WBG/WBL/Documents/Reports/2016/Women-Business-and-the-Law-2016.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2018).

¹⁰ World Bank (2014), *Global Findex Database 2014: Measuring Financial Inclusion around the World*, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/187761468179367706/The-Global-Findex-Database-2014-measuring-financial-inclusion-around-the-world> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

There are still more women than men in poverty in developing as well as developed countries; many also remain excluded from economic decision-making within their own household and from participating in public life. Even if the benefits of economic gender-inclusiveness are clear, the pace of change is too slow: at the current rate it will take two centuries to achieve gender parity in the labour market.¹¹ Policies to actively promote gender inclusiveness are therefore critical to building more robust, sustainable, resilient and inclusive economies around the world.

Support from Australia and the push from Turkey

These were the ideas that the authors of this paper discussed on the margins of the conference jointly organized by ANU and the Brookings Institution, held in Canberra in November 2013 when we engaged with the Australian team that was preparing to take over the G20 presidency from December that year. Australia's support proved critical for holding the first Policy Forum on Gender and the G20, convened in Canberra in September 2014.¹² This built on the G20's awareness of the need for 'women's full economic and social participation', as stated in the G20 communiqué at the Los Cabos summit in 2012, and emphasized the slow and peripheral progress on women's economic empowerment in the G20 agenda. The forum also built on the OECD Gender Recommendations, which included a comprehensive set of policy principles, as put forward in a joint ILO-IMF-OECD-WBG report.¹³ This led the G20 labour and employment ministers to recommend that G20 Leaders adopt the goal of a reduction in the gender participation gap by 25 per cent by 2025. The discussion at the forum, with the participation of the Australian G20 team, helped facilitate the inclusion of this '25 by 25' commitment in the G20 communiqué at the Brisbane summit in November 2014.

The Canberra Policy Forum gathered representatives from government, business, academia, civil society and the diplomatic community from G20 countries to discuss gender-inclusive economic policies and to provide advice to the Australian and Turkish 'sherpas' (or emissaries) on possible measures the G20 countries could take to advance gender equality. It was supported by the Office for Women in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet of Australia, and was opened by Senator Michaela Cash, Minister assisting the Prime Minister for Women.

Discussions at the forum helped consolidate some of the principal themes that would end up shaping most of the subsequent W20 agenda. One such theme was the need to support female entrepreneurs through appropriate policies, tax incentives, access to credit and the removal of discriminatory barriers. Another addressed the need for a more comprehensive measurement of economic activity and valuing the contribution of unpaid care and domestic work to GDP. A third theme referred to women's economic empowerment – from education and skills to the removal of the glass ceiling and leadership roles in many professions, especially in the financial sector – and

¹¹ The WEF predicts that it will take 217 years to close the workplace gender gap while the global gender gap will take 100 years - the global gender gap is an overall index that measures the gender inequality in health, education, politics and the workplace. World Economic Forum (2017), Global Gender Gap Report 2017, Geneva, November 2017 <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2017/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018). According to EY, it will take 216 years to close the gender gap <https://www.ey.com/gl/en/issues/business-environment/women-fast-forward> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

¹² ANU–Chatham House Policy Forum (2014), 'Investing in Gender Equality at the G20 Leaders Summit from Australia to Turkey', Canberra, 24 September, https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20151002RecommendationsSherpasGenderEqualityProject.pdf (accessed 1 May 2018).

¹³ OECD, International Labour Office, International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group (2014), 'Achieving stronger growth by promoting a more gender-balanced economy', 15 August 2014, <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/ILO-IMF-OECD-WBG-Achieving-stronger-growth-by-promoting-a-more-gender-balanced-economy-G20.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2018).

the need for an open discussion about quotas in order to improve the representation of women in key economic, business and political institutions in their countries. A point raised at the forum – which remains unaddressed, as discussed below – was that the G20 members themselves should promote greater diversity of representation in all G20 processes, with a target of at least 30 per cent female representation across all delegations (including working groups and engagement groups). This is particularly relevant for the governance of the finance track.

Finally, the Canberra forum identified the need to provide recommendations to the G20, to set measurable and actionable goals and to develop appropriate metrics and benchmarks in order to improve accountability in measuring progress. Ideally, each country should have specific objectives and a targeted peer-review system.

The issue for the G20 of being accountable on its commitments and of measuring progress at the country level remains unaddressed – and not only in relation to the gender-equality agenda. Policy action and progress are critical not only for the G20's accountability and legitimacy,¹⁴ but also for the credibility of the W20 as an action-driven engagement group.

Through the Canberra Forum and the recommendations it produced, it was possible to engage with the sherpas of a number of G20 countries and to create support for the idea of formally establishing the W20. When Turkey took over the G20 chair from Australia in December 2014, its G20 team made a point of pressing the other member states to agree to establish the W20 as an official engagement group of the G20, and so make the goal of advancing gender-inclusive economic growth and promoting gender equality a key G20 objective. Speaking at Chatham House in late 2014, Turkey's deputy prime minister promised to support this initiative.¹⁵

Closing the global gaps in gender-conscious economic governance

The W20 was formally launched in Ankara on 6 September 2015, joining the other G20 engagement groups: B20 (business), C20 (civil society), L20 (labour), T20 (think-tanks) and Y20 (youth), as well as the – not formally recognized – G(irls)20.¹⁶ The W20 filled a governance gap. Even if since the early 2000s international and regional organizations had been thinking deeply about how to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth in a world of structural gender inequality, no such stakeholder body existed in the UN, in the G20, or in the private sector.

There has since been some progress in gender-responsive governance. The G7 has set goals for creating a gender-responsive economic environment. The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) now include achieving sustainable economic growth and pursuing gender equality. Meanwhile, the International Labour Organization (ILO) designated 'women in the new world of work' as a key theme for its centenary anniversary activities in 2017, while the World Bank and the

¹⁴ Subacchi, P. and Pickford, S. (2011), 'Legitimacy versus effectiveness for the G20: a dynamic approach to global economic governance', Briefing Paper, IE BP 2011/01, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs.

¹⁵ Turkey's G20 Presidency: Priorities for 2015, 28 November 2014, Chatham House, London, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/event/turkeys-g20-presidency-priorities-2015> (accessed 1 May 2018).

¹⁶ G(irls)20 was launched in 2009 as a Clinton Global Initiative that places women and girls at the head of economic decision-making processes. See <https://girls20.org>.

IMF put gender equality at the centre of their annual meetings in 2017. The W20 is part of this push for more responsive governance, and is itself an expression of women in economic governance.

The following discussion explores the options for the institutional design of the W20 that were available in 2014 in the broader governance context. It also outlines the work of the major actors in gender-sensitive governance that influenced the design and operation of the W20 in its first five years.

The UN

Even more than the G7, the G20 tends to keep a deliberate distance from the UN, functioning notably outside the Bretton Woods group (the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, etc.); even the UN Secretary-General is not guaranteed an invitation to the Leaders' Summit.¹⁷ From the outset, therefore, the W20 debated ways of maintaining congruence with the UN system's support for women's rights and economic empowerment, and at the same time working in line with the G20's preferred style and having impact in that forum. It also had the challenge of choosing the most appropriate knowledge partner – in the same way that, for instance, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the ILO interact through the L20. One of the obvious candidates was UN Women.

UN Women (formally the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) was established in July 2010,¹⁸ consolidating previous diffuse structures and raising the priority and profile of UN work on gender equality, women's empowerment, and the elimination of discrimination against women and girls. Two of UN Women's five priority pillars – enhancing women's economic empowerment, and ensuring that gender equality is central to national development planning and budgeting – relate to the G20 agenda. UN Women's strategic focus is on the grassroots level, engaging with women's groups around the world.¹⁹ From the outset, the flagship policy initiative aimed at corporates was the Women's Empowerment Principles, offering guidance to businesses on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community.²⁰ It took longer for the UN to focus on gender-responsive macroeconomic policy.

The High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment was established by the UN Secretary-General in January 2016,²¹ with the aim of placing women's economic empowerment at the top of the global agenda to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The final report and toolkits were released in May 2017.²² The panel members included figures also involved with the W20 and other aspects of the work of the G20 – Elizabeth Vazquez, CEO and co-

¹⁷ Caliri, A. (2011), 'Multiple Multilateralisms in the post-crisis response: UN vs. G20'. The Academic Council on the United Nations System Informational Memorandum No.1, <https://acuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/MultipleMultilateralisms.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2018).

¹⁸ However, discussion on women in the UN dates back to 1947, during which the Commission on the Status of Women was created. The Commission was supported by the Division for the Advancement of Women. Over the years, new UN offices were subsequently created including the UN Development Fund for Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

¹⁹ UN Women (2013), 'Women's Economic Empowerment Thematic Brief', http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2013/12/un%20women_ee-thematic-brief_us-web%20pdf.pdf?la=en (accessed 1 May 2018).

²⁰ See further <http://www.weprinciples.org/> (accessed 1 May 2018).

²¹ UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2016), *Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment*, <http://hlp-wee.unwomen.org/en> (accessed 1 May 2018).

²² UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment (2017), *Final Report*, <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/new-final-report-of-the-un-high-level-panel-on-womens-economic-empowerment> (accessed 1 May 2018).

founder of WEConnect International for the W20, as well as the leaders of UN Women, the IMF, the ILO, the World Bank, ITUC (L20) and Oxfam (C20 and W20).²³

The W20 leadership has held side events at each annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN headquarters in New York.²⁴ This engagement serves to integrate the work of the W20 with the wider women's movement and to contribute to issues that are relevant to both agendas, such as the future of women at work.²⁵ The focus of the 62nd session, held in March 2018, was on the empowerment of rural women and girls. This was followed on 15 March 2018 by a side event hosted by the Argentina W20 Chairs for NGOs, explaining how the G20 was relevant to women, especially rural women. On 14 March 2018 the Argentinian government hosted an official side event on 'Bridging the Digital Gender Divide', co-hosted by Australia, the OECD and Argentina's G20 presidency.

There have been other efforts to connect with, or speak to, the UN agenda. The formal launch of the W20 in 2015 offered a timely platform to engage with UN Women and the Beijing+20 campaign²⁶ and review,²⁷ and Lakshmi Puri, the deputy executive director of UN Women, spoke at the launch at the invitation of Turkey (as host country). 2015 was also a milestone for the UN Millennium Development Goals campaign as it transitioned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new SDGs. Some of the differences in the attitude of the G20 and the UN to women's economic empowerment are revealed in their approaches to the same target in these two settings.

SDG 8 aims to 'promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all'. Its headline target is to:

Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries.²⁸

This is also a G20 aspiration, in line with its mandate to pursue sustainable and balanced growth and avoid financial crises.

Within SDG 8, target 8.5 reads: 'By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.' Possible indicators²⁹ for target 8.5 include measuring the gender gap in wages

²³ These members are Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women; Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, IMF; Guy Ryder, Director-General, ILO; Jim Yong Kim, President, World Bank; Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of ITUC; and Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director, Oxfam International.

²⁴ UN TV (2018), 'W20 vision on challenges and opportunities for rural women', <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/treaty-bodies/watch/w20-vision-on-challenges-and-opportunities-for-rural-women-csw62-side-event/5752060170001/?term=?lanenglish&sort=date>, (accessed 1 May 2018). And see further the concept note for the event <http://www.un.org/webcast/pdfs/180315am-argentina.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2018).

²⁵ Commission on the Status of Women (2017), 'Concluding Sixty-first Session, Commission Agrees on Approach to Women's Economic Empowerment in Changing World of Work, 24 March 2017, ns21https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/wom2114.doc.htm (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

²⁶ For details of the Beijing +20 campaign see UN Women (2015), 'Empowering Women – Empowering Humanity: Picture It!', http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2014/beijing20brochure_print-single-web_rev2.pdf (accessed 1 Mar. 2018).

²⁷ UN Women, Political Declaration adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, March 2015, <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/declaration-en.pdf?la=en&vs=4833> (accessed 1 Mar. 2018). See further Harris Rimmer, S. (2016), 'The Architecture of Women's Economic Empowerment', International Law Girls Blog, 23 April 2016, <https://ilg2.org/2016/04/23/the-architecture-of-womens-economic-empowerment/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

²⁸ UN, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>.

²⁹ UN, Sustainable Development Goals, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/>.

by sector of economic activity. The G20 has an agreed process for measuring progress by an earlier deadline of 2025, working through the ILO and the OECD.³⁰

The SDGs are emblematic of the disconnect between the more rights-based organs of the UN and the influential international economic forums, such as the G20, that are working on the same issues specifically within a developed-country framework.³¹

The SDGs show greater engagement with structural issues of gender equality, notably using language from the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the ILO Conventions and the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action in SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). Among the targets set within SDG 5 are to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work; to ensure the full and effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life; and to give women equal rights to productive resources including land and credit.³²

Notably, the G20 has no process to measure the indicator of unpaid work as it proceeds towards changes in the formal labour market. On the other hand, the G20's flexible space and limited membership should make it more likely to make demonstrable, and faster, progress towards its targets. Both the SDGs and the Brisbane G20 target allow for 'national circumstances' to be taken into account. Some G20 members have now published strategies explicitly to reach the '25 by 25' target,³³ and the W20 should promote this direction of travel in national contexts.

Rather than pursuing gender issues through the UN, the G20 often chooses to work through the OECD. This poses some data sharing challenges for G20 countries that are not members of the OECD, such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia and current host Argentina – although all have working relationships with the organization.

The W20 needs a strategy for maintaining policy coherence and furthering access to G20 thinking through its interaction with the international organizations. The G20 Development Working Group should be a stronger focus for the W20, providing a path to coherent implementation of the SDGs by each G20 member.

The private sector

There was no specific platform within the private sector pressing for gender equality in economic governance at the time the W20 was first established, but it was already building support for, and interest in, the agenda. Increasingly, the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos was criticized for

³⁰ OECD and ILO, *Monitoring progress in reducing the gender gap in labour force participation*, Report prepared for the meeting of the G20 Employment Working Group, Istanbul, Turkey, 7–8 May 2015, <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/Monitoring-progress-in-reducing-the-gender-gap-in-labour-force-participation.pdf> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

³¹ Harris Rimmer (2016), 'The Architecture of Women's Economic Empowerment'.

³² The full set of targets is set out at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>.

³³ See for example Commonwealth of Australia (2017), *Towards 2025: An Australian Government Strategy to Boost women's Workforce Participation*, <http://womensworkforceparticipation.pmc.gov.au/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

its lack of female participation.³⁴ Since 2006, however, the WEF has produced an annual Global Gender Gap Report that identifies gender equality as a structural risk.³⁵

International corporations such as McKinsey, PWC and EY have produced influential research and policy reports presenting the business case for gender-inclusive policies. Several, including EY, support and attend the W20 in a generous and sustained manner. Some support is highly significant in other parts of the G20, such as Mastercard's involvement with the Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion.

However, the B20, the most influential of the G20 partners, has not yet identified gender equality as a priority in its calls to G20 leaders, although it has shown support for the UN Women's Empowerment Principles in its events.

From the outset, many of the delegates to the W20 summits have been entrepreneurs. Women's leadership in business and STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and the promotion of female entrepreneurship dominated the first meetings, in contrast with the more structural aspects of the G20 finance agenda.

With the establishment of the Business Women Leaders' Taskforce in Hamburg in 2017, it is anticipated that the W20 and B20 will work together to produce a high-level gathering.³⁶ The W20 held its first Davos breakfast at the WEF in January 2018, with Argentina's first lady, Juliana Awada.

Existing G20 engagement groups

It is no small endeavour to create a new G20 outreach partner. The primary objective for an engagement group is to identify policy priorities for the G20 and give feedback on its past actions. From the perspective of an engagement group, we define success as a mix of the following elements:

- A process perceived as legitimate, which produces coherent and timely policy recommendations or language that are received favourably by the G20 members (including by being adopted in the final communiqué);
- Access to G20 officials, ministers and leaders in order to prosecute an advocacy strategy and promote its recommendations; or socialize ideas; or provide feedback on implementation of agreed outcomes;
- Influence over or early awareness of G20 agreements that may affect the interests of that particular group;

³⁴ Stevenson, A, 'A Push for Gender Equality at the Davos World Economic Forum, and Beyond', New York Times, 19 January 2016. But note that the WEF was entirely chaired by women in 2018.

³⁵ World Economic Forum (2018), Global Risks Report 2018, <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2018/global-risks-2018-fractures-fears-and-failures/> (accessed 1 May 2018).

³⁶ There is no clear public information on the Taskforce. There are reports that Vice President Gabriela Michetti reached an agreement with Queen Letizia of Spain in November 2017 to organize a meeting of female leaders during the 2018 G20 summit in Buenos Aires. See for example Collinger, B. (2017), '2018 G-20: Vice President Michetti Organizes Global Female Leaders' Summit with Queen of Spain', *The Bubble*, 17 November 2017.

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- Quality knowledge products,³⁷ such as reports on particular issues or scorecards rating the fulfilment of G20 commitments against agreed targets, which are used by the media or officials;
 - Opportunities for international and national networking and engagement with the media; and
 - Enhancing the reputation and effectiveness of the G20.

Given this formula for an ‘ideal’ engagement group (or social partner), the first dilemma faced in establishing the W20 was whether to create a new group or focus on existing outreach groups, to avoid the charge of adding yet another ingredient to what has sometimes been called the ‘alphabet soup’ of the G20. Another concern was that in creating the W20 there was a risk of instituting a ‘gender ghetto’ where issues of gender-responsive economic governance would be marginalized and otherwise ignored. There was discussion of hosting G20 meetings of ministers for women, but there was a lack of consistency in how this portfolio was distributed from government to government; the position of minister for women is often a junior post, and is in some cases held by a man.

Overall, it was felt that the existing G20 engagement groups were not providing focused guidance to leaders on gender-equality issues, with the exception of the L20 on women’s working life. These groups were, moreover, largely male-dominated, and very rarely had female leadership – with the notable exception of Sharan Burrow at the L20. The idea for the W20 emerged from the margins of Think20 meetings, where women were relatively thin on the ground.³⁸ The C20 was also new, meeting as an official engagement group for the first time in Australia. With the establishment of the W20 and the C20, it was felt that there could and should be useful crossover between the two groups. This was immediately evident in Turkey in 2015; it was less so, however, the following year in China, where the civil society space was more constrained.

In view of the resistance shown at the establishment of another engagement group, the W20 had to demonstrate added value for its policy work in the first five years.³⁹ It did work successfully with the other engagement groups in a strategic fashion in Germany in 2017, including achieving a prominent appearance on the B20 summit programme. At the invitation of the W20, the heads of several international organizations addressed that year’s W20 summit in Berlin, offering their perspectives on the G20 agenda.

The W20 still has strategic choices to make about knowledge partners and about the selection of delegates, and can refine ways of working with other engagement groups, the private sector and international organizations. With limited resources, it must decide which events and partners to focus on. The next section assesses how the W20 has actually worked as a process, and what impact it has made on the G20 agenda thus far.

³⁷ ‘Knowledge products’ is a term used by the international financial institutions and other organizations to describe research or information presented so that a reader can take action on the contents.

³⁸ The Think20 is the engagement group for G20 think-tanks, such as T20 Argentina, <https://t20argentina.org/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018). On the under-representation of women in think-tanks, see further Zenko, M. (2011), ‘It’s a Man’s World’, *Foreign Policy*, 14 July 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/14/its-a-mans-world/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

³⁹ Wurf, H. (2015), ‘Can the W20 influence the G20 to unlock opportunities for women?’, Lowy Institute Interpreter (blog), 11 September, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/can-w20-influence-g20-unlock-opportunities-women> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

The new frontiers of economic governance

The W20: structure and methodology

Turkey chose to create the W20 in a rather formal way, asking each member state to appoint three representatives from organizations in the fields of civil society, academia and business that promote gender equality and support female entrepreneurship.⁴⁰ The role of these delegates is to contribute to the agenda of the W20 summit, and feed into the summit communiqué and recommendations for the G20. Critically, the W20 delegates need to achieve consensus on the communiqué and recommendations; given their diversity of background, interests and priorities, this is a complex and time-consuming process that unfolds over several weeks before the summit. An online platform was introduced in 2017 to enable delegates to exchange views and engage with one another. The whole consultative process ahead of the Berlin summit was then effectively managed through that platform.

Although at the informal level ideas flow freely and networking is strong at the W20 summit itself, the decision to emulate the structure of the G20, with a summit and a final communiqué, has inevitably resulted in some stiffening of the exchange among delegates as this is channelled into a formal process. This risks curbing the dialogue within and around the W20 at the formal level. However, since legitimacy has been a key concern for the W20 since its inception, the decision was made to involve a plurality of stakeholders even if this sometimes undermines efficiency. Being appointed by their member states and therefore having the right to vote on the W20 agenda and final communiqué gives legitimacy to these W20 representatives and so makes them direct interlocutors of the G20. The W20 communiqué is given to the G20 chair, who will then present it and discuss it with other member states. The objective is that some recommendations will be adopted by the G20.

There are two inherent problems with this structure. First, many W20 delegates are not familiar with the G20 process, and therefore the concerns that emerge from the W20 do not always resonate with the G20 agenda or are too broad to drive significant commitments. Furthermore, the W20 has not been able to engage on a sustainable basis with the finance track. The bulk of the engagement hitherto has been with the sherpa track, which deals with the labour market, food security, entrepreneurship, economic development and international trade. In future, it will be crucial to engage with finance ministers and their deputies on gender-responsive fiscal policies, investments in social infrastructure and financial regulations. W20 delegates require better baseline knowledge about the G20, which will be a useful resource for women around the world generally.

The second problem with the W20 institutional architecture relates to how delegates fund their work for, and participation in, the W20 summit – a problem that is not unique to the W20. Most delegates are self-funded, and their participation in the W20 process ultimately depends on the resources available to their organizations. And given that a significant number of women's organizations around the W20 table are small, with a limited budget, supporting the W20 and

⁴⁰ In reality, however, not all member states appointed their delegates for the first W20 summit. Furthermore, when delegates step down it is not clear whether their replacements/successors should be appointed by the relevant government or whether the civil/private sector will identify their own reps.

attending events – especially the summit – is often challenging. The W20 itself is supported by the country that chairs the G20. This covers the organization of the summit and the costs of the secretariat, but often the W20 chair needs to look for external sponsors to cover the shortfalls. However, limited financial resources mean that there is no capacity for a deeper engagement – for example, through publication of research or advocacy papers. In the Bellagio Action Plan,⁴¹ it was suggested that several working groups should run ahead of the summit to better influence policy. These have been formally established but are so far self-funded.⁴²

Financial constraints, and the fact that, like the G20, the W20 does not have a permanent secretariat, impinge on continuity; furthermore, the need to rely on the host country's financial support can, in principle, have an impact on the agenda. As suggested in the Bellagio Action Plan, the best way to remedy this problem is to have a network of organizations and individuals happy and willing to support the W20 in the long term through policy-oriented research, recommendations and advocacy.

W20 recommendations and G20 commitments

The G20 first embraced gender equality in Los Cabos in 2012, declaring:

We commit to take concrete actions to overcome the barriers hindering women's full economic and social participation and to expand economic opportunities for women in G20 economies. We also express our firm commitment to advance gender equality in all areas, including skills training, wages and salaries, treatment in the workplace, and responsibilities in care-giving.⁴³

Two years later, in 2014, the G20 made a clear and measurable commitment to reduce the gender gap in the labour market and increase women's participation in the formal economy.

In Brisbane, the G20 leaders pledged to reduce 'the gap in participation rates between men and women in our countries by 25 per cent by 2025, taking into account national circumstances, to bring more than 100 million women into the labour force, significantly increase global growth and reduce poverty and inequality'.⁴⁴ This was the most significant commitment towards correcting the gender gap in the labour market and promoting gender-inclusive growth. Moving away from the broad statements in the previous communiqués in favour of a measurable commitment makes the Brisbane summit a key moment for gender-inclusive governance. However, this major step forward for gender equality received no more than an acknowledgment in the final communiqué at the G20 summit in Antalya in 2015.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Hangzhou communiqué, in 2016, refers cursorily to gender equality by pledging more effort to achieve greater inclusiveness and address inequality – 'so that no one is left behind' – to increase the number of women in science, technology and

⁴¹ The authors of this paper both contributed to the Bellagio Group on Gender and Growth (2016), 'Putting gender equality at the core of the G20 agenda Action Plan 2016–17', London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2016-09-15-bellagio-group-gender-g20.pdf> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ 'G20 Leaders' Declaration', Los Cabos, Mexico, 19 June 2012, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2012/2012-0619-loscabos.html> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁴⁴ 'G20 Leaders' Communiqué', Brisbane Summit, 15–16 November 2014, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000059841.pdf> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁴⁵ 'We welcome the establishment of the Women20 and look forward to its active contributions going forward.' 'G20 Leaders' Communiqué', Antalya Summit, 15–16 November 2015, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2015/151116-draft-communicue.pdf> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

innovation, to support businesses led by women and equitable access to finance – ‘with a focus on women and youth’.⁴⁶

The real breakthrough for the W20 came only at the summit in Hamburg in July 2017, when the G20 endorsed the launch of the Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi) and established the Business Women Leaders’ Taskforce. The communiqué outlined a plan to support women entrepreneurs, with some clear financial commitments; it also contained a section on women’s empowerment that reiterated the 2014 Brisbane ‘25 by 25’ commitment.⁴⁷

The language of the communiqué – the use of ‘women’s empowerment’ and the avoidance of the more politically charged term ‘gender equality’ – and the focus on entrepreneurship and leadership suggest that success for women’s equality in Hamburg was partial, and to some extent the unintentional outcome of a tangled diplomatic situation. Women’s economic empowerment was in fact one of the few areas where the G20 was able to achieve some consensus. With the new US administration of Donald Trump signalling a preference for bilateral deals as opposed to multilateral agreements in the areas of international trade, financial regulations and climate change, it proved difficult for the G20 and the G7 and their chairs – respectively Germany and Italy – to find areas where consensus could be built. The tense relationship between President Trump and Angela Merkel that became particularly evident when the German Chancellor visited Washington in March 2017 made the task of engaging with the US more arduous.

Merkel did, however, find an ally in support of women’s empowerment in Ivanka Trump – the self-defined US ‘first daughter’. On the eve of the W20 Berlin summit, the *Financial Times* published an op-ed by Ivanka Trump and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim that emphasized the importance of bringing more women into the labour market and encouraging female entrepreneurs.⁴⁸ Arguably, Merkel picked gender equality not out of particular conviction – ‘I am not a feminist’, she stated at the W20 summit – but purely because it was one of the few items that were unlikely to be blocked by the US administration. Whatever the intention, the outcome was positive.

We-Fi, a Financial Intermediary Fund managed by the World Bank, is the first initiative collectively endorsed by the G20 to tackle gender inequality; previously, the responsibility to respond to commitments such as ‘25 by 25’ had been left to the domestic policy domain of each member state. Its function is to support female-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in ‘World Bank Group client countries’⁴⁹ by facilitating access to capital, providing technical assistance, and investing in other projects and programmes that support women. The initial target was to have G20 countries commit at least \$100 million to allow the initiative to leverage the initial capital and raise more than \$1 billion of financing as a mix of donor grant funding and commercial financing. The response was better than expected, and by the time of the formal launch of We-Fi in October 2017, the World Bank stated that donor commitments exceeding \$340 million had already been received.

⁴⁶ G20 Leaders’ Communiqué, Hangzhou Summit, 5–6 September 2016,

http://www.g20chn.org/English/Dynamic/201609/t20160906_3396.html (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁴⁷ G20 Leaders’ Declaration: Shaping an Interconnected World, Hamburg, 8 July 2017, <http://www.g20.utoronto.ca/2017/2017-G20-leaders-declaration.html> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁴⁸ ‘Investment in women unleashes global gains’, *Financial Times*, 27 April 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/4d028aae-28f2-11e7-bc4b-5528796fe35c> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁴⁹ World Bank, ‘New World Bank Group Facility to Enable more than \$1 billion for Women Entrepreneurship’, press release, 8 July 2017, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/07/08/new-world-bank-group-facility-to-enable-more-than-1-billion-for-women-entrepreneurship> (accessed 1 May 2018).

A number of G20 members – Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, the UK and the US – and non-G20 countries – Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Arab Emirates – were among those supporting the initiative from the outset.⁵⁰ The first call for project proposals was launched at this time, with up to \$150 million in grants available through the World Bank and the regional multilateral development banks. The first approved proposals were announced in April 2018, with \$120 million directed to proposals submitted through the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and the World Bank Group.⁵¹

The key question with regard to We-Fi is whether it will manage to develop into a truly public-private funding facility aimed at providing capital and credit to female-led sustainable and potentially scalable SMEs in developing countries, or be more focused on poverty relief and micro-credit. If the latter, it risks replicating many existing programmes. Indeed the gap to be addressed is at the level of SMEs that need ‘to scale their operation, build capacity, ensure their equal access to finance and markets, and accord them their fair share in global value chains’, as recommended by the W20.⁵² By focusing on the ability of female entrepreneurs to service their debt and build financial sustainable enterprises, the We-Fi fund will be in a position to continue to serve this market and even to expand its resources. Only by having a clear mandate, identifying the best channels for disbursing the funding, and establishing strong governance and best practice can the We-Fi fund fill this critical gap and make a significant difference for women entrepreneurs in developing countries. For the moment, the jury is still out.

Achievements so far

The main achievements of the W20 over the last five years are in having contributed to putting gender equality on the global economic agenda, and having shifted economic governance from gender-neutral to gender-responsive. If, prior to the W20’s inception, gender was considered a marginal issue better left to ministers for equal opportunities, gender equality and women’s economic empowerment are now part of the mainstream economic dialogue. Not only did consideration of the gender gap and economic empowerment feature prominently on the WEF programme at Davos in January 2018, but access to finance for women, education and skills, tax policies and infrastructure investments, and all policies aimed at closing the gender gap were discussed at the 2017 IMF–World Bank spring and annual meetings. Furthermore, multilateral financial institutions increasingly include diversity in their intervention plans, and press the governments of recipient countries to address gender inequalities. This would have been inconceivable just a few years ago, when economic theory and policy practice were expected to be gender-neutral as well as socially neutral. Even the G7, under Italy’s presidency in 2017, put gender equality firmly on the agenda, and in Taormina in May of that year the leaders agreed to adopt a Roadmap for a Gender-responsive Economic Environment.⁵³ In Davos in January 2018, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau emphasized the advancement of gender equality and established a Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC) with the objective of informing the work of the G7 under

⁵⁰ World Bank, ‘Statement on Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (We-Fi)’, press release, 12 October 2017, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/10/12/statement-on-women-entrepreneurs-finance-initiative-we-fi> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁵¹ Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, <http://we-fi.org/how-we-operate/> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁵² http://www.w20-germany.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/W20_Communique_Final.pdf.

⁵³ G7, G7 Roadmap for a Gender-Responsive Economic Environment, <http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/summit/2017taormina/gender.html> (accessed 6 Jul. 2018).

that year's Canadian presidency.⁵⁴ Following the recommendations to the G7 leaders in Charlevoix to 'make gender inequality history',⁵⁵ the G7 committed to put together \$3.8 billion for education for women and girls in developing countries.⁵⁶ President Emmanuel Macron has announced that the GEAC will continue its work under the French G7 presidency in 2019.⁵⁷

Such developments are positive, but the achievements of the past few years need to be put in perspective. First, in light of the persisting inequality and wide gender gap, recent progress should be seen as the exception rather than the norm. Second, the most tangible goal in terms of closing the gender gap remains the '25 by 25' commitment. An example of how G20 members implement and track their progress is Australia's 'Towards 2025' strategy, launched in 2017 to boost women's participation in the workforce in line with the G20 target.⁵⁸ On the whole, however, progress has been at best incremental, and there has not been enough peer pressure to keep up with the '25 by 25' commitment. Nor has there been any specific capture of good practice across members on responses to the target.

This leads to a third point: progress on gender equality is too slow and too peripheral to drive change in the relatively short term – over one generation, for example. Initiatives like We-Fi are commendable, but there is the risk that after much early fanfare they may fall short in terms of delivery. In any case, such initiatives are likely to have limited impact in isolation. Active domestic policies are needed, and governments must embrace credible policies to bring more women into the labour market, improve access to education and finance, close the pay gap, invest in social infrastructure – especially childcare and assistance for the elderly – and support female entrepreneurs. Moreover, these domestic policies need to be internationally coordinated to ensure that action and benefits are widespread.

Where next?

The gap between visibility and action – and the problem of limited resources

Gender is now a key theme in multilateral economic governance, and inclusivity and fairness are intrinsic to the G20 agenda of 'strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth'. Presenting the G20 agenda for 2018, Argentina's President Mauricio Macri referred to 'gender mainstreaming', with the aim of ensuring that the three main topics of focus – the future of work, infrastructure for development and a sustainable food future⁵⁹ – include measures to advance female empowerment. He declared: 'We will boost women's empowerment, the elimination of gender disparities in

⁵⁴ WEF, Justin Trudeau's address, 23 January 2018, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/pm-keynote-remarks-for-world-economic-forum-2018/> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁵⁵ G7 Charlevoix, Recommendations from the Gender Equality Advisory Council for Canada's G7 Presidency, June 2018, <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-presidency/gender-equality-advisory-council/recommendations/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁵⁶ G7 Charlevoix, Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education for Girls, Adolescent Girls and Women in Developing Countries, June 2018, <https://g7.gc.ca/en/official-documents/charlevoix-declaration-quality-education-girls-adolescent-girls-women-developing-countries/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

⁵⁷ <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-presidency/gender-equality-advisory-council/recommendations/>

⁵⁸ Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Towards 2025: An Australian Government Strategy to Boost Women's Workforce Participation*, July 2017, <http://womensworkforceparticipation.pmc.gov.au> (accessed 1 May 2018).

⁵⁹ Overview of Argentina's G20 Presidency 2018, Building Consensus for Fair and Sustainable Development, Buenos Aires, 1 December 2017, <https://g20.argentina.gob.ar/en/overview-argentinas-g20-presidency-2018> (accessed 1 May 2018).

employment, science, technology and education, and protection from all forms of gender-based violence.’⁶⁰

Acknowledging the importance of gender inclusiveness for the G20 agenda underscores the progress achieved in 2017, and the fact that the W20 now has a legitimate and recognized space within the G20 architecture. However, this does not equate to having a strong and influential policy role. Because of its heterogeneous formation, as discussed above, its lack of experience in economic diplomacy, and the difficulty of ensuring continuity from one year’s presidency to the next, the W20 lacks both policy content and monitoring capacity. As a result, its impact on the G20 is limited, and depends almost exclusively on being adopted as a platform by the latter. This is what happened in 2015, when the W20 was embraced by Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressly to show his own commitment to women’s empowerment; and again in 2017 when German Chancellor Angela Merkel used the W20 to find common ground with the US. While progress towards gender parity is what ultimately counts, having little or no policy traction other than through leaders’ own motivations leaves the W20 hostage to fortune.

The G7 Roadmap: is there scope for an overlapping agenda?

This vulnerability means that progress has been patchy. With the notable exceptions of ‘25 by 25’ and We-Fi, the G20 has not committed to any measures or to any measurable target to advance gender parity. It is even open to question whether We-Fi itself reflects the G20 financial commitment, as not all G20 member states have pledged to support it. Furthermore, there is no shared roadmap that has been adopted by the G20 leaders (unlike the G7), no mechanism to monitor implementation, and not even a shared language. It is somewhat concerning that the concept of gender equality remains alien to the language of the G20, with its preference for the more neutral ‘women’s empowerment’. The latter is, in effect, a much larger box that includes structural policies to improve the supply of education and training for women and girls without, however, addressing the reality that in some G20 countries women still have limited legal and civil rights. More monitoring, ‘naming and shaming’ and peer review are necessary among the members of the G20 to ensure that empowerment does not become a comfortable narrative for avoiding more impactful – albeit more controversial – policy measures.

To some extent, the G7, a latecomer to gender equality, has made more significant progress in the past 12 months than has the G20 since 2013. The G7 Roadmap for a Gender-responsive Economic Environment contains some of the recommendations that the W20 made to the G20 in 2014 and in 2015. The recommendations from the GEAC for Canada’s G7 presidency build on the roadmap, asking the leaders to ‘make gender inequality history’ and putting forward ‘concrete commitments, new investments and measurable targets to advance gender equality’.⁶¹

Both documents underscore the need to tackle poverty among older women, immigrants and women who have never worked in the formal sector, and also note the urgent need to measure the contribution to national output made by unpaid domestic and care work. In addition, they both support a gender-conscious fiscal policy that will contribute to bringing more women into the

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ G7 Presidency, ‘Recommendations from the Gender Equality Advisory Council for Canada’s G7 Presidency’, June 2018, <https://g7.gc.ca/en/g7-presidency/gender-equality-advisory-council/recommendations/> (accessed 8 Jul. 2018).

formal labour market. The language is clear, too, setting ‘gender equality’ as an objective together with the less defined and more ambiguous ‘women’s empowerment’.⁶² Canada, which holds the current G7 presidency, has included ‘advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment’ among the five themes of this year’s G7, and gender equality will feature in all ministerial meetings – on employment and innovation, foreign affairs and security, finance and development, and environment and energy.

While there is a substantial overlap with the G20 agenda, the G7 approach to gender seems more integrated and more focused on policy outcomes, in particular on ‘high quality childcare that is accessible and affordable’,⁶³ as the joint endeavour of the finance and economic development ministers. There is clearly some resistance among the BRICS members of the G20 to working with the G7, and there is little appetite to embrace an overarching gender-equality strategy – but that already exists at the UN level. However, it is important to avoid duplicating efforts, and there is scope for the G7 and the G20 to work together to achieve measurable progress on the gender agenda.

More focus, better coordination and some hard targets

The W20 has to date rightly focused on visibility and recognition, investing considerable resources on the annual summit and on direct engagement with each year’s presidency. Now it is time to focus more on strengthening its engagement in the G20 process, including collaboration with the other engagement groups – B20, C20, L20, T20 and Y20.⁶⁴ The W20 should also focus on improving dialogue among delegates – the W20 led by Germany made significant progress in the latter – and shoring up content. The working groups, which were introduced by the German presidency on the recommendations of the Bellagio Action Plan, are a good way to develop a deep policy dialogue, bring together actionable recommendations with measurable targets and create continuity.

By improving content and strengthening its engagement with the G20 process, the W20 should aim to increase its influence within that process and so be actively supported by the G20 leaders. At the same time, the leaders must become more aware of the need to reframe their objectives and encompass inclusive growth that respects women’s economic rights. This is a challenging enterprise, but some initial steps are presented below, together with a conceptualization of the long-term aim.

The next steps: an actionable plan for the W20

A feminist and rights-based agenda

Members of the W20 should be expected to bring their specific experience of coping with austerity and other policy measures taken to combat the financial crisis, which disproportionately impacted on women and girls, and this feedback is valuable. But the W20 could go further towards a more transformational approach. This paper’s proposal for the G20 is feminist and rights-based. The G20

⁶² To be clear, measures to empower women – such as, for example, allowing women to drive a car – do not necessarily affect their participation in the labour market, their access to finance and their right to equal pay for the same job.

⁶³ G7 Presidency, ‘Charlevoix Commitment on Equality and Economic Growth’, June 2018, <https://g7.gc.ca/en/official-documents/charlevoix-commitment-equality-economic-growth/> (accessed 18 Oct. 2018).

⁶⁴ As already indicated, it is also worth mentioning G(irls)20, which, though not a formal engagement group, has been active in promoting girls’ education (see footnote 16 above).

should emphasize interventions throughout the life-cycle, noting women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care, rather than fixate on formal employment. A feminist agenda at the G20 should draw attention to the current empirical evidence of women's exclusion from the benefit of their economic activity. The UN High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment has taken this approach. That same spirit of addressing the feminization of poverty shown in the Beijing Platform for Action should also be more prominent in the W20.

In order to engage with the G20 in a more meaningful way, the W20 should focus on the G20 working groups on development and on trade and investment. These are both part of the sherpa track, and will be prominent in the run-up to the 2018 Leaders' Summit in Buenos Aires. The Trade and Investment Working Group, in particular, lacks structural gender analysis, even though its mantra is that trade and investment must benefit all.

Moreover, the W20 should ensure that decisions taken by G20 members in the interests of promoting gender-inclusive growth are consistent with the SDGs and are aligned with the work of the UN human rights system.⁶⁵ This would promote coherency and also enhance the relevance of the G20 to a wider array of women's organizations currently engaged with the UN system.

The W20 should also engage with the G20 finance track (i.e. finance ministers and central bank governors), especially in areas such as gender-sensitive fiscal policy and structural reforms as key elements in boosting growth and achieving the goal of 'strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive growth'. To this end, the W20 should set up a working group to define the indicators of a gender-responsive fiscal policy and establish a monitoring system to report on the performance of G20 countries in this regard.

Promoting gender balance in G20 representation

The W20 should encourage the G20 itself to model good practices on gender. It should, for instance, as the Bellagio Action Plan has recommended, press the G20 to undertake a gender audit of public-sector employees, with the objective of better understanding where the gaps are – prioritizing finance ministries and central banks and then extending the work to all G20 delegations. There is, moreover, a need for good data to encourage governments to improve outcomes. In addition, the G20 should highlight good gender practice, pointing to examples of companies and government programmes committed to gender-inclusive growth.

The reality is that economic governance is weighted against the participation of women. With Janet Yellen no longer at the helm of the US Federal Reserve, as President Trump chose not to reappoint her for a second term, the only woman among the governors of the G20 central banks is Elvira Nabiullina of Russia. The G20 finance ministers are all men, and there are just two women among the leaders – German Chancellor Angela Merkel and UK Prime Minister Theresa May. Among the permanent invited guests, the only woman is Christine Lagarde, in her capacity as managing director of the IMF. Photograph after photograph of the many G20 meetings tell the same story of gender exclusion, although the Development Working Group is often an exception. In 2018 women made up at most only 15 per cent of the combined heads of state, finance ministers, central bank

⁶⁵ Harris Rimmer, S. (2017), 'Why Ivanka Trump was the least newsworthy aspect of the Women20 Summit', Lowy Interpreter, 28 April 2017, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/why-ivanka-trump-was-least-newsworthy-aspect-women20-summit> (accessed 7 Jul. 2018).

governors and sherpas in the G20. The economic status and rights of women also remain on the periphery of the G20 agenda. This is mainly because domestic economic governance institutions such as central banks, finance departments and treasury departments remain male-dominated (and with little diversity even among this cohort). There have been recent efforts to remedy this situation. The Reserve Bank of Australia, for example, has set a target of 35 per cent of managerial positions to be occupied by women by 2020, with a longer-term goal of 40 per cent, from its 2017 level of 31 per cent.⁶⁶

The W20 should press the G20 to commit to the panel pledge initiative⁶⁷ in order to promote a better gender balance among speakers at G20 forums. For example, all G20 member countries could commit to not contributing to any all-male panel. This initiative was used quite effectively during the 2014 B20 meetings to push for greater representation of female speakers on its panels, increasing the numbers considerably, but the pledge has been inconsistently maintained at B20 events since then.

Monitoring the '25 by 25' target and We-Fi policy outcomes

Linking the macroeconomic policy challenges to the increased representation of women in economic governance gives the best chance of success. But setting out policy recommendations is not enough if these commitments are not buttressed by measurable targets. Even when hard targets are set and agreed, as in the case of the '25 by 25' target, data by country are scattered, as are data on progress so far. The W20 should collect comparable figures for all G20 countries and make an annual assessment of progress.

In addition, the W20 should encourage the G20 members to agree on drafting and making public national strategies or commitments and plans for gender equality. Australia's 'Towards 2025' strategy, devised with a G20-agreed target in mind, could serve as a useful template for other member countries to set out their own national strategies. These national plans would then provide a point of reference whereby the W20 can measure, monitor, compare and mount pressure on an annual basis.

This assessment would then provide some tangible reference points for examining the challenges to gender equality and diversity posed by the 'future of work' scenarios that are part of Argentina's G20 agenda. The shift towards a digitally driven, knowledge-based economy highlights even more strongly the need to invest in women's education and digital literacy. The social policy stakes for this transition are high. Notably, the increasing trend towards freelance and contract employment entails real risks in terms of workplace conditions such as maternity, paternity and carer's leave.

Regarding We-Fi, along with monitoring the policy outcomes, the W20 should promote some discussion within the context of the working group on financial inclusion on how this initiative could best be measured, tracked and evaluated, with the objective of setting shared and solid performance indicators.

⁶⁶ Reserve Bank of Australia, 'Equity & Diversity Annual Report – 2016', <https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/annual-reports/ead/2016/diversity-initiatives-and-profile.html> (accessed 1 Mar. 2018).

⁶⁷ See for example, the International Gender Champions Panel Parity Pledge, <https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/igc-production/files/NNn34foqvO9oFQRSWWazinexpuKIIdNv.pdf> (accessed 1 Mar. 2018).

Moreover, the W20 should regularly attend the Spring and Annual meetings of the IMF and World Bank Group, in order to monitor We-Fi and so make its mark on the finance track of the G20.

Conclusion

Five years after the inception of the W20, women and gender equality remain at the margin of the G20. Given this disappointing scenario, there is a real risk of the W20 representing a one-off territorial gain at a frontier that could easily be pushed back again. Visibility has been very helpful in raising the profile of the W20, but this must be translated into credibility in the eyes of G20 officials and in terms of policy action. An unfocused and lengthy communiqué unrelated to the G20 agenda in the future may lead to regression.

Broadly, the areas where progress has been disappointing since 2013 are in taking gender-equality issues from the micro to the macro level. Many G20 countries do not have a clear public strategy that can be interrogated. One exception is Japan, with its structural economic policy that includes gender equality as a key pillar.⁶⁸ Real difficulties in achieving good-quality comparable data across the G20 members also bedevil attempts to monitor targets. The W20 must devise methods of obtaining and sharing data on G20 commitments.

There has also been a lack of creativity and forecasting. Where will new jobs for women come from? And how can we ensure that these are decent jobs? Will women be penalized if there is less manual labour? How can attitudinal change be promoted so that decent jobs for women are accepted where there is scarcity in employment?⁶⁹ When will countries properly measure the informal labour market and get a clear picture of gender-sensitive economic reforms? Every aspect of the G20 agenda can be interrogated from the perspective of gender, from trade to anti-corruption measures to tax.

It is critical to keep an eye on the gender-conscious ‘big picture’, as well as responding to each G20 presidency’s priorities. That big picture includes the poverty of women in every economy on earth, as well as the distributional effect of poverty. Gender-conscious economic governance has never been more important.

⁶⁸ Chotani, V. M. (2017), 'Five Years On, Where Does Abe's 'Womenomics' Stand?', *Journal of International Affairs*, 30 July, <https://ia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/five-years-where-does-abe%E2%80%99%E2%80%98womenomics%E2%80%99-stand>.

⁶⁹ Eswaran, M. (2014), *Why Gender Matters in Economics*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press.

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