



T20 Policy Brief

Task Force 06

STRENGTHENING MULTILATERALISM AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Non-State Actors and the Future of Multilateral Governance

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TF06



Abstract

Over more than two decades of dialogues conducted by dualities of innovation and understanding, controversies and agreements, words and actions, the G20 Brazil 2024 has found a world composed of elements that didn't exist in 1999. Cooperation opportunities have emerged from innovation and comprehension; risks and threats have arisen; and “black swans” and “silver linings” have materialized. These shifts are part of the ever-changing nature of an international system where voices from all latitudes must contribute to building effective solutions to present and future global challenges.

Beyond formal agreements, the true catalyst for change-making and trust-building in a multipolar world order lies in people-to-people connections. Thus, Non-State Actors (NSA) can build inclusive partnerships where institutional frontiers are separated from cooperation prospects. The role of G20 engagement groups, which constitute NSA, NGOs, and Subnational Units, has demonstrated the range of impacts regarding exchanging best practices, developing science-based methods, and establishing long-standing collaborative alliances to improve the welfare of a 4.8 billion population and beyond. Engagement groups' contributions have been change agents. However, there is room for elevating their resonance and expanding collaboration frameworks.

Our paper pursues a triad of objectives: examining the pivotal roles of G20 engagement groups; analyzing study cases and exploring the role of transnational networks and professional exchanges in SDG implementation, emphasizing accessible and inclusive capacity-building; and proposing new cooperation areas for NSA in the G20 frame, referring to promote the welfare and economy growth through public diplomacy rehearsals. In Multilateral Governance, the NSA dynamics represent suitable channels to reach perspectives from where the world's weather requires connections to dissolve the mist, and the G20 has the potential to be the home for these synergies.



Diagnosis of the Issue

Accounting for 85% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), over 75% of global trade, and housing two-thirds of the world's population, the diverse G20 countries grapple with distinct challenges but also shared tasks. People and the international plethora are growing constantly and witnessing changes around digitization, emerging technologies or even human mobility trends. The dynamics of dialogues and communication follow a new scenario where NSAs are pivotal in comprehending situations, particularly from local, societal, and specialized perspectives.

Secondly, NSAs are becoming one of the best bonds for governments to approach populations and emerging topics; the NSAs usually provide insights from a knowledgeable spectrum. Finally, the NSA can be a casual door the governments can employ to open informal dialogues and engage with other NSAs with aligned interests. These nexus are more relevant than ever, especially in an international context full of structural variations, where democratic elections fill the pages of newspapers and the geopolitical narrative.

Foundations in Germany, think tanks in the United Kingdom or India, and scientific centers of development in the United States are examples of successful cooperation between governments and the NSA around several concerns, such as climatic change policies, border issues, social welfare or space exploration. These examples have created long-standing synergies that represent opportunities to improve the grasping of a broader landscape. On the other hand, the results of these frames are hardly seen in international relations and multilateral organizations. The NSA can water their projects, but policymakers must build roads to create a global network of NSA. If the NSAs are

empowered, they will be crucial resources to support government planning and even recognize opportunities and risks with anticipation.

The G20 drives joint efforts with various civil society groups through its various engagement groups on how to support the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This involvement has been strengthened since 2015 by introducing regular exchanges between G20's engagement groups and its Development Working Group to enhance G20's "whole-of-society" engagement on the 2030 Agenda. The currently active engagement groups of the G20, from the "Business 20" group, created in 2008, to the "Science 20" group, founded in 2017 (and recently the StartUp 20, which was made official in 2023) have demonstrated the value of the voices of experts in different fields, usually resulting in recommendations. The G20 has been following a path to become an abode for conversations and NSA gatherings about emerging concerns.

Traditionally, each group, chaired by an NGO from the host country, develops position papers and recommendations on G20 agenda items. These groups submit their documents to the G20 presidency before the summit and monitor the implementation of agreed measures. Nonetheless, their access to working group meetings could be improved. The engagement groups offer the G20 a chance to demonstrate openness and responsiveness to citizen needs, addressing concerns about legitimacy. Yet, disparities exist in how different groups are treated, with some, like B20 and L20, being more influential and organized than others, such as the C20.

Inclusive alternatives and capacity-building efforts are vital to meeting policymakers' needs. Critical procedural elements include shared problem understanding, collaborative issue framing, implementation steering authority, and strategic information use. Capacity-building and training investments for stakeholders facilitate knowledge sharing and strengthen the application of science-based methods. These are branches in which the



NSA can actively collaborate with the correspondent offices and state departments. Peer-to-peer partnerships can efficiently increase the capabilities of policymakers, providing them with fresh views in specific fields and teaching the NSA the governmental agenda. The collaborative efforts will enhance cooperation and lead to comprehensive solutions.

According to this diagnosis, there is a need for a group of interest inside the G20 capable of gathering the most representative NSA regarding developments and public diplomacy. The United Nations has yet to settle an initiative like this due to political difficulties and a lack of consensus; therefore, the initiatives must emerge from other fronts, and the G20 is the accurate place for these exchanges. A new task force overseeing and evaluating the agenda of the NSA inside the dynamics of the G20 can effectively complement the different groups and give better settings and foresight of the most relevant topics. It might include vital economic growth and social welfare issues, such as tourism, entrepreneurs' efforts, connectivity, promotion of the efforts made around these spheres, open policy-making experiences, implementation strategies, and future project candidates for collaboration.



Recommendations

Mobilizing NSA to advance global normative change and catalyze collective action requires a multifaceted approach that involves collaboration, engagement and empowerment. Hence, there are three perspectives to be considered for the next steps towards developing the forums regarding the synergies of NSA: i) Collaboration (partnership and collaboration; formal recognition and influence; and diverse representation); ii) Engagement focussed on cross-sectoral and long-term networking; and iii) Empowerment through capacity building and developing a Task Force for Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms.

Collaboration


- **Partnerships and Collaborations:** The NSA, governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders should foster partnerships to leverage their strengths and resources. Collaborative initiatives can amplify impact and facilitate knowledge-sharing and coordination.
- **Formal Recognition and Influence:** Formalize engagement groups' roles within the G20 framework by granting them advisory status or establishing mechanisms for their recommendations to be directly considered in decision-making processes. This recognition enhances their legitimacy and influence within the G20 ecosystem.
- **Diverse Representation:** Encourage diversity and inclusivity within engagement groups by actively seeking representation from marginalized communities, underrepresented regions, different genders and minority groups. Fair representativeness ensures that a wide range of perspectives is represented and considered in discussions and decision-making processes. The current call for papers for T20 abstracts, under the G20



Presidency of Brazil, represents a strategic effort to empower NSA and has been an example of how to create bonds among experts from different countries and institutes with the motivation of achieving collaborations and building partnerships; even taking into account the gender equality promotion.

Engagement

- **Cross-Sectoral Engagement:** Facilitate collaboration across different sectors, including government, civil society, academia, and the private sector, to address complex global challenges holistically. Cross-sectoral engagement can foster innovation, leverage diverse perspectives, and generate integrated solutions. **Conducting a DFOG Analysis: Preventing Duplication, Fragmentation, Overlaps and Identifying Gaps:** For instance, while the W20 may discuss women's issues, the L20 might also address aspects like equal pay.
- **Long-Term Engagement and Networking:** Transnational networks and professional exchanges involving practitioners, civil servants, and representatives from academia, civil society, the private sector, and NGOs are essential to support an integrated implementation of the SDGs. Networks facilitate the development of mutual and collaborative responses, as members are encouraged to identify and characterize common challenges, find solutions, and discuss policy alternatives to address global issues. These forums represent a fruitful locus to advance technical discussions, support the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and good practices, and promote innovation in SDG implementation.
 - One illustrative example of the impact and potential of such transnational networks is the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Academy. This program, arranged annually by the German Institute of Development and



Sustainability (IDOS) since 2007, brings together young professionals from Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, South Africa, and the European Union to collectively address global challenges. Currently, the MGG network includes more than 100 institutions and approximately 380 alumni who interact through an online platform, meetings, and international conferences. The main objective of the MGG Academy is to foster “an innovative platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration” on global sustainable development. The program was built with insights from behavioral sciences, investing in building transnational cooperation for primarily relational rather than transactional or instrumental purposes.

- The MGG Academy also aims to prepare future change-makers for a professional and personal life dedicated to sustainable development. Participants partake in a four-month training program combining various working methods, including practical experience and participatory approaches, training, lectures, discussions with experts, study trips, peer coaching through academic and leadership modules and a change-maker project.
- Similar programs can be developed for the members of the G20 countries who can also contribute to the G20 engagement groups and thus foster long-term relationships and networks among non-state actors to sustain momentum and collective action over time. Building trust, encouraging dialogue and maintaining ongoing communication are crucial for effective collaboration and impact.



Empowerment

- **Capacity Building:** Provide capacity-building support to engagement groups to strengthen their executive capabilities, advocacy skills and understanding of G20 processes. This could include training workshops, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing platforms. Building upon India's G20 Leadership: Elevating Capacity Building for Sustainable Development Financing, which proposes a Technical Assistance Action Plan (TAAP) to address issues to mobilize sustainable finance for achieving the SDG, given the challenges in capacity building, coordination, and resource allocation by outlining specific mechanisms and deliverables aimed at creating an enabling environment, tailoring services, and focusing on transition finance and other SDGs. Similarly, programs should be developed in G20; this frame is a bridge builder between NSAs and government and provides capacity building on Global Governance subjects.

- **Developing a Task Force for Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms:** The Brazilian government under President Lula has prioritized the inclusion of civil society in policy-making processes, both domestically and internationally. This commitment extends to the "G20 Social" initiative, announced during Brazil's symbolic presidency at the 18th G20 Summit in New Delhi, India. The objective of G20 Social is to enhance the participation of non-state actors in G20 activities and decision-making, focusing on promoting a "Just World and a Sustainable Planet". As a diverse nation addressing critical issues like climate change and poverty, Brazil seeks to provide a platform for various voices and demands from member countries, reflecting common global challenges.

- Establishing a Task Force for Evaluation and Feedback Mechanisms is crucial to ensure the continuity of initiatives like the G20 Social and foster ongoing improvement. This task force would assess the effectiveness of engagement group participation and gather feedback from non-state actors and

governments. By doing so, the task force enables continuous improvement and policy adaptations to better address the needs and concerns of all stakeholders across G20 presidencies.

Implementing these policy recommendations can address gaps between the NSA and governments, leading to more inclusive and effective decision-making processes within the G20. This paper underscores the need for their proper representation in international institutions. Aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 17, it advocates for empowering these actors through targeted capacity building and partnerships, drawing insights from the MGG Academy case study. Such initiatives aim to enhance the NSA's effectiveness in shaping global governance structures through knowledge exchange.



Scenario of outcomes

During the Indian G20 Presidency, the Defense Minister of India, Shri Rajnath Singh, at the C20 meeting said

“While the Government apparatus is more rigidly structured & institutionalised and the initiatives broadly represent the ideas of a substantial majority; the CSOs have fluid structures that provide a greater scope for new ideas & practices to play out. In modern state structures, the governments cannot act hastily on novel & untested ideas. Still, the CSOs have plenty of scope as they operate in a bottom-up approach and are more responsive towards the ever-shifting realities. The CSOs can act as force-multipliers for the governments.”

NSA and particularly the civil society’s involvement in the G20 has evolved from scheduling independent events to progressively being incorporated into official processes. This reflects a broader trend towards greater recognition of the value of social participation in public policy-making, aligning with principles outlined in the Brazilian Constitution and with recent hosts, as was the case with the Indian and Indonesian presidencies. Strategies to boost engagement, collaboration and empowerment with the NSA are priorities. NSA will facilitate the future of governmental planning from international and multilateral platforms, or the future won't be.



By fostering inclusivity, the G20's umbrella can benefit from diverse perspectives, ensuring that a broader array of voices and experiences are considered in policy-making. A wide spectrum of NSA can enhance the legitimacy and transparency of the G20, promoting greater trust. Moreover, involving these actors can facilitate more comprehensive and effective implementation of G20 decisions at local and international levels. NSA often possesses unique insights and capabilities in grassroots mobilization and specialized knowledge. This holistic approach can strengthen international cooperation, encourage more sustainable and equitable development, and ultimately lead to more resilient and adaptable global governance. Finally, the G-20 needs to find allies, and the bonds with the NSA must be strengthened by reinforcing its presence in the international system.

On the other hand, civil society engagement within the G20 framework has encountered significant challenges, highlighting the need for substantial improvements. While civil society recognizes the importance of contributing to discussions that shape policies affecting citizens globally, their participation often needs to be more meaningful engagement. Obstacles include limited access to meetings, insufficient dialogue with delegations, and a need for more transparency in decision-making processes. Thus, assembling a bridge between the NSA and the government is imperative to ensure that all stakeholders are represented. If all the stakeholders were well-represented, social media wouldn't be bombarded with hashtags like #G20TakeAction.

NSA often leverages social media platforms to amplify its messages and engage with G20 processes. Metrics such as the number of tweets, retweets, likes, and shares using relevant hashtags (#G20, #G20takeaction, etc.) can provide insights into the reach and influence of these campaigns. Greater participation of different engagement groups also allows a significant mediatic impact of the G20 even beyond the borders of the G20

countries; then, more opportunities for collaboration would be possible. Considering the evolution of historical internal dynamics of the participation of the NSA inside the G20 rooms, the digitization of communication and the impact of policies implemented (and its regulations) are some of the most crucial dualities to foresee in the expected outcomes of a significant NSA materiality.

Finally, two trends are aligned in the atmosphere of international relations: The resonance of the words spoken and actions taken during the G20 significantly increases in a multipolar world. At the same time, the importance of the NSA in decision-making has grown simultaneously inside and outside international organizations. A complex world and its challenges need new perspectives, which might come from new spots.



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