



2. Prosperity: Poverty and inequality

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Extraordinary financial demands on states (as well as individuals) are a critical effect of the COVID-19 emergencies. While wealthy nations have capacities to mobilize resources including for social protection, less prosperous countries do not. Results are precarious fiscal situations and large gaps in delivery of critical services, notably those to vulnerable communities. Examples include cuts in funding going to refugee communities. Immediate fiscal pressures mirror wide and often widening inequalities that the emergencies make increasingly visible. The G20 plays central roles in multilateral mobilization of existing and new instruments that, for example, aim to address debt burdens of poorer countries and provide new funding to governments as well as unprecedented new funding.

The central if generally unheralded and uncoordinated roles of religious communities in meeting urgent social protection needs highlights gaps in reach and effectiveness of pertinent programs offer constructive knowledge for policy makers. They argue for further analysis of responses and strategic engagement as pandemic preparedness is examined.

Building on decades long engagement on global financial architecture and with a primary focus on its impact on poverty and inequities, religious actors (individual leaders, coalitions, and institutions) are among leading civil society advocates for bold action. They are part of the complex negotiations involving G20 nations and major multilateral players, notably the International Monetary Fund ((IMF) and the World Bank. A G20 Interfaith objective and recommendation is to broaden and deepen the pertinent coalitions so that their engagement, at global and national levels, is more effective in assuring that the measures involve never stray from a sharp focus on poor and vulnerable communities.

Of particular concern is that the G20 nations act to increase funding of extraordinary humanitarian needs, with a special focus on refugees and IDPs, and on food crises.

The deep inequalities that the COVID-19 emergencies have made unmistakably apparent and, in many instances, accentuated, are a central concern for the G20 Interfaith Forum. These issues belong in a central place for the Italian G20 presidency, which focuses on emergency response and recovery, and for the Indonesian 2022 G20 presidency, which opens extraordinary opportunities for bold reforms. The 2015 Global Agendas and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets and indicators offer a constructive guide for global action but the framework and specific approaches and targets call for deliberate review and refreshing post COVID-19 emergencies.