10th Recommendation – Translate into Action G20 Commitments on Gender, Racial and Ethnic Equality

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Introduction

One of the main drivers of social and economic inequalities is the distribution of both paid and unpaid care and domestic work between genders. Care production and delivery, which lies disproportionately on women, is not only what enables the functioning of our economies and societies, but also constitutes one of the key sectors which can avert the deepening of the polycrises we are facing globally. However, the social and economic value of care economy remains highly invisible. Not only is it not usually quantified in traditional instruments to measure development and growth, such as gross domestic product (GDP), but also not considered in the design of policy. On the contrary, data generation and collection is often blind to gender, race, and ethnicity, among other inequalities.

Over the last decade, policies on care and gender economic equity have become more and more relevant to the G20 process. However, there is much to be done to translate gender, racial and ethnic equality commitments into action.

Articulating a global effort to compile and publicize relevant data that help track global inequality trends, foster every country to develop or strengthen its social data collection system, aiming to produce disaggregated data to designed informed policies – as stated in the T20 Communiqué's 10th recommendation – can be a superlative contribution of the G20 in this direction.

This Commentary aims to put forward a concrete example of an indicator that has the potential of improving the efficacy of care policies: the Basic Care Basket. It does so by recognizing and measuring care work and its socioeconomic contributions, through the collection of disaggregated and comparable data. Given its prospect contribution, there is much that can be won if replicated and disseminated by the G20 platform.

Policy Recommendation Overview

The generation of disaggregated data for the design and implementation of unbiased evidence-based policies arises as a cross-cutting recommendation included both in the T20 Communiqué as well as in the Taskforce 01's Statement (T20 2024a; T20 2024b).

However, we can't change what we don't see and what we don't see we don't measure. Women's contribution to the economy has been historically underestimated (Díaz Langou et al. 2024). This is mainly because they shoulder the lion's share of care production and delivery, which is something relegated to the households' sphere, and within them, to women and girls. Due to gender stereotypes and social norms institutionally embedded, they have been traditionally regarded as natural carers (CIPPEC 2019). Consequently, they spend, on average, three times more hours than men on care work (ILO 2018). However, in some Latin American and other developing economies, such as India, this ratio increases to seven or even eight times more hours (Sukriti Anand et al. 2023). Such burden limits the time they have left to offer in the labor market (among other activities), representing the main obstacle for their full participation in the economy (Díaz Langou and Fernández Crespo 2024).

Simultaneously, unpaid care work is not usually accounted for in traditional instruments that measure growth. However, estimations show that it represents 9% of global GDP and makes a larger contribution than other individual industries in many Latin American economies (WEF 2024).

As such, the design and adoption of specific care indicators would not only foster a more comprehensive and closer to reality analysis of GDP, but also narrow gender gaps and contribute to sustainable and inclusive growth.

An example of these tools is the Basic Care Basket (BCB), a synthetic indicator which estimates the monetary value of goods, services, and work needed to produce sufficient family care without jeopardising women's economic autonomy nor children's development. The BCB makes the link between households' investments and the development of capabilities in children and adolescents visible and helps identify households with disadvantages to successfully provide quality care based on a group of indicators related to health, school attendance, time use and behavioural outcomes. This way, the BCB complements GDP by not only capturing care's economic value, but also its contribution to well-being and societies' flourishing.

Furthermore, the BCB informs public policy since it helps understand how policies and investments can best support families, by identifying and geo-referencing care deficits and households' needs. In whole, this contributes to a more efficient allocation of public resources, as well as enhances care systems, since it helps capacity building for the design of better care policies.

Implementation Pathways

Indicators like the BCB should be incorporated in national public accounts and international statistics systems to systematically collect and share quality, disaggregated and comparable data. The G20 is the perfect platform to foster the adoption of common frameworks, as well as strengthening national capacities regarding social data collection systems to make this possible.

The G20 should also ensure that commitments and goals included in multiple Leaders' Declarations stating the relevance of policies on care and gender economic equity, such as the Brisbane Goal, the G20 Initiative for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and the G20 Roadmap Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target, are tracked and well-funded (Harris 2024).

These and indicators such as BCB should give relevant data for G20 countries to analyze the impact of policies in those dimensions. This way, the G20 would continue fostering a new social contract that places care at the forefront of global priorities (CIPPEC 2023).

Potential Barriers to Implementation

The gender agenda has become more and more relevant to the G20 process (T20 2024c). However, we are still far from accomplishing the aforementioned goals and commitments. The main reason for this is the non-binding nature of G20 commitments.

Sustainable Development Goals also include specific targets which have been set to specifically measure progress in this arena, showing meagre results. For instance, target 17.19 calls on governments "to develop measurements of progress on sustainable

development that complement gross domestic product and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries" by 2030. The last report on its progress states that "countries are on average only at a halfway point in planning, producing and making gender data available. Yet half of all projects on statistics and data supported by official development assistance devote less than 0.05% to gender-related dimensions." (UNSD 2024)

For this not to happen to the mainstreaming of the BCB and other indicators, the G20 could contribute in this arena by endorsing concrete recommendations on improved data and coordination, allocating specific funding and tracking its effective disbursement. It might also be effective to showcase its economic impacts, both in terms of policy efficacy but also through economic stimulation.

Drivers for a Successful Implementation

One of the main drivers for the adoption of the BCB and other indicators that better capture and recognizes care's socioeconomic contribution in national and international statistical systems is that key actors already champion its implementation.

The BCB has been included in 2023 W20's Communiqué, where it advocates for G20 countries to commit to increase funding for a universal "Basic Care Basket", building on prior UN commitments by G20 donor countries to provide 0.7% of GNI to develop and improve care infrastructure – including digital infrastructure (W20 2023).

Within Brazil's presidency, the BCB has been included in the recommendations of the W20's working group on the Care Economy and in the W20's Communiqué 2024[1], as

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1 https://w20brazil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Communique20V7.pdf.pdf

well as in its action plan.

Finally, the conceptual framework behind the indicator reflects some of the most prestigious international organizations' current discussions on sustainable growth. There is considerable high consensus among multistakeholder networks for knowledge and advocacy that we need to shift from the growth we have into the growth we want and need and that, to do so, we need to challenge the dominant paradigm that people and the planet should serve the economy, and not the other way around. To mention a few: the World Economic Forum's Global Future Councils (GFC)[2] – the GFC on the Future of Growth and the GFC on the Care Economy – and the International Panel on Social Progress[3].

Feasibility and Maturity Assessment

The Basic Care Basket is based on secondary data, which favors its scalability. Even though there is no source of information that provides all the data needed for the estimation, the indicator is constructed by surveys which are conducted periodically (and most of which are publicly available) in approximately 100 countries. These are National Surveys of Household Income and Expenditures, National Surveys on the Use of Time and UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

In Argentina, the BCB has been implemented in the main urban agglomerations. Preliminary results showed that 60% of households were at risk of being unable to support the development of children and adolescents without exploiting women's time. By

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[2] https://initiatives.weforum.org/global-future-council/home

[3] https://www.ipsp.org/

running this pilot test, horizontal coordination between public institutions that deal with gender and early childhood policies was increased and more strategic and informed decisions are being made based on the evidence provided about care dynamics within households and identified deficits.

As a result of the joint advocacy effort of global advocacy networks (such as the Global Alliance on Care[4]) within the G20, which contributed to care being one of the priorities of India's presidency in 2023, two Indian states will run a pilot test of the BCB.

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[4] https://globalallianceforcare.org/en/

Conclusion

The care economy is fundamental to growth, development and well-being. This is being recognized by key actors and highlighted in the most prestigious policy forums. Throughout the last decade, G20 leaders have acknowledge its importance in their declarations and many of the G20 engagement groups are pushing forward specific recommendations on generation of disaggregated data for the design and implementation of better policies and contribute to addressing inequalities. It is important that these issues have continuity in the next G20 Presidencies and that existing commitments are accounted for and its progress tracked.

The alternative, the *status quo*, remains costly: most of our public decisions are continuously being taken without complete and disaggregated information. This means that we are blind to many of the impacts that those decisions will have. In the era of information and artificial intelligence we need to rise to the challenge to put those tolls in the service of wellbeing. It is impossible to do without the appropriate information.

Embracing, funding and mainstreaming the use of indicators such as the Basic Care Basket is one concrete way to do so.

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