

WECF Input for Dutch Online Consultation Feminist Foreign Policy

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

The Netherlands promotes women's & LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality successfully through existing dedicated funding mechanisms. The current Power of Women and Power of Voices are good best practices, because they provide dedicated funding to organizations that center gender equality in their work.

Another best practice is the Dutch vocal support for women's and LGBTQI+ rights and gender equality in international forums, such as the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women. We value the collaboration with civil society in these international spaces, that happens specifically through an NGO-representative to be part of the government delegation to the conference.

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?

Lack of policy coherence: While the Ministry promotes women's rights and gender equality with policies and program support, they are not prioritized throughout all of the Ministries working areas. For example, in its international biodiversity & forest protection policy (from 2020), gender equality is not included in the action recommendations. The document does however recognize that deforestation and forest degradation have impacts on communities living in and depending on forests for their livelihoods, including women. It lacks concrete proposals for a strategy to ensure that women are meaningfully included in forest conservation, restoration and management. We miss a recognition of women's agency and role as agents of change in maintaining sustainable forest landscapes in that policy. Without concretely addressing these issues in strategies and policies, we risk the fact that existing inequalities are exacerbated.

Lack of gender analyses: For a strong Feminist Foreign Policy, all Dutch international policies should be based on an intersectional gender analysis. This analysis and subsequent actions will help to prevent any negative impacts for gender equality and women's & LGBTQI+ rights. Currently, the so-called 'Integral

Afwegingskader' for policymakers in all Ministries includes a gender impact assessment. However, it is not clear how often the assessment is made, and outcomes of the assessment are not transparent. This needs to change for a successful feminist foreign policy.

The Netherlands invests in many large-scale climate projects, such as hydroelectric power stations and geothermal projects, abroad. However, because of existing structural inequalities, this affects women disproportionately. For example, they might lose their livelihoods if a dam construction forces local communities to resettle. Subsequently, they often don't have the same opportunities as men to access resources or income in their new location. These kinds of disproportionate impacts should be prevented, and addressed with specific support measures for women in the community. Gender impact assessments and consultations, that create safe and meaningful participation spaces for local women and feminist groups to have their priorities addressed, should be a key aspect of the Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy. The Ministries responsible must commit resources (financial or in staff hours) to enable these assessments and analyses.

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

The Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy should be intersectional, recognizing different intersecting identities of the people it affects. Furthermore, it should aim to address structural gender inequalities, and its root causes. This overarching aim needs to be recognized in all policy areas and departments that will implement the policy.

Short term priorities:

- a. Improve gender balance and diversity in staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (from policy makers to leadership positions).
- b. Increase the amount of gender experts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in all its departments and Embassies and Consulates. Also increase gender expertise internally at other Ministries implementing the Feminist Foreign Policy.
- c. Commit to making **intersectional** gender impact analyses on policies & laws implemented, and act accordingly to prevent negative impacts on gender equality.

- d. Create institutional spaces for women's rights and feminist organisations to engage with the Ministries and Ambassies, including at highest levels, on policy development, implementation and monitoring
- e. Support women's rights and feminist organisation with core support to allow this engagement in policy processes with a longer term, intersectional and broad thematic perspective (e.g. not limit their engagement to only 'gender' issues)

Long term: Transforming power relations and fighting its root causes. **Strong, lasting partnerships with feminist civil society.**

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

Counteracting structural gender inequalities in the world should be the starting point of the Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy, and fighting its root causes. These inequalities exist in all policy areas, so all Ministries active on an international level need to be involved in implementing the FFP. Together they should work towards feminist system change in all aspects of Dutch international presence. Not just in diplomacy or 'traditional' foreign policies, but also in international trade, climate & biodiversity policies, financial policies, etc.

For example, we know that the climate crisis affects women (and other marginalized communities) disproportionately because of existing inequalities. The root causes of the current climate crisis lies in our current capitalist, extractive economy, that give preference to profits over people and nature. Our current economy depends on the exploitation of nature, and on the labor and unpaid care work of many people. Women are the majority of informal and precarious workers. In order to counteract these inequalities the Netherlands needs to recognize its historic responsibility in causing the climate crisis, that is rooted in our colonial history. It needs to support the people most affected by climate change – specifically women in all their diversity in the Global South, and it needs to fund climate solutions that also transform power relations in societies (with grant funding). The Netherlands should drastically reduce its international climate footprint, and work towards an inclusive green transition.

Another element of a Dutch feminist foreign policy should be demilitarization & promoting peace in all aspects. That means not only investing in peacebuilding led by women, or strengthening the role of women in peacebuilding and reconstruction initiatives, but also ending the Dutch role in international arms trade.

A last key element of the Dutch feminist foreign policy is more on a practical level: the Policy needs to make concrete commitments, and budget connected to them. For example: increasing the accessible grant-based funding to feminist civil society across the world by 2025.

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

- a. The Ministry should truly ensure policy coherence as a key step to achieve system change. Policy coherence between policy areas, but also between domestic & international policies. This means that the commitments made for gender equality in international spaces such as the CSW (Commission on the Status of Women) or Climate and Biodiversity Summits (COPs) need to be translated into national policies. It means that our trade, financial and agricultural policies are transformed to truly get in line with our commitments to the Paris Agreement.
- b. The Feminist Foreign Policy should prioritize transformation over national interest. Currently, for example, Dutch foreign (trade and development) policy focuses on “Doing what the Netherlands is good at”, i.e. strengthening Dutch innovation & business abroad. This will not lead to the transformations that we want to see. The priorities and power relations need to change if we want to be truly Feminist.
- c. A feminist foreign policy should go beyond a focus on diplomacy and gender equality & LGBTQI+ rights alone. The Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy should aim for transforming power relations and existing inequalities, and be gender-transformative. This means that Dutch policies should explicitly seek to address root causes of inequality, such as gender roles, norms and behaviour. And that they seek to distribute more equally power and/or access to resources in societies.
- d. Intersectional gender analyses should be done as a starting point for all Dutch policies with an international dimension. We see too often that policies and investments of the Dutch government have detrimental effects on women’s rights and gender equality. This needs to be prevented.

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

At WECF, Women Engage for a Common Future, we believe that the following elements are essential for a successful implementation of a Feminist Foreign Policy:

- a. Cross-Ministry commitment (not just one department), increased capacity of Ministry to truly be transformative. For example hiring gender experts in different departments.
- b. Make a feminist action plan for the implementation, with specific activities, targets and a timeline and with sufficient resources (staff and budget) allocated. Include not only targets for the development aid & foreign affairs departments, but also for other policy areas that have an international dimension, including trade & finance, climate, environment, defense, foreign affairs.
- c. Develop outcome targets in consultation with feminist organisations and movements, especially from the Global South. That means going beyond this online consultation, and creating true partnerships with regular moments for conversations.
- d. Be transparent and report on the implementation of policy to the public, not as a minor paragraph in the annual SDG monitoring report or impact of development aid, but as a standalone Feminist Progress Report.
- e. Continuous collaboration with (feminist) civil society across the world, those affected by the foreign policies of the Netherlands.
- f. Provide more and more flexible core funding to those organisations that are in the frontlines and still lack funding: the feminist organisations and movements. Enable them to connect and build the movement not only in countries but also across boundaries. Both South-South as well as North-South. Refrain from limiting funding for women and feminist organisations purely to 'gender issues', allow broad thematic work areas including on climate, forests, food, water and biodiversity.
- g. Lead by example. Ensure inclusive staffing, gender parity and diversity in the staff composition at all relevant ministries. Increase knowledge on gender and inclusion for all staff.
- h. To be credible feminist policies should also be leading in internal policies. So invest also in national advancement of gender equality and inclusion.

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

- a. Commitment should come from the highest level – at Ministerial level, with clear leadership of the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Tasks and responsibilities should be made clear for the other Ministries and actors involved, to ensure that the actions are actually implemented.
- b. Implementation should be reported on regularly and made transparent to the public, including an accountability process with feminist civil society and other actors involved.
- c. In order to achieve the targets, dedicated staff, hours and budget need to become available for departments implementing the FFP.

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

The Feminist Foreign Policy should be human-rights based and intersectional: recognizing people's different intersecting identities, and the discrimination and inequalities that they face because of that. This goes beyond only gender-binaries (women-men), and should also recognize other persisting inequalities, such as socioeconomic status, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or gender identity, language, religion etc.

Genuine feminist (foreign) policy would need to advocate for a well-being economy, where care is valorised, decent work the norm, planetary boundaries honoured, and peace assured, and apply to all policies a government pursues.