"Higher degrees of interaction and collaboration between the vast and diverse knowledge resources of the T20 and other engagement groups, such as on cities, or business, should be part of the T20 Indonesia definition."
– Riatu MARIATUL QHIBTIYYAH and Teuku RIEFKY, Univesity of Indonesia

Riatu MARIATUL QIBTHIYYAH
(ed.)
University of Indonesia
(LPEM-UI)
Jakarta, Indonesia

Teuku RIEFKY
University of Indonesia
(LPEM-UI)
Jakarta, Indonesia

Intersecting perspectives for the T20 Indonesia: ways to foster effective change

Learning from a decade of T20

Twenty-five years after the G20 was created as a forum of finance ministers in the wake of the Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, the most important world's leaders' forum will return to Asia, as Indonesia will host it in 2022, prior to India in 2023. Born out a regional crisis, the G20 then grew out as a major leaders' forum out of the global financial crisis of 2008 to restore growth.

While the Covid-19 crisis has marked a brutal reversal of fortune in 2020, also ending a decade long recovery cycle, questions were raised about the role and organization of the Forum and its connection with the civil society. We argue the G20 Indonesia could illustrate a different way forward in a changing, fragmented multilateral order. In particular, engagement groups could play an important and valuable role to represent the civil society at large.

Since its inception in Mexico in 2012, the group of think-tanks of the G20, namely the T20 has become one of the largest and well-structured engagement group of the G20. It can convey great ideas, powerful recommendations and mobilize energy and support to the G20 presidency in a networked manner. However, as the T20 has grew significantly in size, it should reassert a purposeful meaning in the context of the enduring Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The year 2022 will mark the 10th anniversary of the T20, as well as the 30th anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit and the 50th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations Environment Program, which is an invitation to address present time issues and to frame long-term visions and policy-directions.

We view several ways to foster effective change such as 1) strengthening south-south and triangular cooperation, 2) valuing civil society engagement and human capital, 3) assessing how to plan/manage/govern an urban planet, 4) rethinking evidence-based policies by building on machine

learning and human spirit, and collectivism and 5) reviewing the 2030 Agenda in light of the Covid-19 impacts.

The core of the G20 has historically been the Finance and Sherpa tracks, albeit in recent years the Development Working Group has been rising in importance. Innovative formats have been introduced in 2021 such as a joint Ministers of Energy and the Environment summit or the organization of a Culture Ministers meeting, under the G20 Italy presidency. One reason for the successful output of G20 Japan on such a structuring issue as infrastructure investment and financing has been the close coordination of the work of the T20, of the Development Working Group, in sync with the Finance track and the Sherpa track.

Therefore, higher degrees of interaction and collaboration between the vast and diverse knowledge resources of the T20 and other engagement groups, such as on cities, or business, should be part of the T20 Indonesia definition, maximizing the research, development, outreach and policy-making potential of the engagement groups and their constituents, including the academia.

The T20 as an anchor for unbiased policy priorities?

Building on the legacy of the T20 Italy and previous troïka, meaningful innovation could be brought up by the T20 Indonesia as the world is still grappling with the Covid-19 crisis. The function of the T20 has become more critical to direct

and supplement nation leaders' agenda towards the right direction on numerous issues. As an engagement group at the crossroads of research and policy-making, the T20 is in a strategic position to serves at least two main roles in the contributions of solving current global issues.

Firstly, due to its independency from national governments and their respective political agendas, the T20 could provide valuable insights on what priorities global leaders should focus on. Power imbalance, geopolitical tensions and political pressure can make reaching a consensus on key priorities challenging and hinder any progress by the G20. Supporting the G20 agenda through most objective and impartial results is therefore essential. As an engagement group constituted by researchers and a wide range of organizations across the globe, with a direct channel to provide recommendations to G20 working groups, the T20 position is central in ensuring the issues that G20 leaders intend to resolve are pertinent and well substantiated. Policy directions recommended by the T20 could enrich G20 working groups perspectives through its evidence-based research.

Secondly, the T20 could serves as an anchor to ensure the inclusivity and unbiased prioritization of the issues discussed. Serving as an 'ideas bank' of the G20 and aiming at providing research-based policy recommendations to G20 leaders, task forces are created within the T20 to address global challenges and priorities raised by the G20 Presi-

dency. Thus, the T20 has the capability and capacity to formulate the task forces such that it represents beyond the critical issues experienced by the host country. The inclusivity aspect has become more imperative than ever as the Covid-19 pandemic widens inequalities across and within countries and worsens global socio-economic imbalances.

It is within the reach of the T20 to ensure its research agenda and formulation is equally representing both developed and developing countries. The T20 network has been built upon cooperation and initiatives forged among think-tanks, multilateral or regional organizations, and research institutions or universities. From these initiatives, each T20 member advocate its aligned research agenda in a combined global and domestic perspective, ensuring ownership and continuity of the needed improvement and adoption of better policies in the areas.

Preparing for the G20 Indonesia

In conclusion, we would like to focus on Indonesia's preparedness for the G20 and in particular on the issue of policy monitoring and assessment. Our institute, LPEM-FEB-UI, has close ties with national and local level governments along with private sectors and we believe we have much to learn from the Covid-19 crisis regarding data management.

Regarding how Indonesian government prepared for the G20, it is worth comparing with how Indonesia has hosted the Asian Games and the IMF and World Bank meetings in 2018. We studied the impact of the Asian games and the importance of involvement of various stakeholders in making it a success. In contrast, the general public has regarded the IMF and World Bank meetings held in Nusa Dua in Bali as elites' discussion, remote from any daily consequence. With regard to G20 summit, we value more participation from various stakeholders, communication of the focused priorities among the public and involvement of domestic and local level universities in decision making process so that there is a sense of ownership which can prove beneficial for the society.

Linking to the efforts put in publishing 'Intersecting' we argue that converging and coordinated global efforts, in particular through the T20, could help set a new benchmark and criteria for policy monitoring and evaluation that allow for more proactive policy implementation, going beyond the GDP measurement of growth.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, many countries - in particular emerging and lower income countries, have struggled with a recurrent shortage of data to monitor properly the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis. We have conducted surveys across Indonesia to find that nearly 80% of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) did not receive any actual support, in part because they just did not know how to get access to such funding. Rising economic sectors such as creative economy, have

been severely affected. In many cases, locally driven, community-led organization have played a more effective and durable role than governments to tackle the short-term impacts of the crisis. This raises questions about how national and local governments could improve their ability to reach out to the wider public to make their policies known and accessible.

There is an urgent need to improve data collection and data management. Emphasizing the link between local and global think tanks in the spirit of 'Intersecting' is also key to implement assessment and evaluation frameworks across policy and geographic dimensions. These directions should ensure that future development strategies are defined and implemented beyond silos, and that recovering from the Covid-19 crisis is inclusive.