

## Online consultatie feministisch buitenlandbeleid – input Both ENDS

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### **MFA introduction to consultation**

In May 2022, Minister Hoekstra of Foreign Affairs and Minister Schreinemacher for International Trade and Development Cooperation announced that also The Netherlands will work towards implementing a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). This means that within its Foreign Policy, the Netherlands will pay more attention to inclusivity in general and specifically to women's rights and gender equality, including LGBTIQ+. This feminist lens will be central to all aspects of foreign policy; security, trade, diplomacy and international cooperation.

Several countries already implement a FFP. Sweden was the first country that adopted a FFP in 2014 and based their policy on the four 'R' approach: Rights, Representation, Resources and Reality check. Rights refer to the protection of women rights, Representation means that women should be actively engaged in policy formation and execution, Resources means that funding should also benefit women, and Reality-check means ensuring the policy is evidence-informed and has no unforeseen negative effects on women.

To foster an inclusive process and acquire insights in what the distinct features of a Dutch version of a FFP should look like, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organizes a series of consultations with a large variety of stakeholders, including national and international public and private institutions, academic and civil society organizations, youth representatives and strategic partners. This internet consultation is part of these broad consultations.

Thank you very much for your participation in this internet consultation!

**1. What are current best practices implemented by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for protecting and/or promoting women's and LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality?**

Both ENDS first of all likes to acknowledge and appreciate the fact that the Dutch government has taken a bold step to adopt a FFP. We see the Dutch government taking a progressive leadership role in addressing and promoting women's and LGBTQI+ rights internationally since many years. Including for example in IFI and UNFCCC negotiations, in the Green Climate Fund or in trade negotiations.

We also see concrete steps being taken to incorporate a gender and rights perspective in Dutch policies and programmes, and specific programmes directly supporting women's rights and gender equality. Examples range from the Power of Voices framework or the LAND-at-Scale programme, to the latest BIT model where the importance of incorporating a gender perspective is acknowledged. This specific focus on women's rights and gender equality strengthens women's (decision-making) power and is especially strong when it takes an intersectional perspective (as is also suggested in the IOB evaluation on gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2021).

Finally, we appreciate the attempts to pro-actively address the issue of power dynamics in the government's own way of operating, e.g. by focusing on inclusive processes and discussing power issues in international development cooperation, e.g. by focusing the first SCS online dialogue (June 2021) on power dynamics and (local) ownership.

**2. What are key weaknesses regarding protecting and/or promoting women's and LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality within the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs' policies and implementation that would need strengthening?**

Weaknesses include:

- **The fact that strong ambitions and commitments are not effectively implemented** (moving from paper to practice). See for example the conclusions from the IOB evaluation on the effectiveness of Dutch climate policy in reaching women's rights organisations, indicating that 'target groups are not necessarily being reached and gender objectives are not being achieved' (<https://www.iob-evaluatie.nl/resultaten/klimaatfinanciering> or IOB 2021: 72-73).
- **Lack of adequate accountability, monitoring and evaluation**. E.g. IFI policies have weak operational frameworks to guarantee integration of gender considerations in policies and standards of IFIs. What is lacking are inclusive consultations, meaningful and participatory gender analyses, gender impact assessment, gender budgeting, Legal Assessment Tool (LAT) for gender-equitable land tenure, and gender responsive tools for prevention of violence. Ex-ante contextual risk assessments are important to minimise the risk that implementation of standards is not adversely affected by discriminatory national law (anti-LGBTQI+, anti-women rights or racist laws).
- **Policy incoherence**. Policies towards gender equality and women's rights and other Dutch policies not always align or contradict each other. For example:
  - The Netherlands currently promotes intellectual property rights of seeds which provide more power to seed companies than to women farmers. Through the UPOV

91 convention which is part of many trade agreements, farmers lost their rights to exchange, breed and sell seeds. Because most farmers in African, Latin American and Asian countries are women, the intellectual property rights approach of the Netherlands hits women hard in their ability to independently manage their seeds and in this way improve agro-biodiversity and food security.

- Dutch climate policies and programmes focus on leveraging private finance and tend to promote large-scale climate projects including hydroelectric power stations, biomass, and geothermal projects, which involve high risks in terms of damaging ecosystems and affecting local communities' access to land, water and forests. Women are hit hardest from these impacts being most directly dependent on these natural resources and also often face sexual harassment in these project sites.
- International financial policies led to the transition of commercialised forms of export-agriculture, in order to increase revenue to repay debts to banks. This further entrenched the domination of men as leaders of agribusiness. Agrarian restructuring makes women redundant in their role as subsistence farmers, and relegates them to precarious, poorly paid work away from home, often without adequate protections or labour standards. Also: privatisation of sectors and market based mechanisms, promoted by IFIs can directly undermine the public provision of public services. This has negative effects on women's unpaid care work and threatens their livelihoods and leisure time.
- A similar sometimes [contradicting role of embassies](#) and portfolios managed by different people at the embassies - i.e. promoting trade interests versus assuring environmental and (women) human rights, or promoting trade in repressive regimes.
- A tendency to [focus on the formal sector and women's entrepreneurship](#), which neglects the poorest segments in society and overlooks non-wage work (subsistence, care etc.) that is mostly done by women. By doing so, underlying causes of inequality in rural/urban and informal sectors are overlooked. An intersectional perspective is crucial.
- [Not 'walking our talk'](#): It is important to assess our own position of power and power dynamics between e.g. local vs. Dutch embassy staff or power dynamics within and between Ministries, or with external stakeholders. Similarly: the Netherlands is strong in promoting women's rights abroad while at the same time people will see situations as in Ter Apel.

### 3. What should be the ambition of a Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy? What should be the short and long term priorities?

A key **short term priority** should be to come to a clear common understanding and vision on what encompasses a Dutch feminist foreign policy. This goes beyond protecting and/or promoting women's and LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality, as mentioned in question 1 and 2. It involves a broader rights-based and intersectional approach, addressing root causes of inequalities including colonialism, patriarchy, racism and historical debt. It is also about adopting a feminist approach to policy and decision-making processes focusing on inclusion, creating space, and recognising and addressing power inequalities. These inequalities are deeply embedded in political, economic, social and cultural systems, so this requires structural and transformational change.

In line with the [analysis done by Ecorys for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2021](#), we recommend to adopt the definition of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), complemented with a stronger intersectionality element.

There is a high risk in the Dutch feminist foreign policy being too narrowly interpreted as promoting women's rights and adding a gender perspective to current policies and approaches or even pink-washing (add women and stir). That would be a missed opportunity and should be avoided at all cost.

**Longer term priorities** should be to:

- Implement coherent feminist foreign policies across all Ministries, i.e. in which all Ministries take responsibility. Water, agriculture, climate, commodities, trade and investment policies should include specific and mandatory gender-related targets (at outcome level rather than output), ex-ante and ex-post gendered risk and impact assessments and adopt inclusive (feminist) processes.
- Boldly assess, discuss and address the current economic and political system from a feminist perspective, and the Netherlands' own role in this system. We need to acknowledge and recognise our own position of power and consider how we can change this and/or use that power to make space for, and shift power to, others.
- Focus explicitly on the intrinsic link between existing and growing inequality and the urgent biodiversity and climate crisis, all stemming from the same root causes and requiring bold and far-reaching action. See for the intrinsic link between climate, biodiversity and gender equality e.g. [https://www.bothends.org/uploaded\\_files/document/WOMEN\\_Klimaat-en-Gender\\_UK\\_online.pdf](https://www.bothends.org/uploaded_files/document/WOMEN_Klimaat-en-Gender_UK_online.pdf)
- Dare and make difficult decisions and pro-actively stand for a feminist approach.

#### 4. What should be key elements of a Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy?

1. A clear [common analysis, vision and 'definition'](#) of how what constitutes a Dutch FFP. This should include a strong focus on intersectionality (including age, rural-urban, literacy, race and ethnicity), and a feminist lens and approach to policy and decision-making, and work to transform unequal power relations.
2. A [thematic analysis and action plan](#) of how a feminist foreign policy will work out in the different themes of *all* foreign policy, thus ensuring policy coherence. This also means that feminist foreign policy goals are explicitly mentioned in different thematic policies such as climate, trade, investment, water and agriculture. And that feminist foreign policy goals are part of the policy coherence action plan, which is annually reported upon.
3. A [concrete plan on how to guarantee inclusive decision-making processes](#), to ensure (safe) spaces are created for all relevant actors to be engaged in relevant decision-making processes. I.e. consciously addressing power relation requires inclusive ways of working, such as different (feminist) approaches to organising meetings and discussions, creating safe spaces for engagement and joint planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning (PMEL).
4. The [implementation of \(participatory\) reviews of the Dutch government's internal ways of working](#) and the commitment to meaningfully act upon the outcomes of these reviews, to assure that the government walks its talk.

5. A [capacity development and resourcing plan](#) to ensure the FFP can be effectively implemented.
6. A [clear accountability framework](#): including clear and ambitious targets, timelines, indicators, binding monitoring processes, and transparent reporting. This involves gender-disaggregated data collection, ex-ante and also ex-poste analyses, broad-based consultations and independent evaluations. Also actors supported by the Dutch government, companies, CSOs and researchers, should be held accountable.

These elements relate to [institutional embedding](#) of feminist principles within Dutch Foreign Policy, which, according to the IOB report on gender mainstreaming (2021) is currently too often hampered by limited staff capacity, a narrow focus on development cooperation, a high level of voluntarism, and limited accountability (p. 46).

#### **5. What should the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs aspire to do differently once a Feminist Foreign Policy is in place?**

Once the FFP is in place, the Dutch government should pro-actively implement its ambitions and be an outspoken promoter of FFP nationally and internationally. Concrete changes include:

- [Different policy choices](#), leading to truly inclusive, gender-transformative, and coherent policies and outcomes. E.g. from ambitious climate policies to urgently transition from a fossil fuel based to a (gender) just sustainable economy, to policies placing restrictions on Intellectual property rights clauses that threaten access to medicines and seeds, hampering rights to health and food access of women.
- [A redirection of funding flows](#), e.g. increased funding will flow to social movements working towards transformational change. Climate finance is additional to ODA and accessible to women-led climate initiatives. Similarly with food and agriculture budgets which have proven to be effective when they are in the hands of women.
- [Human rights valued higher than economic interests](#). Women environmental and land rights activists are actively and successfully protected, also when (Dutch) economic interests are at stake. The Dutch Ministry always prioritises rights-holders over stakeholders.
- [A government-wide vision and agenda to embrace inclusion and diversity](#), both in policies (such as water governance programmes and policies being truly inclusive and intersectional, addressing the 'politics of water') and internally (enhanced diversity in MFA and embassies staff; explicitly addressing power dynamics).
- [A feminist approach to decision-making](#), e.g. women in all their diversity and marginalised groups are strongly represented in decision-making processes at all levels.

#### **6. What do you think is needed to successfully implement a Feminist Foreign Policy?**

- [Awareness raising and securing buy-in](#) from the public, civil servants and Ministers.
- [Committed staff at the MFA and the other ministries](#) responsible for the other relevant foreign policy areas, including the ministries of Finance, Agriculture Nature & Food, Infrastructure and Water Management, Defence, Justice & Security, Economic Affairs & Climate, Education.

- **Additional funding and capacity.** As the IOB evaluation on gender mainstreaming (2021) advised, gender expertise should be available and included in the posts of DGs of all Ministries. Gender focal points need to be well resourced rather than having to do the work on top of their other tasks.
- **1 Minister with final responsibility** to coordinate and report
- Appointing an **Advisory Board** comprising of (both northern and southern-based) feminist experts and practitioners, and an Independent **Evaluation Board** to conduct independent evaluations.
- Consider to appoint a **special Dutch Envoy/ national Ombudsvrouw** to pro-actively promote the FFP in the Netherlands and abroad (give a 'face' to the FFP)
- Consider to set up a '**meldpunt**' for anyone to report inconsistencies or ways to improve the FFP and its implementation
- A **learning approach**: Learn from other countries who have implemented a FFP already and regularly engage in dialogue with experts and Southern-based partners to discuss, monitor and evaluate progress and learn lessons.

## 7. **What is needed to ensure collaboration between different Ministries to achieve a Feminist Foreign Policy?**

Our answer to this question builds upon our answer to the previous question:

- Ministries need to come to a **common understanding** on the purpose and goals of the FFP.
- Implementation of the FFP should be guided by a **Board consisting of all involved and responsible ministries**. This Board is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- FFP needs to be elaborated into a **concrete implementation plan for each ministry**.
- **Sufficient resources and dedicated staff** are needed to consistently raise awareness, and organise cross-ministerial discussions together with FFP experts and practitioners.
- As all ministries will encounter challenges in the implementation of the FFP, and all will need to explore how best to adopt and implement a meaningful FFP for their own ministry, we recommend a **continuous and participatory monitoring, evaluation and learning cycle** to inform the ministries' practices.

## 8. **Is there any other input you would like to give in relation to Feminist Foreign Policy?**

**Timing & deadline of the consultation:** Though this consultation is highly appreciated, the deadline was very tight, especially in these busy times in the run up to the UNFCCC COP and Power of Voices annual planning deadlines, among other things. We did not have time to contribute to, but do support, the joint input provided by the WO=MEN Dutch gender platform.

**Clarity on use of consultation inputs:** It is not fully clear how this input in the consultation will be used in the FFP development process, as a first outline of the FFP seems to be presented quickly after the consultation deadline, so with little time to incorporate all inputs?

**Constraints in Southern participation in the consultation:** For our Southern partners it is difficult to respond to the survey due to time constraints and the limited elaboration of the background of this consultation and the aims and development process of the Dutch FFP. We hope there will

be much more space and time for Southern partners to take part in broader consultations and discussions around the development of the FFP at a later stage.

Both ENDS is happy to answer any questions based on the above input and engage in further dialogue on the Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy.