

## BRICS – Civil society working group on Gender Inequality



### Introduction

From the 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> of June 2018, the BRICS Civics held a consultation to finalise recommendations for the July 2018 BRICS summit. This policy brief provides a summary and recommendations from the Gender Inequality Session. South Africa’s hosting of the summit, prioritisation of gender and expected launch of a BRICS women’s forum in the session was aimed at strengthening the momentum towards a stronger gender equality agenda within the BRICS. Gender inequality is a common challenge across all the BRICS countries. Some of the key issues raised in this dialogue pertained to the need for BRICS countries to do more to address gender-based violence (GBV), workplace discrimination, education, improve data gathering, address financial exclusion, implement gender sensitive fiscal planning, economically empower women and improve access to justice.

## Discussion

### **Gender-based violence (GBV) in the context of BRICS**

The issue of GBV in BRICS countries varies in terms of recorded cases. Certain masculinity traits and gender normative behaviour exists in all cultures, which has given rise to violence against women. In South Africa, incidents of rape and sexual assault are depressingly high and show no signs of waning. Domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV) incidents are common in most BRICS countries with some women facing additional barriers where little or no legal protections exist. LGBTQI people also face increasing levels of violence and gender discrimination. When facing violence, many are unable to find redress due to systematic discrimination, or the fear of the consequences of revealing their sexual orientation. BRICS countries must do more to combat GBV.

### **Gender inequality and abuse in the workplace**

Women face further challenges in working environments. In some cases, women are paid less than their male counterparts for doing the same job. Women who provide full time care for loved ones are not paid at all and face considerable hurdles in supporting themselves. Workplace sexual harassment, discriminative promoting and lack of women in senior management positions are all common issues in today's working environment. Women must be given better protections in the workplace; the need for this has been made resoundingly clear through the global #MeToo campaign which brought issues of sexual harassment, GBV and rape culture to the forefront of the international public agenda.

### **Education and research**

Gender discrimination exists where young girls and women face obstacles in securing a decent education. Comprehensive sex education is not present, which not only affects women, but also affects young LGBTQI people who still face stigma attached to their identity. Data used in related research can be segregated, and does not provide helpful indicators on gender issues within education. Gender-focussed policies are either lacking or non-existent in these environments.

## Recommendations

The working group provided many recommendations for the anticipated BRICS women's forum relating to the New Development Bank (NDB), labour laws, education, gender inequality and gender-based violence. Engaging with BRICS civil society and grassroots movements will be essential when raising issues of gender and gender-unequal practices. It was agreed that the focus should not only be on women, but should instead broadly encompass all gender issues. The importance of gender inclusion was noted as it will give a platform to the LGBTQI community on issues they face in their respective BRICS countries. Part of the recommendation will be that the BRICS Women's forum should be called the BRICS Gender and Women's forum. There is also an opportunity to feed these recommendations into AU Vision 63.

### **Gender-focussed policies on reducing violence and abuse against women and LBTQI people**

There are two umbrellas for the Gender working group. One of them is the eradication of all forms of violence against women and GBV. BRICS countries must have gender-sensitive legal protections for women and LGBTQI people who suffer abuse or/and violence. Legislation that enshrines legal protections for those who suffer GBV must be considered and governments must consult relevant civil society groups on best practice. It was noted that we must promote adoption of federal law on the prevention of domestic violence. We cannot begin to understand the

problem if we do not have a law against it. Sensitivity training and gender-focussed policies must be enacted to address all forms of gender stereotypes, discrimination and violence. It was recommended that BRICS' two focus points should be as follows;

1. Acknowledge gender diversity and commit to progressive laws and policies to address all forms of GBV including violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. BRICS shall expand the definition of gender and gender-based violence.
2. They must not look on gender as binary between men and women, but acknowledge LGBTQI+ people, and see gender as diverse.

### **Business and economic empowerment in a gendered context**

The second umbrella of the Gender working group is the economic emancipation of all women and genders. BRICS countries must develop gender-sensitive fiscal policies – policies must include gender-responsive budgeting and be included in all sectors of government intervention. In partnership with business, governments must adopt and implement inclusive economic development policies in the workplace towards addressing the gender-pay gap in all countries by 2030. BRICS must recognise all forms of work undertaken by women, including and in-particular unpaid care-work, and compensate, redistribute and reduce unpaid work through legislation and government services, including paid maternal and paternal leave infrastructure. All genders and women must be guaranteed labour rights and protections within legal and socio-economic frameworks. Land ownership must be addressed so that women can be more independent and take charge of their own economic empowerment - agriculture and sustenance farming. The NDP or a BRICS cooperative bank should provide easy access to finance where women want to purchase land. Lastly, BRICS Gender and Women's forum must implement the 2017 United Nations high-level report on women's economic empowerment.

### **Gender and the New Development Bank**

The working group calls on the NDB to establish gender-focussed policies, a gender advisory committee and regional gender desks to help monitor progress on gender related issues. These three initiatives will focus on the following;

1. The gender policy shall be comprehensive, mandatory and inclusive, guiding all NDP structures, operations and governance at all levels
2. The gender advisory committee, either at headquarter level or as an external unit, shall proactively advise and work with the bank to integrate gender concerns across the NDP and its projects
3. The gender desk must participate in the designing and implementation of future NDP grievance mechanisms to ensure a gendered perspective is integrated into its accountability and transparency systems at all levels. The terms of reference of regional gender desks, the appointments and their responsibilities of their mandate holders must be developed in consultation with civil society groups including community organisations, labour and faith-based organisations.

These three areas address the need of gender policy, gender advisory committee and gender desk. The NDB must also be transparent in their project work so that civil society can analyse progress. These initiatives can also set a path towards creating a BRICS women's or cooperative bank

### **Reproductive health and education programmes that focus on gender and sex – comprehensive sex education**

BRICS countries must support women's reproductive health more by providing better access to essential services. Poor access to abortion services can cause life-threatening medical difficulties for women and threaten their right to bodily autonomy.

BRICS must encourage investment in comprehensive and inclusive gender equality education and training that teaches children, particularly young boys, about consent, sex, gender equality among other things. There must be equal access to quality education for all citizens regardless of gender identity or sexual

orientation – this means young girls must have access to education. BRICS countries must invest in technology, IT, energy and engineering programmes that are more inclusive and encourage gender diverse participation. Women and girls must have equal access to technology.



*The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Brief do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO, and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.*

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