

Feminist statement for MFA consultation

- Dutch Foreign Trade and Development cooperation policy

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
To Minister E.N.A.J. Schreinemacher
Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

14 April 2022

Your Excellency, Dear Minister Schreinemacher,

As feminist consortia and organisations in Strategic Partnership with your government under the Strengthening Civil Society Framework, we are sharing our recommendations for your new Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation policy.

For decades, the Netherlands has led the way internationally in the fight for women's rights. The MFA is to this day a global innovator and front-runner in gender equality, shifting power and money, and championing leadership from the Global South.

This is a sensible evidence-based position to take. According to a literature review of quantitative and some qualitative studies available, women's rights organisations and feminist movements are a necessary and significant variable for advancing SDG 5 and gender justice; they are also critical for advancing the other SDGs, and positive social change more generally, as they work to tackle issues like the climate crisis, sustainability and economic development.¹ Evidence also shows that more and better funding² to Global South-based women's rights organisations strengthens their autonomy and economic independence, which has significant multiplier effects.

Now women's rights advocates need our support more than ever, as the backlash against them and their work is growing globally, with civic space to organise and their personal health and safety coming under increasing threat. In many places, women's leadership is being challenged. They are daily facing harassment, discrimination and violence in opposition to their activism and self-determination.

With this new policy framework, the Dutch government has an opportunity to continue to visibly and unapologetically back women's courage and effectiveness, everywhere. The MFA has a strong track record. Successive Dutch governments have played a leading role in supporting women's and feminist movements worldwide through initiating groundbreaking funding mechanisms, from the MDG3 Fund to the Leading from the South Fund and Power of Women. Through these, the MFA has been a thought leader among donor countries. The same leadership has assured that gender equality considerations are integrated in every aspect of climate-related policies and programs the Ministry is involved in. It has also had significant impact for the visibility of sex workers' rights and structurally excluded women - helping to make tangible what it means to 'leave no one behind'. And most recently, the MFA

¹ <https://www.mamacash.org/en/literature-review-feminist-activism-works>

² <https://www.awid.org/publications/how-funders-can-resource-feminist-movements-concrete-practices-move-more-money-drivers>

has been a driving force within new, promising multi-stakeholder initiatives like the Global Alliance for Sustainable Feminist Movements.

As we know, the MFA's funding support for women's rights is not the norm. According to the OECD DAC, of all gender equality funding only 1% reaches women-led organisations. For structurally excluded groups such as women with disabilities, trans and intersex persons, or sex workers the % is even lower. Only 31% of bilateral ODA earmarked for climate also supported the achievement of gender equality. Of this, only 3% had gender equality as a principal objective, and 28% integrated gender equality as a secondary objective.³

In order to deliver on the goals of the new Coalition agreement within this new policy framework we urge you to continue to support and strengthen feminist and women's rights movements, and build on the Ministry's long-standing commitment of successfully reaching local and grassroots feminist groups and organisations in the Global South. Specifically, we call on you to:

- Ensure that gender equality and women's rights is both a stand-alone theme and applied as a crosscutting dimension in all policy areas, at all levels, including international cooperation, foreign trade and investment, climate and sustainable economic development.
- Continue increasing investments in gender equality as a principle and funded goal. Within this,
 - Allocate more flexible, long-term and core funding that is fit for purpose and directly accessible to feminist and women's rights organizations and movements, beyond directing this funding via multilateral institutions.
 - Continue to increase the funding of women-led initiatives and projects through all MFA thematic funding streams including those directed at climate adaptation and mitigation, food security and international value chains.
 - Continue to make good use of trusted, proven mechanisms, such as women's funds, to reach the most critical actors in the Global South - namely women-led organisations and movements, and feminist groups and networks operating at the 'grassroots'.
- Recognise that achieving gender equality requires an approach that is context-sensitive, and yet also stretches beyond specific countries, to incorporate the global and cross-regional. Engage with other OECD countries and in international institutions, including the WTO, UNFCCC and international financial institutions to catalyse change at international levels.
- Actively engage Global South-based organisations and consortia throughout your policy making processes by making all documents accessible in multiple languages, including Southern voices in your advisory structures, and pro-actively inviting

³<https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Making%20Climate%20Finance%20Work%20for%20Women%20-%20Copy.pdf>

Southern partners and consortia for their input.

- Be a bold donor by setting an ambitious target of 50% of programmes and consortia having a penholder from the Global South and actively engaging communities in funding and investment decisions that affect them.
- Achieve policy coherence for sustainable development by ensuring all policy areas and investments contribute to and uphold gender equality, human rights, climate justice and transformation of the systemic roots of injustice and inequalities. Uphold the principle of 'do no harm' in all efforts and investments as a basic minimum standard. Ensure that gender equality and women's rights is a key focus in the Corporate Social Responsibility regulation within the Netherlands and at EU level.
- Respond to the specific needs of women in all their diversity during crisis situations and in areas of conflict, including in humanitarian assistance, migration, safety and security, peace processes and conflict prevention.

We thank you for your leadership and look forward to continuing our partnership.

Signed by

- **Count Me In! consortium**, comprised of AWID, Mama Cash, CREA, JASS, UAF and UAF-Africa, and strategic partners Red Umbrella Fund and Wo=Men
- **Love Alliance**, partnership consisting of AFE, Aidsfonds, GALZ, GNP+, ISDAO, SANPUD, Sisonke and UHAI
- **Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action**, consisting of FCAM, Both Ends and Mama Cash
- **Our Voices, Our Futures consortium**, comprising CREA, AFE, APC, UHAI-EASHRI, Wo=Men and strategic partner IM-Defensoras
- **Women Gaining Ground consortium**, consisting of Akili Dada, CREA and IWRAP-AP

