



Consultation: New Policy on Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade

At the request of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as published in the *Staatscourant* 22nd of February 2018, it is [Gender Concerns International's](#) pleasure to provide its input on the new policy on Development Cooperation and Trade. We appreciate the opportunity.

This input has been structured in accordance to the questions for consultation, specified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Responses have only been provided to those questions that are directly in line with organisation's experience and expertise.

Question 1: How can the Netherlands (the government, the private sector, social enterprises, civil society and knowledge institutions) achieve more results on the following themes: conflicts and instability, reception in the region and emergency aid?

By promoting the inclusion of women:

In addition to the current Dutch policies, enhanced and full-hearted mechanisms must be put in place to ensure instrumentality of supporting women's organisations globally (national and international) to engage half of the society in promoting peace, establishing stability, and to prepare and deliver the whole emergency help package through non-masculine perspectives.

It is proven that the sustainability of peace processes increases when women are genuinely represented and participate meaningfully¹. Internationally, the Netherlands has been one of the leading promoters of Women, Peace and Security. Gender Concerns International, being a 3-time signatory of the Dutch National Action Plan 1325, promotes that the Netherlands continues to strongly support and provide resources for women's inclusion and participation as an important tool to prevent and address conflict and instability. Women's inclusion and participation has not only proven beneficial for sustainable peace and security, but also for overall social development. The correlation between women's social and political participation, and economic growth, poverty reduction, child survival and family health has long been recognised². Promoting women's inclusion and participation is hence of utmost importance for Dutch development efforts across the board, including for emergency aid and reception in the region.

Question 2: How can the Netherlands (the government, the private sector, social enterprises, civil society and knowledge institutions) best address population growth in Africa and stimulate youth employment in Africa and the Middle East?

By addressing population growth through women-led community engagement schemes:

In urban slums and rural areas paid or unpaid women's work needs to be better organised. Health and hygiene among women and girls should be promoted on a community level, and education about birth control, medicine and other sexual and reproductive health provision be supplied free. Abortion must be organised and available to women within the community. This must be done together with men.

¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-peace-security>

² World Bank, 1994, "Enhancing women's participation in economic development"

By stimulate youth employment, but also promoting women's economic participation:

While youth unemployment in Africa and the Middle East is the cause of social unrest and migration, women's low economic participation is worrying too. This is not only detrimental to women's empowerment and financial independence, but when half the population is underrepresented in the economy, important human resources that could contribute to economic growth remain under-utilised. There has furthermore been observed instances of correlation between women's increased participation in the labour market and lower birth rates³⁴⁵, especially in developing countries⁶, suggesting that women's economic participation could also contribute to address the issue of population growth.

Question 3: What new priority areas could the government identify? Resources are limited and we need to make choices. So we'd also like to ask: what priority areas could do with less attention?

Consider widening the impact of investment by making the beneficiary cycle larger; This could be achieved by reducing the cost of deliverance of development assistance through mega INGOs and Dutch Giant INGOs. Support women's organisations equally.

Please organize a consultation meeting with major women organisations in order to get input from not just co-financing INGOs only:

Women's political, social, as well as economic empowerment begins with the genuine inclusion and participation of women in decision-making processes. It is therefore of utmost importance that the Netherlands continues to be a global leader in promoting gender equality, and supporting women's organisations and female leadership. Gender Concerns International firmly believes in women's potential as agents of change. When women are genuinely represented in decision-making processes, and participate on the equal basis as of men, women can influence gender-sensitive political and social reform throughout the spectrum of social and political issues.

Question 4: What innovative solutions could the Dutch government, NGOs and the private sector promote with a view to 1) reducing CO2 emissions (climate mitigation) and 2) helping societies adapt to climate change (climate adaptation)?

Recognise the interconnectivity of Gender and Climate, and accordingly earmark parts of the National Climate Fund to Gender and Climate programmes:

It is proven that the climate change and other environmental threats affect women and men differently: The majority of people whose livelihood depends on local resources threatened by climate change are women; when resources are scarce, girls suffer disproportionately due to unequal resource distribution; women are vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexually transmitted diseases following environmental

³ World Bank, 1994, "Enhancing women's participation in economic development"

⁴ Maertens and van den Broeck, 2014, "Does female employment reduce fertility rates? Evidence from the Senegalese horticultural export sector". KU Leuven. Available at:

[https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/182715/2/Van den Broeck-Does female employment reduce fertility rates Evidence-487 a.pdf](https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/182715/2/Van%20den%20Broeck-Does%20female%20employment%20reduce%20fertility%20rates%20Evidence-487%20a.pdf)

⁵ Verick, 2014, "Female labor force participation in developing countries", ILO. Available at:

<https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/87/pdfs/female-labor-force-participation-in-developing-countries.pdf>

⁶ In industrialised OECD-countries, the relationship seemed to shift around 1980, with well-established welfare provisions such as subsidized child-care and parental leave. See for example: Engelhardt and Prskawetz, 2004, "On the Changing Correlation Between Fertility and Female Employment over Space and Time", European Journal of Population. Available at:

https://is.muni.cz/el/1431/jaro2006/Z7044/um/On_the_Changing_Correlation_Between_Fertility_and_Female_Employment_over_Space_and_Time.pdf

disasters; and environmental disasters often result in the emigration of men, leaving women with the bulk of household responsibilities in inhospitable living conditions. Furthermore, women's unequal participation in decision-making processes often hinders their full engagement in policy-making and policy-implementation processes concerning climate change and environmental security and sustainability. This is despite women being generally supportive of pro-environmental policies and pro-environmental leaders. Consequently, women's political participation is an underutilized resource to reach the goal of environmentally friendly politics for a secure and sustainable world. We therefore launched the Gender Watch International Network ([G-WIN](#)) at COP22 in Marrakech as an initiative to promote the voices of women's organisations and female leaders on climate policy and implementation. If the Netherlands strives for a gender-sensitive development policy on climate change and environmental issues, the interconnectivity between Gender and Climate must be recognized and parts of the National Climate Fund accordingly earmarked for Gender and Climate programmes.

Question 9: In addition to the above, do you have any other recommendations in the area of foreign trade and development cooperation?

There is a serious need to respecting the work of women's organisations in the Netherlands and their partners in developing world by being bold and determined to resource them adequately; it is 2018. Praise must be inclusive of women's organisations, and not only Mega INGOs. Women's organisations are underprivileged and discriminated when it comes to proper allocation of resources to their long-committed work, passionate engagement, and proven professionalism and expertise.

We recommend supporting Dutch initiatives for development and political stability such as the GEOM: Election observation from a gender perspective.

GEOMs are international election observation missions, managed and led by women election-experts and are conducted in partnership with major national women and human rights organisations. The unique GEOM programme, pioneered by Gender Concerns International, is designed as a tool to support women's participation in democratic electoral processes and to promote female leadership and inclusive governance within the framework of UN Sustainable Development Goals and UNSCR 1325 targets. GEOMs address women's democratic participation before, during and after elections as voters, candidates and electoral officials. Post-election lasting impacts from GEOMs include: capacity building, training and skills development of female parliamentarians, lobbying and advocacy, and supporting women's and civil society organizations. In past years, Gender Concerns International has, oftentimes with Dutch support, conducted many successful missions in countries such as Libya ([2012](#)), Pakistan ([2008](#) and [2013](#)), Tunisia ([2011](#) and [2014](#)), Myanmar ([2015](#)), Morocco ([2011](#), [2015](#) and [2016](#)), and the Netherlands ([2017](#)). However, this unique and impactful initiative needs increased support.

Make funds available to non-mega (small- and mid-sized) non-profit organisations

As a non-mega women's organisation with strong contacts with the women's movement, and women's organisations and networks internationally, we and our partners bring a unique gender perspective to a variety of issues. However, women's organisations are too often being excluded from funding on the expense of large human rights and development organisations. While we understand the benefit that these organisations and institutions bring in terms of the scale of impact, this too often excludes the influence of women and the important gender perspective. We therefore strongly recommend the new Dutch Policy for Development Cooperation to be expressively structured to make funds and resources accessible for non-mega small- and mid-sized organisations to benefit from the mushrooming of the development impact on the ground.