

FEMINIST JOURNEYS

How Development and Humanitarian NGOs
make their work more feminist





CONTENTS

Foreword	4
Chapter 1:	
Introduction	6
Smash the Patriarchy: Feminism as an important attitude of Civil Society.....	7
Which Feminism?.....	10
The many voices of Feminism.....	13
A historical view.....	16
Strategy of the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).....	17
Strategy of the Federal Foreign Office.....	20
The Question of Power remains with all Projects.....	22
Chapter 2:	
Feminist Approaches in Project Work	26
The Common Thread in Feminist Practice.....	27
Light for the World: Intersectionality in action.....	29
LSVD ⁺ – Federation Queer Diversity in Germany: NGOs with a critical view on Patriarchy have a particularly hard time.....	33
Kindernothilfe: Becoming the voice of children.....	36
Bread for the World: Through the glass ceiling.....	39
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung: Sexual-reproductive health and rights are feminist per se.....	42



DVV International: Gender Toolkit for Adult Education.....	45
CARE: Women in Humanitarian Emergencies take Crisis Management into their own hands.....	49
Plan International: Shaping work with Feminist Leadership.....	53
Chapter 3: Structural Changes in Organisations.....	56
Walk the Talk	57
ADRA Germany: Feminists in progress.....	59
The North-South Bridges Foundation: The journey is the reward.....	61
medica mondiale: Feminism as part of the DNA	63
Annex.....	68
List of abbreviations	69
Sources.....	70
Additional literature.....	72
Interview partners.....	73
VENRO members	74
Imprint	78



FOREWORD

When we look at the world today, it is evident that the patriarchal logic of the past has not contributed to creating a peaceful and just world. For this reason, we believe it is long overdue to break new ground and scrutinise previous perspectives. From our point of view, consistently applied feminist foreign and development policy can lead to a fairer and more sustainable future.

In 2022, Germany followed other states and committed to an explicitly feminist foreign and development policy, which we greatly welcome. Activists and civil society organisations worldwide have been advocating for years to establish feminism in development cooperation and humanitarian aid. Civil society organisations – including VENRO member organisations – have much to say on the topic, especially since many have been working with feminist approaches for a long time and can share impressive practical experiences. In contrast, others have only recently embarked on the ‘feminist journey’. Examples of the various paths taken are outlined in this report.

Feminism is not only an option

We are not starting from scratch in the debate on feminist foreign and development policy. Even a German policy that was not explicitly feminist led to the adoption of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), thanks to years of work by feminist activists, and thus to SDG 5 on gender equality. Global decisions by governments of all political stripes clearly demonstrate the role that gender equality plays – as a minimum consensus – in global sustainable development, irrespective of whether it carries a feminist label.

At the same time, however, we see how short-lived feminist policies can be, most recently in Sweden. Once a pioneer in feminist foreign policy, the country is losing ground again after a change of government. We view the global gender backlash with great concern. These trends show that we must continue to think and act from a feminist perspective.

To this end, we must use the coming period to systematically reorganise structures and processes in Germany and secure long-term funding for feminist projects.

Some readers may wonder whether, given the current widespread global crises and cuts in development cooperation and humanitarian aid, there are no more important things to discuss than feminist politics. Our answer: precisely because of these crises, half of humanity, namely women, as well as marginalised people who experience multiple forms of discrimination, sexism, ableism, and racism, must have a say in all political issues that affect them. It is only through united and concerted efforts that we can succeed in overcoming these crises and achieving sustainable development for all. Feminism is thus not an optional extra, but fundamental for a just world.

Copying allowed

With this report, we would like to contribute to the debate on what civil society organisations can do to become more feminist in their work. The report reflects a wide range of organisations, both small and large, as well as those with a development policy focus or who are active in humanitarian aid. A total of 11 member organisations have their say and



tell stories about how they are anchoring feminist approaches in their work or organisations. The report is an invitation to inspiration, dialogue, and shared learning. The NGO report is aimed at our member organisations and the wider professional public. It is intended to inspire readers: Copying is expressly permitted!

The journey is the reward

We are aware that we are highlighting organisations and their experiences in this report that have not yet reached the 'home stretch' of implementing intersectional feminism at all levels. However, from a

feminist perspective, this is not necessarily negative because when organisations and people embark on this journey, it is the best sign that they are heading in the right direction. We hope that by doing so, we will provide the impetus to set out on this path so that power is distributed more fairly in the future and political decisions are made by the people they affect.

We look forward to receiving constructive feedback on this report and to continuing to work together to make the world a more feminist place!

Finally, we wish you, our dear readers, a thought-provoking and interesting reading experience!

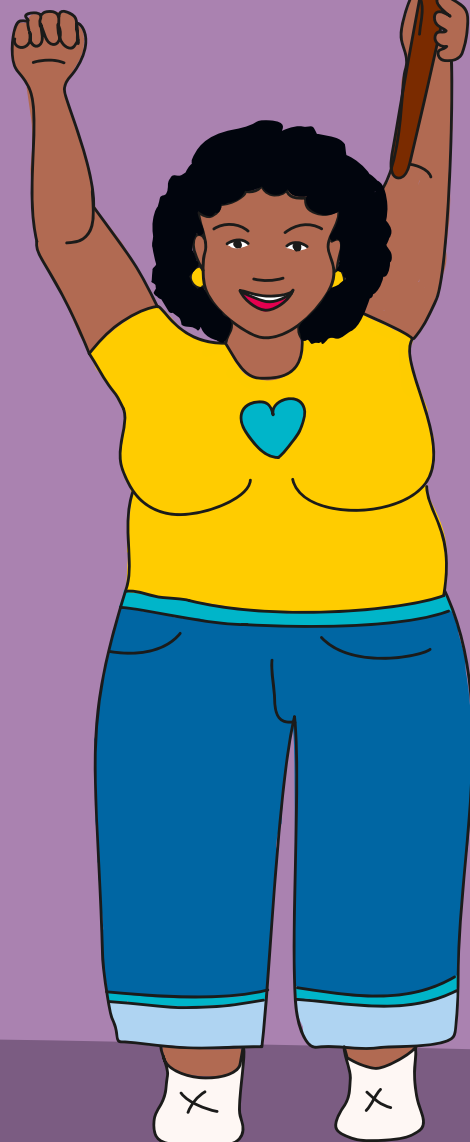


Gudrun Schattschneider Åsa Månsson
Chair of the VENRO Board VENRO Managing Director



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I am no longer accepting
the things I cannot change.
I am changing the things I
cannot accept.
- Angela Davis -



SMASH THE PATRIARCHY: FEMINISM AS AN IMPORTANT ATTITUDE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

‘Smash the patriarchy’ is a widespread feminist slogan. Its relevance continues to this day, because, even in the 21st century, patriarchal value hierarchies that privilege men and boys read as white are still firmly anchored in our societies. The prevailing gender relations worldwide are the result of a historically evolved patriarchal distribution of power. According to current calculations of the Global Gender Report 2022, it will take another 132 years until gender equality is achieved worldwide, thereby closing the gender gap between women and men.¹

However, women and girls, as well as all persons who identify as such, are not the only persons who are disadvantaged in patriarchal systems: lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans* and intersex people (LGBTI), people of colour, people with disabilities, refugees, and poorer people are also discriminated against in our patriarchal societies, often in multiple ways. Such discriminatory patriarchal patterns of thought and behaviour have an impact on all areas of life, including development cooperation (DC) and humanitarian aid.

Compared to men, women are affected by poverty at an above-average rate worldwide. Moreover, when it comes to access to education, girls and women in the Global South – at least in Africa and parts of Asia – are still clearly disadvantaged. ‘Their influence on society and therefore also on local, national and international decisions in the field of development cooperation is correspondingly lower’, says Esther Hirsch from the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International). Significantly, gender equality is a key prerequisite for realising

human rights worldwide and promoting social, fair, and sustainable development overall.

Paternalism – a ‘birth defect’ of Development Cooperation

Unequal gender relations and a Eurocentric worldview as a legacy of colonialism determine multiple power relations between states and social and political actors. Colonialism also has an impact on current development policy as was clearly expressed in the NGO report, [NRO-Report Shifting Power \(2022\)](#). Among other things, it appears that paternalism can be considered a ‘birth defect’ of development cooperation.

As one of the largest donor countries for development cooperation, Germany makes decisions on the allocation of funds in numerous instances, which often occurs in the context of setting topics and priorities for the recipient countries. Due to this practice, recipient countries often neglected their own policies and relied on external aid. Paternalism undermined the sovereignty and self-determination of recipient countries by depriving them of the opportunity to define their development strategies and priorities.

This practice was instrumental in maintaining an asymmetrical and unsustainable relationship between donor and recipient countries and, to address this, German development policy has placed a greater focus on the individual responsibility and independence of recipient countries in recent years. This goal is not least supported by a feminist development policy that seeks to overcome patriarchal, colonial, and racist power structures.



Young women in Brazil take part in protests against the government. © ASW

All people must be included

Many NGOs work with women as a key target group. The Director of International Projects at medica mondiale, Jana Schwerdtfeger, welcomes this. However, it is too short-sighted to only focus on gender. ‘My freedom as a woman is based on the freedom of the woman next to me’, says Schwerdtfeger. Because a society cannot develop further if it only promotes an exclusive group.

Instead, all marginalised people, i.e. people who have experience with discrimination, must be considered. These include, for example, people who identify as women, people with disabilities or non-heteronormative sexuality, women with different ethnic backgrounds, and women from socially disadvantaged families. ‘This does not mean that we weigh the suffering or needs of women against each other. A society can only

develop sustainably if everyone is involved’, says Schwerdtfeger.

Oppression Olympics

When taking a closer look and discussing various forms of discrimination, some feminists warn that it could diverge into an ‘Oppression Olympics’. In other words, a situation in which there is competition about what type of discrimination outweighs another. Actors in feminist contexts must consider this aspect and hence feminist foreign and development policy must incorporate an intersectional perspective to break up unequal power structures and provide fair access and opportunities for all people.

What does this mean for us?

In the past, some countries have adopted feminist foreign policy – not least thanks to the decades-long

international activism of many feminists. Sweden was the first country to start in 2014, and Canada joined in 2017. In 2022, Germany followed in Europe alongside France, Luxembourg, and Spain. Currently, these countries pursue a feminist foreign and development policy – at least on paper – and implement it through various approaches.

For development and humanitarian organisations, some questions arise: What does feminist poli-

tics mean for us and our partner organisations in the respective countries? What does it mean to promote feminist development projects? How can organisations embed feminist approaches in their structures? This NGO report addresses these questions and aims to serve as inspiration for mirroring the approaches. The target audience of this report comprises employees of humanitarian and development organisations, as well as political decision-makers.



Dialogue workshop in Rwanda, 2023 © Jakob Studner/Kindernothilfe

WHICH FEMINISM?

Definitions of Feminism

Although many assume there is a certain consensus about what feminism means or what the term encompasses, its meaning is quite controversial due to its being shaped by diverse currents. The NGOs interviewed and cited in this report also define the term quite differently. However, all emphasise that representation and participation, especially of disadvantaged people, is vital.

On its website, the Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy, founded by the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2007, states that:

“The basic concern of all feminist movements is self-determination, freedom and equality for all people, which should be realised in both public and personal life. Their diversity provides grounds for approaches and potential that can shape the current profound social change.”

The Common Denominator

Patriarchy means that rights, privileges, opportunities and resources favour (white) men and are unequally distributed. From VENRO’s point of view, the common denominator of feminist movements is that patriarchal power structures are deconstructed and assessed as unjust, discriminatory, and oppressive. As a logical consequence, the goal is to overcome patriarchy and establish gender equality in all areas of society.

It is important to note that (social) gender is not a homogeneous, universal category and is socially constructed. Because different forms of discrimi-

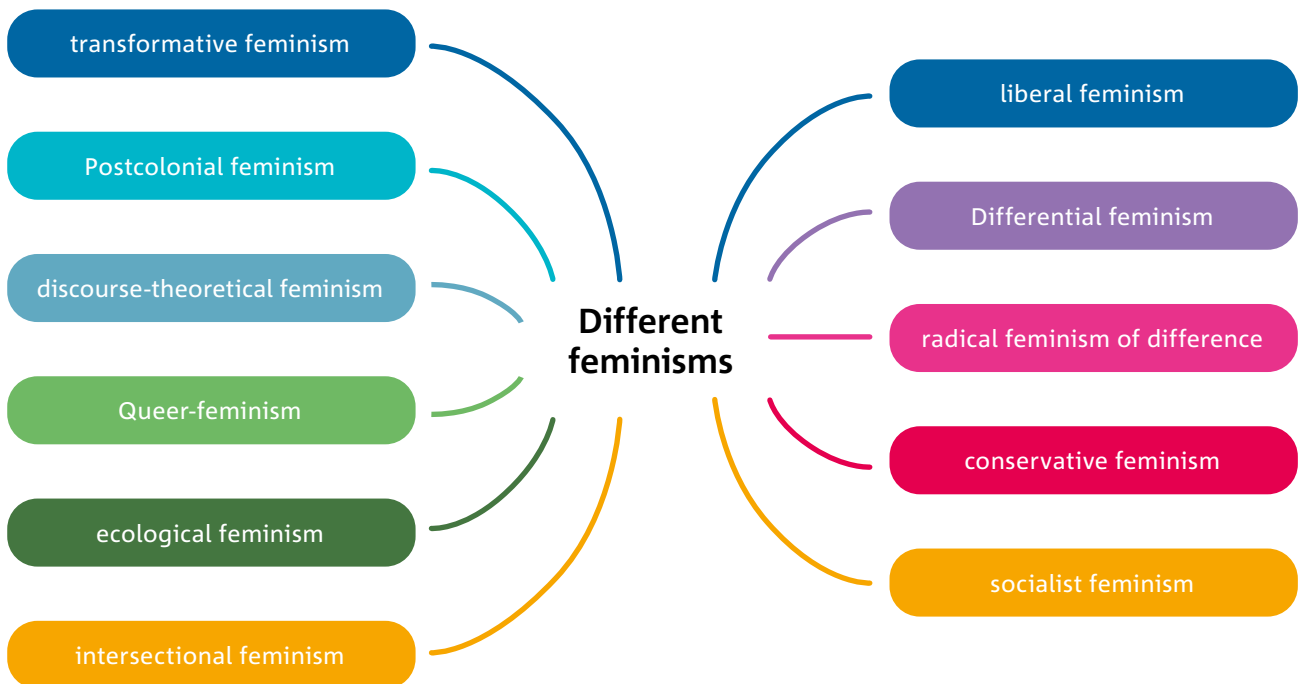
nation – such as racism and sexism – often interact, women of colour are often affected by social inequality and devaluation in multiple dimensions (intersectionality), hence also concerning white women.²

Where does the NGO report fit in this spectrum?

This NGO report provides examples from our member organisations that oscillate between conservative feminism and intersectional feminism. Many respondents from our member organisations acknowledge gender differences. They want to contribute to women’s empowerment and are committed to gender-equal opportunities at work or in politics. Intersectional inequality by gender, class, migration background, and sexual orientation plays a subordinate role at times.

At the same time, an increasing number of NGOs are pursuing intersectional feminism, which has its roots in the activism of black feminists. This stands for maximum inclusion, which can be achieved through political actors because multiple discrimination plays a central role, and hence taking these aspects into account testifies to a more holistic view of society. Intersectional feminism not only addresses girls and women but also, for example, people with disabilities, who represent the largest minority in the world.

How VENRO defines feminist policy and what we expect from it is described in the statement [↘ Expectations for a feminist development policy](#) (VENRO, 2022).



Source: Gunda Werner Institute

Intersectional Feminism

The term intersectionality was coined by the anti-racist American activist and scientist Kimberlé Crenshaw. It is essential for understanding feminism. Intersectional perspectives show that various social hierarchical relationships overlap and lead to different experiences of discrimination. An intersectional analysis of the gender ratio shows, among others, that women experience different types of sexism depending on what types of social categories are attributed to them.

For example, black women who are additionally exposed to racism experience sexism differently than white women. Women with disabilities are more disadvantaged than those without disabilities. In this context, it is important to note that the various discriminations do not

simply accumulate, but rather develop into a new form of discrimination. For example, women of colour are oppressed by patriarchy and are also affected by racism. In this respect, it is important to not only talk about women in general, since marginalised persons who experience increasing discrimination in the patriarchy based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, age, origin, disability, socio-economic status, or ethnic or religious affiliation are also impacted.

An intersectional approach focuses on the perspective of marginalised persons or groups. It takes the interaction of various manifestations of inequality resulting from different systems of power (for example, racism or classism) into account. Intersectionality is a useful tool for identifying and addressing social inequalities as holistically as possible.³

Feminism and other -isms

Feminism, anti-capitalism, and anti-racism are social movements that advocate for the rights and equality of oppressed groups.

Feminism takes a stand against patriarchal structures and gender discrimination; anti-capitalism challenges the exploitation of workers and opposes the capitalist system; and anti-racism fights racism and racial discrimination. These movements are interconnected because they all want to fight oppression and disadvantage at different levels and seek to create an equal society.

Current feminist economic trends increasingly address the crisis of social reproduction, whereby feminist economists highlight the shortage of persons in support and care. Consequently, those who bear responsibility for care work are overburdened and overworked.

The majority of these are women, in particular BIPOC women, because, in patriarchal societies, they take care of the majority of children, the sick, and the elderly.

At the same time, there is tension between anti-capitalism and the promotion of gainful employment for women, since the capitalist economic system is based on a hierarchy of labour and wage labour. Women often have difficulties integrating into the labour market

or with career advancement; they are often underpaid and underrepresented. Anti-capitalist movements therefore focus on abolishing this hierarchy and distributing resources and opportunities more equitably.

Promoting women's employment can, in practice, lead to a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. This gives women a chance to receive adequate pay for their work and reach their full potential. Some advocates of women's employment thus combine the opportunity to build a world of solidarity based on mutual support and cooperation.

On the other hand, critics argue that promoting female employment within a capitalist system only strengthens the structures and hierarchies of labour that would allow the situation in which women are kept in underpaid and insecure employment to continue. They argue for a radical change in the economic system as a condition for the actual achievement of equal rights for women and a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

VENRO's member organisations operate in this field of tension of feminist movements with their feminist approaches presented in this NGO report.

Toolkit on Paid and Unpaid Care Work
 ↘ [From the 3Rs to the 5Rs](#) (UN Women, 2022).

THE MANY VOICES OF FEMINISM

Social Movements and Civil Society

Since 2023, both the Federal Foreign Office (FFO) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) have been pursuing feminist policies. This development has, not least, been influenced by civil society, which provided significant impetus for change. Activists, local women's and LGBTI organisations, and development and humanitarian NGOs are all part of this movement. The emancipatory impulses of the Global South cannot be responded to in general terms because the history and manifestation of feminism in Latin America differ from that in sub-Saharan Africa, and Central or Southeast Asia.

For decades, feminist activists for women's issues and peace have been calling, among other things, for the agenda of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security to finally be translated into practical policy.

UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

UN Resolution 1325 aims to implement an agenda on women, peace and security. In addition to protection against conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, it includes the equal and meaningful participation of women in processes of crisis prevention, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping. Its four pillars are:

1. Participation
2. Prevention
3. Protection
4. Emergency aid and reconstruction

Second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen

Development of the key issues: equal access to education, employment and adequate healthcare.

Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing

189 UN-Member States adopt the most comprehensive approach to date to promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

1975

1980

1985

1995

First World Conference on Women in Mexico City

Definition of three priority goals:

- Equality
- development
- peace

Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi

It was declared for the first time that all problems of humanity are also problems of women. Women therefore have a legitimate right to participate in decision-making processes.

Overview of the four UN World Conferences on Women 1975-1995

Protection of Women

The implementation of the resolution includes involving women and civil society representatives in negotiations and decisions on armed conflicts and wars, as well as in crisis management. In addition, conflict prevention generally takes precedence. Women and children must especially be protected from sexual violence during war and when fleeing conflicts. In essence, many civil society efforts are about dismantling patriarchal, militaristic, destruction-oriented structures and promoting a society that places human security at the core of a human rights-based policy.⁴

Social movements are driving the discourse

Social movements such as #MeToo, Ni Una Menos, and Fridays for Future are driving the discourse today. Thematically, they are much more feminist than their precursor movements.

The #MeToo movement started in October 2017 with a hashtag. In the wake of the Harvey Weinstein scandal, it spread via social networks, encouraging numerous affected women to draw attention to sexual harassment and sexualised violence. The social debate triggered by this continues to this day.

Ni Una Menos (translation: Not one less) is a movement to combat violence against females and femicide that was formed throughout Latin America, where hundreds of women are murdered annually, simply because of their gender. Increasing numbers of people in Chile, Argentina, and other Latin American countries are resisting this violence. Femicides exist in all societies and affect women regardless of their age, ethnicity, religion, or sexual or cultural background. Every third day in Germany, a woman is the victim of murder or manslaughter.

Fridays for Future focuses on the climate crisis as a real threat to human civilisation. Combating the effects of climate change is considered the main task of the 21st century. The movement describes itself as

international, non-partisan, independent, and decentralised. Many of the committed climate activists are calling for a radical conversion to a world of solidarity and justice in which everyone can live a good and healthy life.

Gender Backlash

LGBTI activist and Executive Director of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), Julia Ehrt, notes a new trend: ‘There is a global backlash against LGBTI people and our rights. There is also a global backlash against gender equality – a return to sex-based rights in contrast to gender. And there is such a thing as a backlash against sexual and reproductive health and rights [SRHR], as we are currently experiencing in the USA or Poland, for example. It is central that all three topics: LGBTI issues, gender equality or feminism and sexual and reproductive rights, and health as a whole must be considered. Foreign and development policy in particular should recognise this and act accordingly’.

The current gender backlash markedly targets LGBTI and women’s rights activists. Most recently, new legislation banned work with and for LGBTI people in Uganda in 2023. The Atlas of Civil Society 2022 shows that the areas of action of feminist civil society organisations or organisations working on women’s rights are, internationally, the most severely restricted areas.⁵ In extreme cases, members of social movements are criminalised, threatened, or even murdered.

Feminism in the Global South

Feminism in the Global South also affects the debate, since such movements operate quite differently from those in the Global North.

For example, in the podcast *Our Voices, Our Choices*, some feminists from the Global South demand that NGOs question and analyse their structures because they often support coloni-

alism, racism, patriarchy, and unjust economic structures. In addition, organisations in the Global South should be actively involved in decision-making processes and financial resources should go directly to local feminist organisations.

Good to hear: Our Voices, Our Choices podcast

The five-part series on the global feminist collaboration of the gender-political podcast, *Our Voices, Our Choices*, started in the autumn of 2022. It was commissioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and FAIR SHARE of Women Leaders and features people whose voices often go unheard and whose rights are restricted. In this series, the participants shed light on what feminist development policy – as a possible global collaboration – can look like in practice and what can be done to make it a reality.

Playlist ↘ [Our Voices, Our Choices](#) (Heinrich Böll Foundation)

The podcast, for example, discusses the results of a study by the Association of Women in Development (AWID) which indicates that women's rights organisations worldwide receive only 0.4 per cent of the total gender-specific aid. Moreover, approximately half of the feminist organisations in the Global South work with an average annual budget of the equivalent of 27,500 euros or less. Most women's rights organisations have also never received basic funding or multi-year funding.

In the position paper ↘ [Neue Finanzierungsansätze](#) (VENRO, 2023), VENRO makes concrete proposals on how decolonial and feminist approaches to state support for civil society actors worldwide can be strengthened.

Chantelle de Nobrega, who works as Grants Manager at the NGO Mama Cash, reports that her organisation started as the first international women's fund in 1983. Her work focuses on funding feminist organisations around the world. It supports a wide range of groups working on issues such as environmental justice, labour rights, the rights of sex and agricultural workers, as well as reproductive issues.

'It's not enough to just say that we give money. We need to think about how we do that and whether we do it in a way that really gets through to the groups we want to reach', explains de Nobrega. A participatory financing approach that serves to share power helps in this context and requires recognising that the communities to be reached with the funds need to act as experts: they have to be fully involved in the decision-making processes for fund distribution.

Mama Cash is a feminist organisation that relies on participatory direct financing. It is committed to ensuring that power stays where it should be: with the people or activists who want to reshape their reality. More information about this specific financing approach can be found here: www.mamacash.org

A HISTORICAL VIEW

For 50 years, German development policy has pursued an approach to combat global gender injustice. In the 1980s, a liberal gender equality approach emphasising women's economic self-actualisation dominated. However, a holistic approach was lacking; it was assumed that women were victims of circumstances and had to be emancipated while the existing power structures remained unchanged. This was not a suitable method to achieve sustainable changes.

The feminist political scientist Radwa Khaled-Ibrahim writes that women were portrayed as vulnerable subjects of discrimination without the power to act. 'Against this background, development aid understood its task was to "help" women.'⁶ In the 1990s, an empowerment paradigm developed that recognised women as important actors in the goal of strengthening economically weak states.

One of the best-known examples of such development policies was establishing micro-credits for women to start mini-enterprises. This allowed women to be economically independent and integrate into the capitalist system. Even today, many places issue micro-credits to support women.

The previous fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (Beijing, 1995) marked an important milestone. At that time, 189 UN member states adopted the most comprehensive concept to date to promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

In the 2000s, gender mainstreaming made its way into German development cooperation, and fostered the understanding of the obligation to consider the varied effects on men and women in all decisions.

The Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action list various measures to help ensure that every woman or girl can exercise their freedoms, choices, and rights. These include a non-violent life, the opportunity to attend school, and equal pay for work of equal value.⁷

In 2014, the BMZ adopted a 'cross-sectoral concept for gender equality in German development policy' that envisaged integrating the gender perspective into all development policies and projects. However, from a feminist perspective, it is essential to recognise and dismantle the ruling structures of global capitalism to initiate lasting and sustainable changes.

Hierarchies between women and global contexts, such as the economic growth paradigm, also play a key role. Feminist critics assume that disadvantaged groups of people need to be given greater consideration to combat exploitation and climate injustice and permanently break through global patriarchal and racist structures.

Since the international community adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, its 17 SDGs have been the guideline for German development policy. This includes gender equality as SDG 5.

STRATEGY OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ)

In her [strategy paper](#) on feminist development policy, published at the beginning of March 2023, Svenja Schulze, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, writes that, for her, the focus lies on justice: ‘Women and girls make up half of the world’s population. They should also have half the power’. She goes on to say that if women were equal and had the same responsibilities, there would be less poverty, less hunger, and more stability in the world. It is therefore worthwhile to strengthen the rights, resources, and representation of women and girls.

Not the one feminism

At the time of writing, the Federal Government has published its third gender action plan (GAP III). With the participation of civil society, a plan has been drafted that outlines how feminist development policy should be implemented. At the request of VENRO, it says: ‘Within its new strategy, the BMZ acknowledges that there is no one feminism, but that there have been diverse feminist movements over the centuries and across all continents. Some of them also had a different focus, such as workers’ rights, voting rights, or skin colour. In some cases, they even contradicted each other’.

According to the BMZ, the central finding is that inequalities are not products, but the result of discriminatory structures, power, hierarchy, dynamics, gender roles, and discriminatory social norms – and since these, in turn, have been established by society, they can also be changed by society. The status quo is therefore not natural or fixed but was created by society itself and can therefore be shaped differently.

As a result, according to the BMZ, inequalities cannot be viewed in isolation but must recognise that not only are there very diverse reasons for discrimination and marginalisation of others, but these forms of discrimination also frequently overlap, thus reinforcing each other (current

If we aren't intersectional, some of us, the most vulnerable, are going to fall through the cracks.

– Kimberlé Crenshaw –



buzzword: intersectionality). At the same time, girls and women in all their diversity are at the centre because they represent the largest population group which is still politically, socially, and economically marginalised in all countries while their participation is often limited or non-existent.

New Political Understanding

With its feminist development policy, the BMZ wants to tackle structural causes, compensate for unequal power relations, and contribute to enabling the participation of all people on equal footing. The BMZ wants to proceed in a gender-transformative and intersectional manner that is based on an inclusive, non-binary (people who do not identify exclusively as male or female) understanding of gender.

According to the BMZ, women themselves must earn sufficient money and should be free to decide how they spend it. It continues: ‘They need access to education, information and networks. This is the only way that women and girls can truly shape their lives freely’.

By 2025, 93 per cent (2021: approx. 64 per cent) of the newly committed project funds should go to projects that promote equality in the Global South.

Hoping for a Pull Effect

In development cooperation, the BMZ does not dictate to NGOs whether and how their projects incorporate gender equality. At the same time, the Ministry says: ‘Of course, we also want to see it as an impulse within the federal government and towards our partners that, as a department, we lead by positive examples and also hope for a pull’. This hope is shared by civil society.

A Novel Participatory BMZ Process

The participatory process in the development of the current BMZ strategy was a novelty. From the out-

set, the BMZ has allowed for closer involvement of civil society from the Global North and the Global South in the planning and dialogue process, for example, in the form of consultations. Following a decolonial understanding, the BMZ sought expertise from the partner countries, as some strong feminist movements in the areas offer considerable learning potential. Local approaches to solutions and a local understanding of feminism are essential for successful cooperation. The impulses and demands of civil society have significantly influenced the current strategy.

According to the BMZ, the global multiple crises show that politics and forms of government are based on dominance, supremacy, and exclusion. With a feminist approach, answers for future societies would now have to be formulated so that they can construct a more resilient, stable, and peaceful coexistence.

Gender Transformative Approaches

The BMZ’s feminist development policy relies on gender transformative approaches to dismantle gender-specific power hierarchies in the long term. They focus on the causes of gender inequalities: discriminatory laws, unequal social norms and practices, discriminatory attitudes and gender roles, and stereotypes arising from patriarchal power relations. For a critical examination of common images of masculinity, men are also included.

In this respect, these approaches differ from gender-sensitive approaches, which consider specific needs in measures, but do not provide for an active shift in inequalities. According to the new strategy, gender transformative approaches are a central element in implementing feminist development policy as a basis for development policy measures.⁸

The BMZ formulates the do-no-harm approach as a minimum standard for all measures of German development policy: no measures may further consolidate unequal power relations and structures, and the safety of all actors involved has top priority.

In the future, the BMZ wants to work more closely with civil society organisations that are driving change and leveraging power structures and gender roles.

Fact sheet on the Do-No-Harm Approach

In VENRO Insight [↘ Gut gemeint ist nicht gut genug](#), the seven steps of the do-no-harm approach are explained.

All style...what about the substance? The BMZ is examining its own structures

The BMZ also examines its own structures, processes, and working methods. It aims to provide training on feminist, postcolonial, and anti-racist development policies and take measures to actively promote diversity, equal opportunities, participation, and competencies.

Following this approach, events must be designed to be mandatory, inclusive, and gender-appropriate and event concepts with management participation should comply with these standards. Participation formats and mechanisms for the direct financing of civil society, grassroots organisations, and (human rights) activists working in the countries where the measures are to take effect will be reviewed.

At the launch event of the feminist strategy in March 2023, Svenja Schulze said: ‘A mammoth cannot be dispatched alone. You not only need a strong woman, but also several people, as well as

the men. I think that’s a good image. However, the scheme doesn’t just make friends’.

Coherence as a new feature?

The BMZ wants an interdepartmental exchange, in particular with the FFO to ensure the coherence of feminist, human rights-based approaches in external action. The focus is on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), participation in peace and reconstruction processes, overcoming conflict-related gender-based violence, and the economic empowerment of women.

Joint Strategy Paper [↘ LSBTI-Inklusionskonzept der Bundesregierung für die Auswärtige Politik und die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit](#) (Federal Foreign Office, BMZ)

Good to learn: Intersectional feminist development policy

In the podcast *Entwicklungssache*, Emilia Roig, activist and founder of the Center for Intersectional Justice, explains in conversation with Federal Minister Svenja Schulze what intersectional feminism is all about in development policy.

Podcast [↘ Mehr Feminismus wagen: Wie schaffen wir eine gerechtere Gesellschaft?](#) (BMZ)

STRATEGY OF THE FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE

The FFO presented guidelines for a feminist foreign policy at the same time as the BMZ. Although civil society representatives criticised the fact that two exclusive, non-coherent processes had been developed by the BMZ and FFO, the new feminist orientation was generally met with approval.

The concept, published in March 2023, emphasises that the realignment is not a ‘magic wand’ that can eliminate all difficulties, but an ‘important, overdue step in the right direction’. The strategy should be continuously developed through dialogue with civil society and international partners.

Feminist foreign policy is based on the fact that all people are entitled to the same rights and deserve the same freedoms and opportunities. It should specifically address the unique vulnerabilities in project funding or humanitarian aid and help women, girls, and marginalised groups become more representative, have a say, and participate.

Like the BMZ, the FFO pursues a gender-transformative and intersectional approach and continues the gender mainstreaming of German domestic policy in foreign policy. The provision of humanitarian aid should be implemented in a 100% gender-sensitive manner. If possible, gender aspects should be explicitly formulated as a goal (gender-targeted). In 2022, Germany was the world’s second-largest donor with just under 3.2 billion euros.

‘Feminist reflex’ in the Federal Foreign Office

The aim is to formulate a ‘feminist reflex’ among employees and develop new working methods

and structures. The position of an ambassador for feminist foreign policy is established, and the proportion of women in management positions is to be significantly increased. In terms of gender budgeting, the FFO aims to spend 85 per cent of project funds on gender-sensitive and eight per cent on gender-transformative topics by 2025.

The FFO resolutely opposes an anti-feminist backlash. In the fight against female genital mutilation, for example, it works together with the BMZ on education, awareness-raising, and dialogue, including with state and civil society organisations. Climate change is another focus.

What does this mean for humanitarian aid?

According to the FFO, feminist foreign policy is by no means a policy ‘of women for women’. The FFO also considers diversity characteristics and aims to strengthen not only women’s rights but also the rights of marginalised groups. The coalition agreement states that ‘Germany will continue and increase the growth of funds for humanitarian aid as needed, also in light of the forgotten crises.’

Every third euro is to be paid out as flexible means, and localisation is to be further expanded, whereby the latter aspect is intended to bring about a redistribution of power in humanitarian aid and create more local scope for action so that those who trigger the crises are those who (have to) live with them.

The aim is to facilitate access to humanitarian aid in conflict regions and improve the protection of aid workers.

The FFO supports projects with a humanitarian objective, and the BMZ promotes similar projects with a development policy objective with possibly the same project partners in the same country. For NGOs active in both areas, this lack of coherence can make work and access more difficult for other actors. ‘A feminist, inclusive, bottom-up approach would be a good opportunity to optimise these processes at this time’, explains Bianca Belger, responsible for advocacy at ADRA.

In a guest article⁹ for VENRO, she writes that humanitarian aid rightly claims to be apolitical, neutral, and impartial, and that ‘All persons who are dependent on humanitarian aid should have access to precisely this’.

This also includes the commitment and participation of all genders and groups in a society in design and decision-making processes. She describes local actors, especially women’s organisations, as a crucial pivotal point in the realisation of feminist goals.

That is why, according to Belger, humanitarian donors such as the FFO should promote their own processes and decisions of local (women’s rights) organisations. ‘The review and revision of the funding modalities, as well as the adjustment of the accountability and quality assurance systems, is a necessary step to fulfil the promise of sustainably strengthening the role of local actors and allocating funds in a predictable, flexible and transparent manner’.

Climate Change as a central issue

In 2021, according to the UN, up to 80 per cent of the people forced to flee due to climate-related disasters were women. As in most crises, women – especially black, Indigenous, and women of colour – are also most affected by the consequences of climate change and the scarcity of natural resources due to socio-economic and structural inequalities.

Women and girls who are forced to flee their homes are more often affected by sexualised violence and exploitation. Moreover, the prevalence of domestic violence increases dramatically after natural disasters. At the same time, women receive lower compensation figures, for example, in the event of land loss. According to some studies, women have a much higher risk of death due to climate events.

Countries such as Norway and Denmark use their feminist foreign policy for strategic orientation. Norwegian peace researcher Torunn Tryggestad says in an interview: ‘We could not assert ourselves with military strength in foreign policy. So, we depend on reliable rules. It is therefore in our own interest that we focus on peace and equality and work to move international agreements step by step in this direction’.¹⁰

In July 2022, UN Women Deutschland, Greenpeace, and several VENRO member organisations such as medica mondiale and ADRA published the ePaper [↘ Annäherung an eine feministische Außenpolitik Deutschlands](#), which states that feminist foreign policy has a transformative effect. With it, the focus is placed on the safety of people and not that of states:¹¹

It is committed to the dismantling of patriarchal structures and violent relations. It recognises gender equality as a crucial prerequisite for peace. Moreover, overcoming structural violence based on gender, origin, racialisation, sexual orientation, disability and any other of the many interdependent categories of discrimination is a prerequisite for peace and human security.

Further information: [↘ A feminist approach to climate policy](#) (BMZ, April 2023)

THE QUESTION OF POWER REMAINS WITH ALL PROJECTS

Critical Voice from the Global South

Interview with Rosebell Kagumire of the African Feminist Network

Rosebell Kagumire is a Ugandan journalist and founder of the African Feminist Network. She is committed to ensuring that African activists improve their networking and that their concerns are heard. The interview is reproduced in an abbreviated version.



Rosebell Kagumire © malaika media

Your work is in African feminism: Do you consider development cooperation and humanitarian aid problematic per se, or should the mode of cooperation be changed?

Rosebell Kagumire: Development cooperation is not really cooperation. It is built on decades of colonisation and capital flight from the (African) continent and other formally colonised countries. Cooperation is usually one-sided rather than two[-sided] since some colonised countries bear the legacy and the systems of colonisation. It also manifests in the material condition of the people and their background.

Essentially, the world depends on capitalist extraction from the Global South and their enrichment. Thus, the framework of development cooperation is deeply rooted in response and reaction to uphold the discourse on aid that is not aid in parts. It is also about justice issues and the reasons for injustice in the world that lead to the repetitive, generation-long cycles of violence and poverty in countries.

The categorisation of people who need humanitarian aid is dependent on the effects of disasters or wars. For instance, in the case of Somalia, DR Congo, Sudan and South Sudan. It is important to address the factors and powers that weaken societies.

From my point of view, it is not a cooperation but rather a one-sided control in which one party has the power and privilege to determine what goes where and who gets what while they profit

from the materials and resources of the countries receiving the aid. Additionally, it is necessary to consider the ethics of development cooperation and clarify with whom, and in what manner, cooperation is permitted. Although the framework conditions have existed for decades, this has not largely transformed the lives of the people. Despite the partnerships, unequal power systems still exist, creating one-sided development cooperation.

What role does patriarchy play in the relations between NGOs in the Global North and South?

Rosebell Kagumire: Colonisation was a white supremacy patriarchy and has always undermined the autonomy and self-determination of the cultures, people, and economies of other societies. It is important to note that humanitarian cooperation often reproduces all these dynamics that exist in societies. It doesn't matter who espouses them or how many women from the Global North are active in the industry. White women have dominated humanitarian aid for so many years, acting as saviours at the intersection of the exhausting fragility of women, i.e., women as carers, fragile, yet more intuitive and capable of communicating with the other party than men. This has been deployed using feminisation and the engagement of white women in development cooperation in the Global South in places of which they have no knowledge or concept. Thus, white women also represent white supremacy in these places, in effect representing the white patriarchy. It is an extension of the relation between race and patriarchy that also produces a form of hierarchical power.

It is important to note that the NGO world in the North for development and humanitarian aid is characterised by a female face; the exception is NGOs for peace and security. This makes it easy to justify the support of humanitarian aid since women are regarded as being soft. Nevertheless, the women [in question] still represent white supremacy and the imperialist system.

NGOs from the North have always brought all these problematic imbalances of power and the victimhood of African women, i.e. African women are presented as victims and children as parentless, with them. This is an individualised way of determining who is considered a vulnerable or helpless society rather than investigating the power systems taking away people's lives and how the systems are designed to keep people impoverished and turn against them.

Thus, it is crucial to analyse the interrelation of patriarchy and race imperialism in the North and South and examine how Northern organisations have operated in the past. Furthermore, the power hierarchies are re-established when NGOs from the North come to the Southern Hemisphere and formally colonised countries.

The power play of indigenous knowledge and the issue of whose knowledge is considered expertise has always been the heart of the problem in relations between Northern and Southern organisations. These imbalances undermine the alliance, as its true form analyses one's power and grants privileges to people who have an intimate understanding of how their country functions. This can only be facilitated by asking them about their needs, views, and ideas concerning their situation.

How should the international development and humanitarian sector change? How can NGOs from the Global North put feminism into practice?

Rosebell Kagumire: It is important to change what we call 'international' which always means 'foreign' and break down the hegemonic power that is called international development. Moreover, resources should be made accessible to those people who are close to the issues and where the people need change.

Community, local, and national organisations should be considered international, knowledgeable



actors coming in as allies rather than dictating what should be happening on the ground. Depleting power is at the heart of any meaningful change.

It is extremely vital to alter the dynamics to address the issues of racism, misogyny, homophobia, and sexism and bring about changes. It does not mean bringing marginalised people to the table but rather changing the systems, because international development often includes marginalised people only to exclude them again. Thus, it is very important to pay attention to power relations: ‘Who has the power, who is important, whose opinion matters and are the people who are supposed to be aided being heard?’

In my opinion, there are many feminist organisations on the continents, for example in Latin America and Asia, and it is very important to learn from these people. There needs to be an open and honest conversation to listen to the feminists from these regions. What are the visions for the future and how should they be aligned?

Listening to the minorities in their own countries can considerably benefit the NGOs of the Global North. Additionally, feminists from minority ethnic groups in these countries are doing well. That’s why they need to raise their voices. In addition, one needs to be aware of the changing trends because organisations often come and reproduce patriarchy on our soil, but this would not happen in their countries. There is also a demand for experience-based knowledge and well-funded research as well as grants for the integration and shaping of change.

What are the possible first steps a German NGO could take towards smashing the patriarchy in the systems they are working in?

Rosebell Kagumire: It is important to look at intersecting systems and imperialism as well as

how to ensure that one does not carry the imperialism present in the German government with them. In my opinion, if you want to work somewhere as an NGO, you have to become an ally who is aware of their role and tasks. This is because organisations frequently arrive in countries and they want to be in the driver’s seat. There is no need to be driving change in another person’s country when that person will never drive change in your own country. These are issues of concern not only for patriarchy but also for other ruling systems and feminists in the majority of the world.

Therefore, it is very important to analyse patriarchy relative to other ruling systems and comprehend all power relations. Oftentimes the power exercised is power over people; it is important to then analyse whether there is power with people or power over people and determine what happens in places where we have never lived.

What trends should NGOs of the Global North watch for in feminist debates?

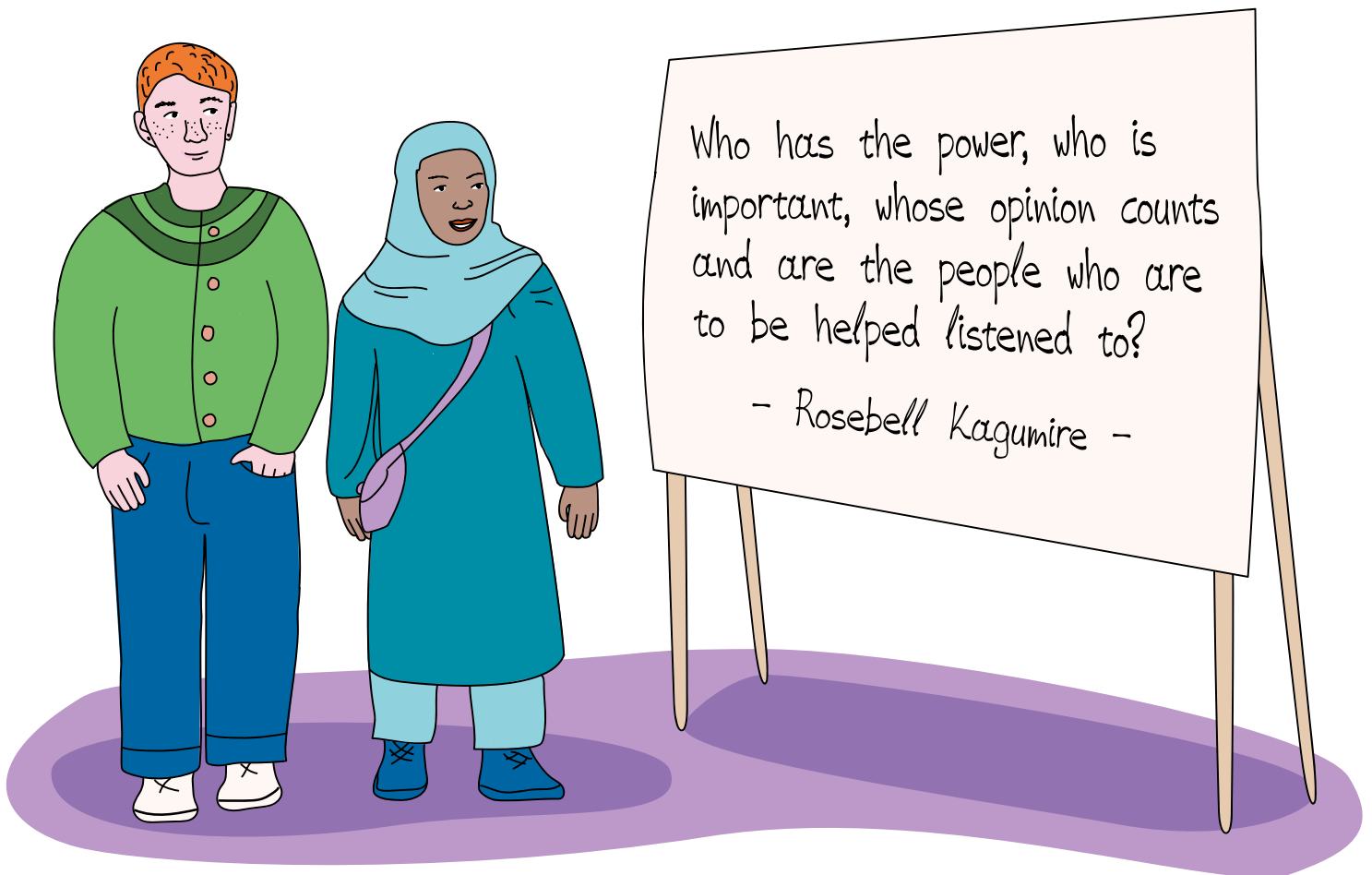
Rosebell Kagumire: It is important to discuss and critique the trends in feminist foreign policies because it can be a potentially applicable framework. However, organisations and governments often hijack the language of resistance and resistance movements, whether within the country or among the colonised people. Thus, what remains and is not prioritised becomes significant in the question of how power is addressed in feminist foreign policy.

It is not just the approach for addressing transsexual rights or LGBTQ or migration, but rather how power is analysed and how it impacts people living outside the country’s borders.

Most German organisations participate in this debate on feminist development policy. The question of power continues to exist in all feminist-oriented

projects or developments. It is a good framework if it is undertaken with the appropriate sensitivity and understanding of what feminist movements have

been and can be. Above all, the feminist movements and demands in the countries where these measures shall be implemented must be regarded.





CHAPTER 2: FEMINIST APPROACHES IN PROJECT WORK

I'm optimistic about the fact that we're still here. That's the first thing to celebrate. That yes, despite all the repression that is growing everywhere in the world - some kind of activism is still alive at the local, national and global levels and it has persisted against all odds.

- Srilatha Batliwala -



THE COMMON THREAD IN FEMINIST PRACTICE

Implementing feminist principles in project work challenges traditional thought and policy patterns. The problem with development and foreign policy is that the prevailing structures are male-dominated and, above all, reflect the perspective and experiences of (white) men.

Depending on gender, social position, and influence, everyone's behaviour is different. The male world of experience serves as a norm for how we shape foreign and development policy and practical work, how power is distributed and maintained in organisations, and how and by whom (and by whom no) decisions are made. This power gap exists in both governmental and non-governmental organisations and relationships.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, women take on approximately 75 per cent of unpaid care and housework.¹² Unjust social norms support unequal power relations worldwide. They discriminate against women, girls, and people of non-binary gender identity and diverse sexual orientations. This system impacts how our organisations operate and how local disadvantaged groups participate in decisions.

VENRO member organisations do not start from scratch in their partnerships with organisations from the Global South: they have years of experience in addressing patriarchal structures and power asymmetries in development policy and humanitarian practice and in contributing to gender equality.

Gender Equality in Project Work

In the pamphlet for the implementation of the Venro Guidelines [How projects that are effective for good intentions are described](#) how the guideline on gender equality can be implemented in the project work of NGOs

In February 2023, the Action for World Solidarity (ASW) published the thematic booklet 'Solidarity World: Women – Rights – Realities. Perspectives from the Global South'. The ASW has been active in the field of women's empowerment for 40 years and cooperates with numerous committed NGOs and women. In the course of this work, factors have emerged that particularly contribute to a lasting change in the lives of women in rural regions from India to Brazil, namely increasing the power of action of women and people who identify as women and giving them space and opportunity for more self-determination.

For example, by imparting knowledge about one's rights and participation in decision-making bodies with the help of self-help groups, education and training courses, and by training facilitators who pass on what they have learned – such as basic knowledge in financial accounting and business administration – to other women. Political participation is a powerful lever of sustainable support for women in their development.

Carla Dietzel, Gender Advocacy Officer at CARE Germany: 'Women and girls in all their diversity must not only be taken into account in their



needs; they must also be able to participate in decisions in humanitarian crises or be enabled to make such decisions themselves’.

Cornelia Sperling (LSDV) says: ‘It’s about cooperation, not about helping. The project partners should not be forced to accept any concepts, but should focus on what they consider important’.

The promotion of the capacities of women and people who identify as women and belong to marginalised groups must be an essential aspect of feminist project work. This is the only way they can assume supporting roles and leadership positions at all levels. Diversity and inclusion should therefore be taken into account and promoted in all strategic orientations and financing decisions.

Real social change is only possible with a gender-transformative approach in which basic attitudes are reflected and role models, norms, and values with underlying discrimination are overcome and dismantled. As a central element, people who identify as men and boys are actively involved in measures for gender justice.

The Christoffel Blind Mission (CBM) demands that all measures be designed in such a way in the future that people with disabilities can participate (disability mainstreaming). At the same time, targeted measures for people with disabilities would have to be implemented to compensate for disadvantages. Inclusion thus becomes a cross-sectional task.¹³

Successful inclusive development cooperation therefore requires reliable data for project planning and progress measurement, consistent participation of people with disabilities in the implementation, and sufficient human and financial resources.

What constitutes feminist project work?

In this chapter, we present NGOs that pursue feminist approaches in their humanitarian and development work. During the discussions, we, the authors of this NGO report, noticed seven overarching aspects that are common to all, and feminist approaches in partnership practice often include the following elements:

1. Reflection: grappling with one’s own privileges and prejudices and making these processes transparent;
2. Listening: listening attentively to understand the context;
3. Participation: maximum participation, sharing of power and participation in decision-making processes;
4. Men: be sure to involve them in the area at an early stage;
5. Time: enabling long-term partnerships to build mutual trust and thus be more effective;
6. Innovation: strengthening old and new networks and venturing to try new approaches;
7. Resources: investing in intersectional approaches.

Find inspiration in the following examples from Light for the World, LSVD* – Verband Queere Vielfalt/Federation Queer Diversity in Germany, Kindernothilfe, Brot für die Welt/Bread for the World, Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung, Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV International), CARE, and Plan International.

LIGHT FOR THE WORLD: INTERSECTIONALITY IN ACTION

Originally, Light for the World was ‘only’ about eye health and blindness prevention. However, over time, inclusion and redistribution of power, social, societal and economic participation, as well as sustainable changes, have been added as topics. As the project Young African Women with Disabilities Leadership Program impressively demonstrates, the focus is on women with disabilities.

Founded in 1988 in Vienna, Light for the World initially focused on preserving or restoring people’s eyesight in the Global South through special operations. Over the years, the commitment has

expanded to embrace inclusive education as well as inclusion in education and work.

The NGO now has numerous offices, for example, in Germany, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Sudan, and Kenya and its total budget amounts to more than 22 million euros annually.

‘The basic idea is that we want to work sustainably with our local partners and build structures – not just promote short-term projects’, says Regina Göhlert.



The participants of the Young African Women with Disabilities Leadership Programme (Saffiatu Kamara, Poovedy Motto, Sukoluhle Mhlanga, Pooja Gope, and Uzoamaka Asiegbu) on the last day of training
© African Disability Forum



The participants of the Young African Women with Disabilities Leadership Programme (Adama Sarr, Poovedy Motto, Uzoamaka Asiegbu, Shakirah Nabakooza, and Sukoluhle Mhlanga) give a presentation on the topic of intersectionality © African Disability Forum

Since 2019, she has been working at Light for the World Germany in Munich and is currently the International Senior Advisor of Philanthropy. She primarily works with foundations and major donors.

Mathilde Umuraza, originally from Rwanda, has been working as a gender expert at the NGO in Bielefeld for one year, where she has been responsible for four key areas of action: capacity building, organisational development and training for employees and partners, monitoring of and communication on projects focusing on gender equality, and the consolidation of the best practices in media publications.

Before joining Light for the World in 2022, Umuraza worked for other NGOs, particularly with women with disabilities and HIV-infected women. In 2014, she founded her own network of women with disabilities for women with disabilities: 'Women with disabilities are simply left behind. I wanted to change that'.

Personally affected and committed

Umuraza is very concerned about the topic: 'First of all, I am affected myself because I have a disability. And secondly, it's about justice for me. It is simply unfair that some groups of people are marginalised or excluded due to a characteristic such as disability'. She is currently increasing discussions about inclusion in the women's movement.

She welcomes this because women with their different identities and attributions are particularly affected by multiple discrimination. Mathilde Umuraza says that she is very fortunate to have her family because they are always there to advise and support her. Her progressive physical disability was taken seriously but not considered a problem. Instead, she benefited from considerable understanding and regular rehabilitation measures. 'My understanding is that I don't fit the stereotype of a woman with a disability', she says.

By integrating into the family network, she was challenged and supported and was later able to take charge of her own life. This is by no means a matter of course. In her work, she sees many women with disabilities – especially women with multiple or severe disabilities such as cognitive impairments – who are very ill. They are severely discriminated against and do not receive the support they need to live a self-determined life. The 45-year-old defines feminism particularly broadly and sees it as more than a movement.

Feminism encompasses more than gender

For Umuraza, feminism is about justice and opportunities for all: ‘For me, feminism encompasses more than gender. It is also about equal opportunities and fair processes that allow each individual to realise their full potential’. She welcomes the increasing openness and commitment to intersectional feminism. Continuous development is important and affects persons who can tell their own stories, continues Umuraza.

In this way, everyone is included and valued which is a very important aspect because it is a dynamic process that thrives on the impulses of its designers. Specifically, by 2025, she and her colleagues aim to fully and authentically involve everyone in their work as an organisation. Not just in theory, but primarily in practice as an intersectional approach, so to speak.

On track to setting up one’s structure more intersectionally

With a proportion of women of about 55 per cent, more than 250 people currently work for Light for the World in Africa and Europe (about 10 per cent are persons with disabilities). The employees are people from marginalised groups such as women with disabilities, people with severe disabilities, and people with different sexual orientations and identities. The number of employees with intersectional

identities who rose to middle or higher management as executives or experts has recently increased.

Women without disabilities are already a good deal further along the long path of feminism: Marion Lieser, for example, took over as female CEO from a male successor at Light for the World International in 2022. In this respect, gender equality is already well implemented in NGOs. The next step in the project work is to achieve more diversity and inclusion for ‘people with complex identities’, as Umuraza calls it. The people she works with would have a fundamental right to participate and be the ones driving the changes.

The work of NGOs should aim to empower, support and ultimately strengthen people’s capacity to act. ‘Working with people with disabilities is exciting because you learn something new every day, not only about the sad experiences but also about their ability to solve problems and their resilience’, argues Umuraza, who herself has gained vital experience in this work.

Changing Perspectives

Project leader Shitaye Astawes defines feminism as a movement and drive to make the world a fairer place. For them, it is about the right to lead a secure independent life. This is a particular concern for Astawes, who has been involved in the disability rights movement on the African continent for many years.

According to the 52-year-old, the need for programs with this special focus is there, but there is a lack of funding. Aspects such as encouragement, reinforcement, inclusion, and representation are central, especially for self-confidence. For example, if more women with albinism or cognitive impairment were coached, they would have the opportunity to learn tools and techniques that they can use for themselves and their needs. As a result, they would not have to rely on other ‘experts’.

‘I remember a young woman from The Gambia who – apart from her mother – only experienced rejection. It was a depressing environment. As a result, the young woman had little self-confidence. This changed abruptly through our course, and now she is determined to get a job’, says Astawes. Stigmas can be overcome permanently, and individuals can be-

come role models for other women with disabilities in their community. To ensure that as many NGOs as possible act more intersectionally, the Ethiopian recommends changing the perspective from charity to a human rights-based approach and interaction on equal footing to enable change.

Good practice example: Young African Women with Disabilities Leadership Program

In Africa, Light for the World has been supporting the project Young African Women with Disabilities Leadership Program for some time. Project Manager Shitaye Astawes from Ethiopia works for the African Disability Forum, the African umbrella organisation of people with disabilities. She is particularly committed to disability mainstreaming. At its core, it is about enforcing the equality of people with disabilities at all levels of society (similar to gender mainstreaming).

Shitaye Astawes’ central project is a 12-month leadership program for women with disabilities. Women with different identities, above all, from urban and rural environments and different backgrounds should be included: a particular challenge lies in the fact that African women with disabilities are particularly discriminated against in terms of mobility, not only because of the weak transport infrastructure. As a wheelchair user, the activist is familiar with this problem from her own experience.

The last invitation for the leadership program was an overwhelming success with more than 600 applications from all over Africa. The selection was challenging because only 16 applicants could be admitted to the final round. They came from Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda and The Gambia. The high demand reflects the immense and urgent need – especially in rural regions. Across Africa, the invitation was circulated by national disability rights organisations, which are excellently networked and even represented in rural regions.

Together with colleagues, Astawes is responsible for reviewing the applications, and defining the selection criteria, for example, to ensure intersectionality, for training concepts in person, for virtual mentoring sessions, and routine follow-up. According to the project manager, the programme only develops the power of change through the networking of the participants. Quite a few graduates have gone on to become executives. More donors are currently being sought to be able to accommodate more than 16 candidates.

LSVD+ – FEDERATION QUEER DIVERSITY IN GERMANY: NGOS WITH A CRITICAL VIEW ON PATRIARCHY HAVE A PARTICULARLY HARD TIME



The Masakhane project to empower lesbian, bisexual, queer women and trans is the largest LGBTI-inclusive project funded by the BMZ to date. It was initiated and supervised by the Federation Queer Diversity in Germany (LSVD+) and by filia. die frauenstiftung, which also financed its own contributions. Throughout the eight-year project period, it was supported and implemented by the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL).*

In 2007, the Hirschfeld Eddy Foundation was founded on the initiative of the LSVD. The Foundation's main concerns are international networking and cooperation with partner organisations in the Global South and Eastern Europe to provide very concrete help for threatened LGBTI people.

The focus is on education, awareness-raising, persuasion and, above all, strengthening the human rights of LGBTI people. The name goes back to Magnus Hirschfeld, the pioneer of the gay civil rights movement in Germany, and the lesbian human rights activist, Fannyann Eddy from Sierra Leone. In 2004, Eddy, one of the most significant LGBTI voices from the Global South, was brutally murdered.

The largest project ever funded by the BMZ for lesbian women and trans* persons was launched by LSVD and filia. die Frauenstiftung. The project continued from 2018 to 2022 under the title: 'Advancing human rights in southern Africa through

the empowerment of NGO activists – with a focus on women's rights and LGBTI rights'.

In Zambia, queer groups networked via the project. For example, the Women's Alliance for Equality (WAFE) was created. In the future, lesbian women, sex workers, women with HIV, women with disabilities, and activists will continue to work together in this network and campaign for their rights at the political level.

Organisations critical of patriarchy have a particularly hard time

'The wheel can't be turned back. Lesbian and queer women have strengthened their voices and are at the forefront of their countries' social and democratic movements', says Botho Maruatona, Masakhane Coordinator. Now it's about fighting for more resources because feminist and lesbian activities are underfunded and, in principle, there is a focus on projects for gay men. Sperling states: 'The explicitly lesbian-queer projects get the smallest portion'.

Not least, this reflects the traditional balance of power: an NGO critical of patriarchy has a particularly hard time getting funding. This is based on the motto: Who has already developed a voice? Who is already trained in lobbying? Who sits on committees and nods through projects? It's not necessarily the women or lesbians.

Good practice example: The Masakhane project

Masakhane is a Zulu word and means, freely translated: ‘Come, let’s become stronger together’. The project started in the pilot countries of Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe with a project volume of 500,000 euros in 2014. By 2022, 250,000 euros were added for follow-up financing with the inclusion of three additional African countries, namely Mozambique, Eswatini, and Lesotho.

In the second phase, the BMZ surprisingly cut the funding by half, and thus many planned measures had to be cancelled, says Cornelia Sperling, who has accompanied the project on behalf of LSVD since 2018. The project work changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There were predominantly digital offers, and financial resources were used as a direct survival aid, as many activists became increasingly impoverished.

A major concern of the project is to break the dominance of the West or the Global North. Women in African countries should take the lead – also in terms of know-how. ‘Feminist development policy is maximally participatory’, says Sperling. It is thus not about imposing any concepts on the project partners but focusing on what they consider important.

Masakhane will continue to run after the official end of the project period in 2022 because the activists in the six countries have been strengthened and networked. Matlhogonolo, an activist from Botswana, says: ‘Masakhane has really empowered lesbian and queer women. We challenge society to take us on!’ Sperling adds: ‘I am a big fan of this type of grassroots partnership’.

Further information:
Factsheet ↘ [Masakhane](#) (Hirschfeld Eddy Foundation, 2022)

Many projects thrive on volunteering, which is not immediately rewarded. Due to structural barriers, LSVD would have few resources available for international work. In theory, many things are developing in Germany in the direction of gender justice: third-gender entry, gender-sensitive language, etc., but, in practice, things are still lacking.

Connect and Learn from Each Other

A good seven per cent of the world’s population lives a non-heteronormative sexuality. According to Sperling, if you want to address this group of people more specifically – especially in the Global South – you should a) get in touch and b) investigate what their biggest problems are to c) be able to learn from each other. The companion from the Masakhane project primarily learned that German

development policy has little to do with the reality of civil societies in the Global South and that it is important to really listen to understand what the conditions are in the countries and how the active groups respond to it.

Advocacy has ‘gone through a lot of work – practically in all areas of society’. It was about the rights of LGBTI people and freedom of expression. In 2019, civil society in Botswana achieved the decriminalisation of homosexuality. With Beyond the Rainbow, the LGBTI organization LEGABIBO (Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana) developed a strategy for LGBTI inclusion in all areas.

The development is impressive: talks with traditional and religious leaders in many villages, consultation with members of Parliament, and cooperation

with the Council of Churches and the Ministry of Health. ‘There can only be real change if people stop being homophobic’, says Sperling. This is why there are different strategies to bring about real change. In 2021, however, the Supreme Court reversed the decriminalisation of homosexuality.

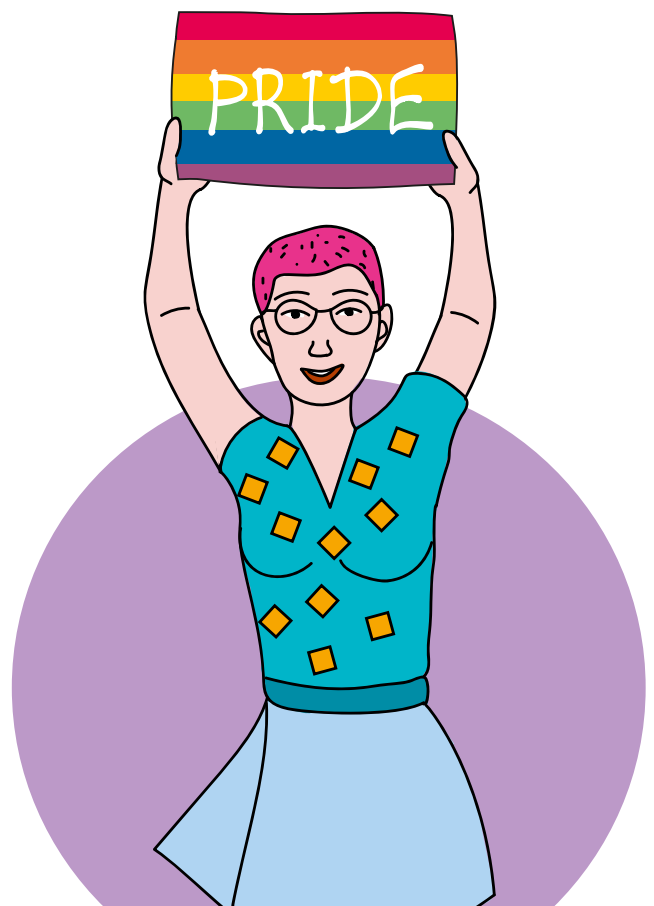
Another lever for sustainable change is networking. The Masakhane collectives are active in several regions and are linked to 200 activists in Zimbabwe alone. ‘Previously in the women’s movement, lesbians were usually the most industrious, but their issues were not necessarily taken into account’, Sperling notes. Nowadays, they are more confident and more likely to join forces which greatly helps to advance gender equality.

In 2018, Sperling initiated a sister project in North Rhine-Westphalia in which lesbian groups from Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Namibia work together with groups in Essen, Düsseldorf, Cologne, and Dortmund. They provide mutual support to draft new strategies and concrete measures because there is still a considerable amount of work to be done.

Masakhane: Key results of the project work.

A detailed evaluation carried out by external experts produced the following findings for the countries of Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe:

- Small groups have also been successfully formed in rural areas outside the capital cities, significantly expanding the reach of the civil society LGBTI community;
- All collectives see their conflict management skills and leadership abilities significantly strengthened;
- A solidarity-based and inclusive approach to working with sex workers, HIV-positive people, and other marginalised groups has been implemented;
- Even during the COVID-19 pandemic with its travel and contact restrictions, the community was able to stay in touch through social media and organise emergency aid in the form of food parcels and psychological counselling;
- Through Masakhane workshops and online communication, further networking, mutual learning and exchange of feminist strategies have developed between the groups in the six countries.
- A clear focus was finally placed on the more marginalised groups of lesbian, bisexual, trans* and queer women, opening up the opportunity to clarify their self-image and formulate their own agenda priorities;
- The acceptance and visibility of the collectives and activists are also becoming stronger in established LGBTI organisations, which are mostly dominated by gay men;



KINDERNOTHILFE: BECOMING THE VOICE OF CHILDREN

Kindernothilfe places a special focus on the empowerment of children who often have minimal decision-making power in patriarchal societies. Children are a group of people who – viewed through intersectional glasses – often have minimal access to decisions that affect them. The diversity concept of Kindernothilfe determines their work. A comprehensive transformation process is also underway within Kindernothilfe – moving away from established power structures towards more self-reflection, participation and flexibility. In addition to the concrete work, it is also about the fundamental attitude with which more gender equality is to be achieved.

Kindernothilfe was founded from church community work in 1959. Together with local partners on the ground, it has carried out more than 5,000 projects worldwide and reached over seven million children and adolescents. In this collaboration, there was a significant shift and professionalisation from an aid organisation to a children's rights organisation. The diversity approach consistently carries out this development.

'Our understanding of diversity is based on justice, on law. Gender equality has not yet been fully implemented anywhere in the world', says Katrin Bröring, the organisation's Diversity Manager.

With a focus on particularly marginalised children and adolescents, gender is not only part of the programme and project work but also a concern of the Duisburg office with about 180 employees. 'At Kindernothilfe, a pet project is the reconciliation of work and family', says the 42-year-old.

Promote Participatory Approaches

For the project work, Pac and Bröring emphasise that they consciously seek expertise, for example, through cooperation with women's rights organisations on the ground. 'I think this is one of the most important approaches, because we cannot and do not want to know what is meant by feminism and what is needed, but rather choose the participatory approach in order to recognise the complexity of the topic and, above all, to be able to see it in context', says Bröring.

'We take great care to ensure that we are on equal footing with the partner organisations and that we do not impose anything on them', says Pac. Some are very progressive, others have to explore options for action in a challenging, misogynistic context, and still others have to engage in intensive dialogue in order to learn together.

'When we look at projects, we screen for potential discrimination categories to identify power imbalances, such as age and gender. The situation can be even more difficult for individuals if there are other factors such as disability', explains Bröring. When the environment recognises that it has a responsibility to reduce power imbalances and break down barriers, this is inclusion. This happens, for example, in projects on sexual and reproductive health or against child marriage: 'It demands a gender-appropriate approach and motivation, as well as the gender-conscious dissemination of information'.

Like many other NGOs, Kindernothilfe relies on a self-help group approach. For example, extremely poor women in particular organise themselves into



Maphisa Orange Days, Zimbabwe © Hope for a Child in Christ

savings and loan groups. Because they are able to earn their own money, the women's self-confidence is strengthened and their reputation within the community grows. The success of this approach is measured by the food security of the children, their access to the health system, and their educational opportunities. The established group structure is developing an ever greater reach. In this respect, this approach is an empowerment tool with the potential to transform gender roles at the community level and achieve political participation at the higher regional level.

Gender Transformation is Social Change

'Gender transformation is a process of social change', explains advocacy expert Pac. This is not least about the reflection of norms, stereotypes, and gender roles. Based on these analyses, the status quo is questioned. The next step would be to focus on awareness-raising measures by stakeholders and families that had a direct impact on the environment to create a society with more gender equality.

These transformative processes would have to happen from within and be defined and shaped by the actors themselves: '...and above all, that takes time', says Pac. Kindernothilfe supports this,

but the main task lies with the local civil society. In order to better protect girls from violence, for example, work must be done on several levels, explains Pac.

'We have advocacy projects that focus on influencing national legislation. It is clear that laws are ineffective the moment they are not supported by society'. For example, Kindernothilfe also supports projects for awareness-raising and educational work. Through holistic support, NGOs would have the potential to contribute to the social transformation process in partner countries. In doing so, the NGO acts in a gender-sensitive manner. All participants are aware that the realities of life differ significantly among various groups and these differences must be considered in the project work.

For the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2022, Kindernothilfe and 30 partner organisations drew up a position paper that advocates the end of gender-based violence worldwide. 'It is very time-consuming to develop such a paper in several languages with partners and repeatedly coordinate it internally', Pac explains in retrospect. However, this is their claim: to be inclusive in partnership and leave ownership with the affected persons.

Diversity is anchored in the mission statement of strategic planning and is a cross-sectional task in all areas of work. The challenges lie in the complexity of the issue and the balancing act between aspiration and reality: the process requires an attitude, self-motivation, a systemic approach, and structural changes. At what point, when, where, and how can and must this be merged? The implementation process must be further systematised and formalised in the organisation.

If an NGO wants to be more strongly feminist-oriented, self-reflection can be a first step. According to Bröring and Pac, many organisations have now developed an awareness of the importance of gender and diversity. However, there is still a lack of implementation in practice.

Good practice example: Time to Talk

The Time to Talk project is a good example of participation and greater involvement in decision-making processes. In collaboration with terre des hommes, it was originally intended to involve working children in debates and discourses because their voices are often not heard, even when it comes to issues that directly affect the children. In the first step, they should therefore be supported in organising themselves, if this has not already been the case.

With the help of 50 partner organisations, more than 1,800 working children were asked about their life situation, their perspectives, and their recommendations, also in order to improve the level of protection. 'In the course of this, gender was considered a cross-cutting topic and the interviews were analysed separately for gender', explains Coordinator Katrin Bröring.

One result was that the situations and analysis categories have to be differentiated between girls and boys because, depending on the gender of the respondents, there were clear differences in the end. According to the diversity manager, it was important that the children

didn't simply answer questions. 'The children organised themselves into committees in order to develop positions together and talk about their realities in life', explains advocacy expert Magdalene Pac.

The entire process was maximally participatory because the idea of empowerment played a central role. The children were able to stand up for their positions themselves, and it was not decided over their heads. It became clear that girls are excluded from decision-making processes more often than boys.

As a result, 10 gender-relevant perspectives were formulated that project staff, policymakers, and scientists should take into account when dealing with child labour. The [results](#) illustrate the interdependence and interweaving of human rights and the approaches are cross-sectoral to effectively implement children's rights.

Further information, toolkits, strategy papers, reports, and child-friendly documents can be obtained from the Global Campaign [Dialogue Works](#)

BREAD FOR THE WORLD: THROUGH THE GLASS CEILING

The former Gender Consultant Carsta Neuenroth welcomes the new feminist orientation of the BMZ. At the same time, she is concerned about the global rise of conservative movements. She claims: 'To actively shape the development of their countries and societies, women need more freedom'.

Bread for the World is one of the largest development NGOs in Germany with approximately 550 employees and an annual budget of more than 300 million euros. Their funding programmes focus on Africa, closely followed by Asia. Together with Diakonie Deutschland and Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Bread for the World forms the Protestant Agency for Deaconship and Development (EWDE).

Carsta Neuenroth has been a Gender Consultant since 2009. At VENRO, she was involved as a co-spokesperson in the Gender working group.

Creating Space for Women

Bread for the World is committed to ensuring that all people, regardless of their gender, can lead a dignified and self-determined life. To actively shape the development of their countries and societies, women need more freedom. The NGO focuses on women's rights and empowerment to promote gender equality.

The partner organisations are largely in charge of implementing gender equality. Bread for the World does not implement its own projects, but financially supports the projects of independently working local NGOs.

The partner organisations are very diverse. For instance, some understand themselves as feminists and accordingly implement feminist approaches, others support women, and the projects of some partner organisations are not related to gender equality at all.

Bread for the World supports organisations that explicitly engage in gender work with men or carry out LGBTI projects. Projects focus on violence against women, improving living conditions, and creating income for women. The average duration of the projects is three years. Some organisations are funded over several project cycles, allowing gender approaches to be further developed.

An overall evaluation of the 131 small projects confirmed this assessment. Carsta Neuenroth explains that according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) evaluation scale, the work of approximately 30 projects could be described as gender-transformative. This is a positive result. Of these, 129 projects made a big difference, some appealing to novel target groups or taking up new activities and issues.

Findings from the cross-project evaluation of Bread for the World

To effectively promote gender equality, an NGO should:

- Reduce misogynistic (traditional) practices;
- Enable greater participation of women in decision-making and opinion-forming processes;

- Include women in traditionally male-led organisations or leadership positions in organisations;
- Influence legislation to prosecute gender-based violence and discrimination;
- Build strategic alliances for women's rights and gender mainstreaming;
- Promote awareness of gender equality in the public sphere;
- Improve the psychosocial situation of victims of gender-based violence;
- Share newly acquired knowledge on gender mainstreaming through trained employees of state institutions and NGOs;
- Change patterns of behaviour within families and the private sphere concerning the distribution of domestic tasks and decision-making processes;

Women in Reconciliation: Ecumenical Women's Initiative in the Western Balkans

The Ecumenical Women's Initiative (EMI) supports and funds women and their projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. In the region, as well as worldwide, increasing nationalism and fundamentalism lead to regressions in gender equality and the implementation of women's rights. Social and religious norms and traditions restrict women. They quickly hit a glass ceiling, which excludes them from participation and decision-making power.

In view of this situation, the promotion of small projects by local women's organisations and initiatives through a specially established fund, as well as accompanying measures such as training programmes, seminars, and networking offers has proven to be an efficient instrument.

For example, small organisations that do not have access to international donors due to their size and a lack of foreign language skills can implement their capacity-building projects for disadvantaged women. The focus is on reconciliation, interreligious and interethnic understanding, and empowerment of women

through participation in economic, social, and political life as well as overcoming violence against women.

Women were able to take a leading role in peace and reconciliation processes in most of the small projects funded. In total, 359 activists participated in the project and 10,000 participants were reached. Cooperation between women's groups and relevant local religious institutions was renewed, and more women participated in civil and interreligious dialogue.

One woman involved reports that her commitment and the self-efficacy she experienced improved her quality of life: 'For me, the big step was that I had the opportunity to hear myself, but also that my voice was heard. That my word has value means that someone hears it and respects it. This led me to trust myself and lead a workshop, to design and do something myself. And I did. I planned, drafted the content and managed to gather women from my local community and run a workshop with them on identity'.

EMI and the women involved help to reduce human rights violations in conflict situations, strengthen cross-border cooperation and reconciliation in the region, and promote peace.

- Improve income and earning opportunities;
- Ensure greater visibility of women and marginalised groups in projects.

Further information ↘ [Evaluation über die Förderung von Geschlechtergerechtigkeit bei Partnerorganisationen von Brot für die Welt und ihren Projekten](#) (2021)

As a church-related organisation, Bread for the World supports numerous church partners, whereby the spectrum includes very conservative organisations that are critical of women's rights, gender equality, and especially gender diversity, as well as faith-based actors who vehemently advocate for these aspects.

To meet this challenge, the NGO is committed to further developing relevant theological positions and church partners are encouraged to act as role models for change.

Light and Shadow

A challenging generational change is taking place in feminist movements according to Gender Consultant Neuenroth. A representative from a feminist partner organisation in Peru comments: 'Young women are now coming in who work differently – they are more loosely connected'. The ways in which young feminists organise themselves are not only changing in Peru but in numerous other countries. For instance, many prefer to work in informal networks rather than formal NGOs, which can change cooperation and make access to funding more difficult.

The commitment to gender equality could never be taken for granted, Neuenroth concludes. Long-term continuous work, political will, alliances, gender competence, and resources are necessary. At the same time, the global backlash proves that what has been achieved could be called into question again.

Although feminist development and foreign policy still leave many questions unanswered, they have given new impetus to the discussion about gender justice, gender diversity, and feminist perspectives.



Partner organisation of Bread for the World in Maglaj, Bosnia & Herzegovina © Fojničani

DEUTSCHE STIFTUNG WELTBEVÖLKERUNG: SEXUAL-REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS ARE FEMINIST PER SE

‘If I look at sexual-reproductive health and rights from a human rights perspective, then it is feminist per se’, explains Angela Bähr, Deputy Managing Director of the Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW) and Deputy Chairwoman of the Board of VENRO. There is an increasing awareness of feminist approaches in project work in sub-Saharan Africa. However, in the current political situation, it is difficult to generally promote sex education and the use of contraceptives for girls and boys.

DSW has an annual turnover of approximately eight million euros and employs almost 170 people. It was founded in Hanover in 1991 and primarily focuses on promoting SRHR for and with young people. ‘The right to reproductive self-determination is an integral part of feminist thinking’, explains Bähr.

Feminism is about the protection and implementation of women’s and girls’ rights and the economic, social, and political participation of women and girls.

‘For me, this means that other vulnerable and discriminated groups – of course, also with other sexual identities – are integrated into an expanded concept of feminism’. However, Bähr admits that intersectionality has been difficult to implement in Africa so far and refers to other reasons for discrimination such as ethnicity, sexual identity, or disability. Bähr criticises using the term ‘minorities’ when speaking of women. Women make up 50 per cent of the world’s population, and it is not about protecting minorities, but about full

recognition and fair participation: ‘Half the world belongs to us’.

Concerning intersectionality, the DSW has a lot of catching up to do, affirms the Managing Director. Equality or even equal treatment of the sexes is far from being achieved. ‘In the partner countries in Eastern Africa, we first focused on a binary understanding of gender in the work on sexual and reproductive health and rights [SRHR], because there is more than enough to do’.

Projects in the four East African countries of Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia still focus on people with disabilities or ethnic minorities. The training materials for the young target groups in Eastern Africa included the recognition of all sexual orientations and same-sex lifestyles.

The primary target group is between the ages of 12 and 24

The primary target group of the DSW is people between the ages of 12 and 24. A lack of sex education, early marriage, and unwanted pregnancies put young people at risk, especially in rural areas. In the most recent strategy process, the DSW decided to focus on gender-sensitive work and to tackle harmful practices against girls and women in a more specific way because girls and women can only live in a self-determined way if their sexual and reproductive rights and health are ensured. This has a positive effect on society as a whole.



Awareness campaign at the Safe Community Youth Initiative in Mtwapa, Kilifi County, Kenya.

© Brian Otieno/DSW

According to DSW's experience, gender stereotypes often continue in mixed-sex project work: men take over the leadership of the self-organised youth clubs, and young women take care of the accounting or are secretaries. Gender-sensitive training should motivate women to take on leadership roles and make it tangible for young men that everyone benefits from equal cooperation.

It certainly makes a difference whether you have to convince young or older men to give girls and women space. 'With older men, it is extremely difficult to live role models differently', says Bähr. In contrast, the younger men are mostly convinced by the argument that they are relieved by mixed teams and joint responsibility.

In the DSW youth clubs, female and male peer educators pass on their knowledge and experience to peers. Youth activists are politically involved in their districts to promote their rights, the social participation of young people, and access to youth-friendly health services and their financing. However, it still is not an easy task for local employees to question social norms and traditions and address the stigma of sexuality.

Slowing Population Growth

When the DSW was founded in 1991, its declared goal was to slow population growth. However, it is difficult to measure the impact of 30 years of work. Overall, the average number of children per woman in sub-Saharan Africa has fallen from 6.4 to 4.6 during this period and, according to Bähr, global development cooperation has contributed to this. The DSW approach is intended to enable young people – especially women – to actively decide for or against children. The keys are sex education and access to low-cost contraceptives.

New pilot projects aim to give young women access to modern contraceptives. In Kenya and Uganda, for example, such access is extremely difficult to obtain for unmarried girls under the age of 18. Instead, they are taught abstinence with the result of numerous teenage pregnancies. Providing education in schools for the highly sensitive age group between 12 and 15 years can help reduce the number of teenage pregnancies and, as a result, the number of school dropouts among girls. In addition, DSW promotes the use and distribution of condoms among young people.

Young Role Models

‘If active countermeasures are not implemented, two-thirds of men and only one-third of women will benefit from the projects’, says Bähr when examining a project in Uganda. This is why the NGO works with local consultants who perform a local gender assessment. Together with the project partners on site, specific questions are addressed: What is the living situation of men and women in our district? What are the traditional beliefs? How are the parents engaged? Why is a young woman not allowed to come to the youth club? What would she need to be able to attend events?

‘How a girl gets there, especially when a workshop is 20 kilometres away, can be a problem. So it must be considered if, for example, several young women could join forces’. The youth centres, which are often registered as Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), are managed by the young people themselves. They decide independently about their activities and their structure. To ensure that more young women are represented in these decision-making bodies and that they can become publicly active, Bähr argues for a 50 per cent quota for women.

Role models, i.e. courageous young women who are supported by their community, are important: ‘I have a particular young Muslim woman in mind. Her name is Fatuma and she is the director of a youth club and, at the same time, an assistant at the public health centre. When she started four years ago, Fatuma barely spoke a word because many young women in Uganda are just quiet in public. And now she has multiple roles and acts as a role model for other girls’, says Angela Bähr.

Good practice example: Youth activist Fatuma Imanet

Fatuma Imanet is a peer educator and youth activist and runs a youth club in Mityana District, Uganda. Talking about sexual and reproductive health is not taboo in her community, she says, ‘[...] but we need to clear up the misconceptions and myths about it’. Many of her peers lack information. ‘Most have not attended school, and the health centres where they can get information about sexual and reproductive health are much too far away’.

However, the demand is very high. ‘Sexualised violence is prevalent, and it affects us young people in particular’, she says. However, their voices were ‘not heard’ because they were not included in the community meetings. In the course of her efforts, she is now convinced that her work is worthwhile: ‘The attitude of the village community towards young people has clearly improved’.

DVV INTERNATIONAL: GENDER TOOLKIT FOR ADULT EDUCATION

With the Gender Toolkit for Adult Education, DVV International has presented a 77-page document that aims to help other NGOs practically implement gender equality in their projects. Deputy Director Esther Hirsch is convinced that the toolkit is well-suited for many contexts. Currently, the focus is on the MENA region (Middle East and North Africa).

DVV International is active in numerous countries worldwide together with partner organisations. Approximately 190 people are employed in local office structures in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe, supported by a dozen seconded professionals. Moreover, approximately 35 people work at the headquarters in Bonn. The NGO has an annual budget of about 20 million euros, a large portion of which comes from public funding by the BMZ and its focus is on adult education.

Esther Hirsch has worked in various positions for the association for 15 years and has been Deputy Head of the institute since March 2022. She states that DVV International is committed to pursuing feminist approaches in project work. While feminism is currently being discussed intensively, it is not a novel topic. NGOs have been preoccupied with the questions ‘How do we keep an eye on everyone?’ and ‘How can social and power relations be changed?’ for some time.

In terms of education as a human right, the following aspects should be reviewed: Who has access to education at all? To whom is it oriented? Women in the Global South have a great need for education and, according to Hirsch, they are often disadvantaged in terms of access and qualifications in the formal education system.

Therefore, the NGO launched the Gender in Adult Learning and Education (ALE) toolkit which was preceded by a gender strategy and gender checklists for projects. Hirsch states: ‘It is not that difficult to draw up this kind of checklist. But the implementation can be problematic’. This is because the demands are high anyway, and thus gender equality can sometimes be perceived as an additional complication.

Not only the target group of women is relevant, but also their environment, family structures, and social norms that significantly influence their lives. Hirsch: ‘We have the target groups on board, yes – and, for the most part, that is not enough. That is why we critically reflected our work and asked ourselves: How do we manage to not only give women access to adult education but ultimately enable them to participate on equal footing at all levels of family and society? Strategies and checklists alone are not sufficient here’.

The Gender in ALE toolkit also supports the concrete implementation of gender-transformative work in practice. It was developed together with partner organisations to address the most pressing issues for the actors: How does the life partner handle themselves when women attend educational courses? How can courses be adapted to the daily routine of women? What is meant by gender-sensitive language? How can the men’s understanding of gender injustice be sharpened?

The toolkit also covers advocacy work, i.e. raising awareness of the legal framework and lobbying in the respective countries. The concrete examples of action are especially beneficial for the partner organisations



Training course for women in Afghanistan © Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAF AE)

of the NGO, and the toolkit is also actively used in training courses in the MENA region.

‘In all the countries where we work, we have a local office that represents us and works at different levels’, explains Hirsch. The DVV funds innovative non-formal education courses at the grassroots level that the partner organisations carry out. They also regularly undergo further training. At the macro level, the NGO tries to improve the national framework conditions for adult education.

Focus on Inclusion and Diversity

Hirsch says: ‘Of course, it increasingly affects our work – including our association work in Germany – to be able to say with conviction: adult education for everyone’. Gender equality, inclusion, and diversity have long been a focus of the work of adult education centres, which are essentially open to all.

Discourses in development cooperation change, and the focus shifts more towards structural conditions. For example, in literacy courses, it is no longer sufficient to aim to achieve the highest possible number of women participants, but rather: Who are the teachers? How does this

impact women’s lives? How is their income situation developing? Do they succeed in being equally involved in decision-making processes in familial, professional, and community contexts?

Diversity officers are currently in demand, both in companies and NGOs. Hirsch: ‘As a result, you take the issue seriously and keep a closer eye on it’. Ideally, not only words and strategy papers will follow, but also actions, such as specialist conferences and workshops, and new perspectives.

In principle, it remains challenging for activists to change social structures and traditions. These are lengthy processes that cannot be achieved solely through educational projects, but can only be supported by them.

Good Practice Example: Gender in ALE Toolkit

The Gender in ALE Toolkit is an easy-to-use practice guide with information, exercises, activities, and concrete methods. It is a useful aid for dealing with gender and women-specific content in adult education at the micro-, meso-, and macro levels.

The practice-oriented instruments are based on the experience of almost 50 adult education trainers in Jordan, Morocco, Palestine, and Tunisia and address the central challenges that these actors face in integrating gender issues into adult education.

The toolkit is aimed at professionals in adult education as well as policymakers whose

tasks include fostering equality between women and men in the field of adult education. Unlike a gender strategy, it was not developed top-down or as a strategy paper that includes general guidelines but is often not very practical.

Rather, the toolkit was developed by practitioners for practitioners of the project partners in the Arab world. The challenge is to transfer these approaches to other regions. It is currently being translated into Spanish for use in Latin American projects.

Further information: The Gender in ALE Toolkit [↘ Gender in Adult Learning and Education Toolkit for the MENA Region](#) (DVV International)



Training course for women in Afghanistan © Afghan National Association for Adult Education (ANAFAE)

The DVV International checklist on gender-specific indicators for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects:

MICRO LEVEL:

- Establish awareness of personal prejudices/biases/stereotypes (as a result of social influences, etc.);
- involve women, marginalised groups – and potentially affected men – in project activities from the very beginning (participation);
- survey the practical and strategic needs of women and marginalised groups (also in comparison to expressed needs);
- provide women and marginalised groups with access to decision-making processes, project resources, and project services (empowerment);
- contact local feminist organisations at an early stage and learn from each other;
- document expected/unexpected project results for women and marginalised groups (compared to the project objectives) and, in particular, record the learnings;
- adjust the allocation of project budgets for gender issues;
- empower project staff through trainings and workshops to mainstream gender equality;
- adopt new gender-specific questions and pay more attention to them in new projects.

MESO LEVEL:

- The quantity/quality of gender-competent staff among partners is changing;

- the social position of women and marginalised groups is improving;
- tools and procedures for the inclusion of gender equality are created and used;
- new initiatives and partnerships are created to build synergies for cooperation in the field of gender equality;
- hiring practices are shifting towards equal opportunities;
- the budget for gender equality is increased.

MACRO LEVEL:

- Legislation affecting equality is changing;
- national budget allocations for gender equality are changing;
- the institutional focus on women and gender issues is changing;
- the political participation of women and marginalised groups at various levels is strengthened;
- employment rates of women and marginalised groups are increasing;
- access to productive assets (property, loans, vocational training) is improving;
- access to basic services (education, health, water) for women and marginalised groups is improving;
- economic prosperity is developing.

CARE: WOMEN IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES TAKE CRISIS MANAGEMENT INTO THEIR OWN HANDS

Today, CARE Germany's portfolio of funded projects ranges from the provision of shelters for refugee women to safety during childbirth, resilience in the context of the climate crisis, and strengthening the participation of women. For the organisation, this means not only integrating gender-transformative approaches into long-term projects but also working with feminist approaches in humanitarian projects.

'For a long time, the best and only advice we had to promote the significant participation of women in humanitarian action was to set a quota of 50 per cent female members on committees, as well as working with women's rights organisations. Both are good approaches, but we also know that they are not always effective'. This is how Isadora Quay, the Global Coordinator for Gender in Emergencies at CARE International, describes the situation that led to the development of the Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE) approach.

Decisions instead of Tea

In 2018, Quay was working for the 'Inter-Agency Standing Committee' of the UN on a handbook on gender equality in humanitarian aid. It became apparent that there was a lack of concrete approaches to promote the significant participation of women in humanitarian emergencies. Quay: 'The presence of women on committees often means that women spend a considerable amount of time making tea and little time making decisions'. To counteract these sobering experiences in the humanitarian field, CARE's approach is extremely important.

Listen to affected persons to understand the context

Not all regions that experience humanitarian crises have established women's rights organisations that are immediately available as partners. 'The WLiE approach is a way to promote the meaningful participation of women that combines the best of gender equality and humanitarian aid, while incorporating a variety of gender, development and governance tools', explains the coordinator.

The WLiE approach involves five steps. It serves as an aid to the practical implementation of humanitarian projects, taking feminist aspects into account. CARE has already applied the approach in climate disasters and conflicts, refugee contexts, and protracted emergencies.

The basis for needs-oriented, gender-transformative humanitarian aid, as advocated by CARE, is to consider the various needs of different groups. According to Quay, this in itself is a fundamentally feminist approach, namely listening to the affected persons. Only if we understand the different problems, needs, and abilities of women, men, boys, and girls can we address them adequately. However, all too often, humanitarian action is not driven by the affected women.

The fact that women can make their own decisions in humanitarian crises is the transformative approach that distinguishes WLiE.

Good practice example: WLiE in Niger and Ukraine

In Niger, the WLiE approach was implemented with already existing small savings groups. Isadora Quay describes how unusual it is for women to engage in political conflicts there. According to their observation, the women attracted a lot of attention when they successfully demanded a school and this inspired a group of women in another village to advocate for the construction of a well. Since it is usually women who fetch water, they could argue effectively. The women also organised patrols to protect them from assaults while collecting firewood. With these measures, they provide humanitarian aid. At the same time, they strengthen their self-confidence and their role as leaders in their community.

In Ukraine, CARE responded with humanitarian aid after the war in the spring of 2022: war and millions of refugees require primary medical care, water, hygiene products, and accommodation, but also safe spaces for women and girls, as well as psychosocial support and care.

Quay explains: 'In Ukraine, we have provided a special budget for humanitarian aid. The women's rights organisations and networks already based there needed money for humanitarian aid. And so we used the funds from the first phase of the WLiE programme in Ukraine to enable them to continue this humanitarian aid. The second phase is now about further advancing the processes led by women'.

Currently, the WLiE approach is being implemented in 16 locations worldwide, including Colombia, Mali, Uganda, Syria, Sudan, Philippines, Ukraine, Niger, and Bangladesh. In Tonga, the pilot project started in 2018.

The five steps of the WLiE approach:

1. Reflection
2. Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA)
3. Co-creation
4. Action
5. Learning: monitoring and evaluation

Further information: Toolkit ↘ [Women Lead in Emergencies](#) (CARE International)

According to Gender Advocacy Consultant Carla Dietzel, it is essential to break up structures that further marginalise knowledge and people. 'We, who are employed in the Global North, have to step back a bit. We need to use our opportunities to start discussions and then let others do the talking'. Political participation and representation are central aspects in this context.

The specific focus on gender equality at CARE is not a new development. It began, among other things, with small savings groups in Niger that were designed to give women access to finance with the approach: saving together. 'We noticed

relatively quickly that this not only includes economic aspects but that it is also about solidarity among women', explains Dietzel. Women are strengthened and can appear more confident if they collect money within their own groups and give each other loans.

First of all, reflection is necessary to strengthen the participation of women in humanitarian emergencies. 'It's about shaping consciousness, raising awareness, and realising one's own bias', explains Quay. For CARE, this reflection must be carried out with partner organisations and affected communities, and also within the organisation



Women's March in Zambia, 2023 © Ollivier Girard/CARE

itself. Prejudice prevails almost everywhere, and, globally, an approximate 50 per cent participation of women hardly exists anywhere. In the second step, RGA (see box) is conducted with a focus on power and participation.

The third step of the CARE WLiE approach is the co-creation phase. 'This means that we support women's groups in working with the results of Rapid Gender Analysis [RGA], validating them and then using them as a decision-making aid to identify which power structures and problems they want to tackle in practice', explains Quay. CARE usually works with informal women's groups, for example, small savings groups or church-based women's groups.

Quay reports enthusiastically on the fourth step, namely action: 'That's great! They want to do these things, and they have a budget to implement them. For example, some women's groups have opted for adult education and literacy because they did not attend school and now want to learn to write and

read to be able to participate. Others take English lessons because they now live in a country where it is important to speak English'. The coordinator emphasises that there has to be an open budget line for these activities that does not specify in advance which activities will take place—the women decide for themselves what they need.

Monitoring and evaluation are the fifth step in the implementation of the WLiE approach and the women's groups themselves must participate in the monitoring. Quay believes that NGOs should apply a collective form of accountability to the populations affected. 'Flipping' accountability by being accountable to the populations affected, rather than just to the institutions that provide the funding, is also a feminist approach.

Dietzel: 'Of course, a gender-transformative approach may not mean that only women are empowered. WLiE projects always have a component for the involvement of men and boys, because change can only take place in the entire community'.

Good practice example: Rapid Gender Analysis and Rapid Gender Analysis Power

Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) is a toolkit to quickly identify different needs, relevant actors, inequalities, and initial measures in humanitarian operations while Rapid Gender Analysis Power (RGA Power) is an addition focussing on power relations. Isadora Quay explains: ‘RGA Power deals with humanitarian decision-making structures, but also with local government structures and traditional structures that are notoriously not considered by humanitarian organisations’.

Intersectionality is always included in the analysis of power relations. The following are considered: gender, religion, ethnicity, race, or disability.

For the Gender Advocacy Consultant Carla Dietzel, the process must always be participatory and therefore feminist. RGA Power is co-created by affected persons and actively used for their own reflection and decision-making.

Further information: ∨ [Rapid Gender Analyses for all countries with humanitarian emergencies](#) (CARE International)



Women members of a small savings group in Niger © Ollivier Girard/CARE

PLAN INTERNATIONAL: SHAPING WORK WITH FEMINIST LEADERSHIP

With regard to programme and advocacy work, Plan International takes a gender transformative and inclusive approach based on the feminist principles of gender equality for all. For their internal programme quality process, the NGO has developed its own gender marker, which is used in all projects. It evaluates how the projects contribute to gender transformative and inclusive change.

The children's rights organisation Plan International was founded 86 years ago. It advocates equal rights and opportunities for girls and boys to actively shape their future. The independent NGO has been focusing on the rights of girls and young women for about 15 years. Their global goal by 2027: 200 million girls should learn, lead, decide, and reach their full potential.

With an annual budget of more than 217 million euros and around 300 employees, it is one of the largest VENRO member organisations. In 2019, Plan International developed so-called feminist leadership principles. Building on this, the Feminist Leadership Labs were formed that support the global organisation in shaping its own organisational and leadership culture with more of a feminist orientation in the future.

For Kirstin Bostelmann, plan consultant for gender transformative and inclusive programme work, feminism is all about social justice – '[...] of course with a focus on gender justice for all genders'. According to this, it is necessary to overcome not only gender-based discrimination against women and girls but also against non-binary, trans*, and queer people. Bostelmann calls for a feminist intersectional approach to better understand the realities of life. An intersectional approach not only takes

gender into account but also social identities such as age, disability, ethnicity, class, or religion.

The gender transformative approach aims to transform the causes of gender inequality and discrimination to achieve sustainable change for all. According to Bostelmann, this requires analysing and transforming social norms, gender norms, and power relations. 'Here, the approach differs from others that mainly seek to improve the living conditions of girls and women. The gender transformative approach is complex and does not promise quick results'.

First step: critical self-reflection

The first step is critical self-reflection. Bostelmann explains: 'For me, nothing works in feminism without critical self-reflection. This also means understanding my own reservations, stereotypes and prejudices and how they affect other people'. Conscious change is complex, challenging, and sometimes tiring, as quick results are the exception. In addition, change in gender norms and the distribution of power is a sensitive, sometimes frightening process. 'We need time and space to discuss questions, concerns and reluctance together'.

Access to power is important since power is accessible to some due to certain identity characteristics, but not to others. Challenging this status quo and overcoming it in the long term entails difficult internal and external conversations. Plan International speaks of a gender-transformative and inclusive project work that builds on feminist principles.

According to Bostelmann, social and gender norms are an important driver of discrimination,

inequalities, and violence in everyday life. Plan International attempts to strengthen the capacity of young women and girls by encouraging them to actively stand up for their rights and participate. In order to sustainably overcome power structures, it is important to also involve young men.

Plan International's project work is intended to improve the social status of girls and young women. To this end, norms and practices can be reflected on, processes and structures adapted, or new regulations implemented in cooperation with parents, local and religious leaders, government representatives, and other groups involved.

'For example, instead of simply paying school fees as an NGO, we could check with the partner organisations on the ground: Why don't the girls go to school? This is also about the status, the position, the value of girls compared to boys in the family, in addition to economic and other factors', says Bostelmann.

Local activists educate young people about child marriage and early pregnancy. To build sustainable structures, dialogue with local authorities is important, especially concerning public opinion. More progressive representatives of local communities are sensitised as change agents to advocate for more gender equality.

The Six Criteria of the Gender Marker

To design inclusive projects, Plan International recently developed a gender marker that analyses the progress of gender transformative change in projects. It is based on six elements of gender transformative programme work. .

1. Analyse and reflect on gender norms;
2. enable self-determination of girls and young women;
3. work with boys and young men to reflect positive masculinity and advocate for gender equality;
4. improved both the living conditions and the status of girls and young women;
5. understand girls, boys, teenagers, and young adults in all their diversity;
6. provide a supportive, empowering environment that advocates for children's rights and gender equality.

Good practice example: Feminist leadership labs as a 'space for dreams'

The Feminist Leadership Labs Plan invites its country offices to identify the needs they want to address. The concept note states: 'The Feminist Leadership Labs are designed as meeting places to dream, experiment, test and come up with courageous and practical solutions together so that Plan International is transformed into an organisation that is truly committed to feminist leadership principles'.

So far, these labs have been piloted independently in six country offices including Cameroon, Uganda, Bolivia, Peru, and Cambodia. At the country office in Tanzania, a survey found that the employees in the office felt unsafe. The project team initiated workshops on safety in the office or on service trips, sexual harassment, and access to sanitary facilities. It is important to involve affected persons in order to be able to develop solutions and possible strategies in a participatory manner. Further information: Concept Note [↘ Feminist Leadership Principles](#) (Plan International)



Bring the Men on Board

Because cooperation with feminist organisations is important, Plan Tanzania has cooperated, for example, with the international NGO Men Engage. From the outset, the focus was on a reflection process among men. Office Manager Mona Girgis¹⁴ has supported this process intensively over the past four years: 'We still have to stretch ourselves quite a bit, but we have already taken many steps in the right direction'. She felt it was important to create a culture in which all 200 local employees felt safe and valued.

It is about creating a balance of power between women and men, about inclusion and barriers. Her team is currently developing sign language training: 'It's not about everyone mastering this language', says Girgis, but about creating and raising awareness and empowering employees to communicate with the deaf.

Change Takes Time

The labs have led to more flexible working hours in six country offices and, consequently, better working conditions for women in the NGO offices. Female employees participate more actively in meetings and conversations and report complaints in a timely manner via the improved reporting system. The communication culture has also greatly changed, as people with disabilities and women are more likely to be listened to. In addition, the Feminist Leadership Labs has prompted junior employees to express their concerns and ask critical questions with more self-confidence.

It is not always easy in feminist development policy, but important, according to Bostelmann, to take a step back as an NGO and let the other girls, young women, and activists have their say with their organisations: 'Feminism also means letting others speak'.

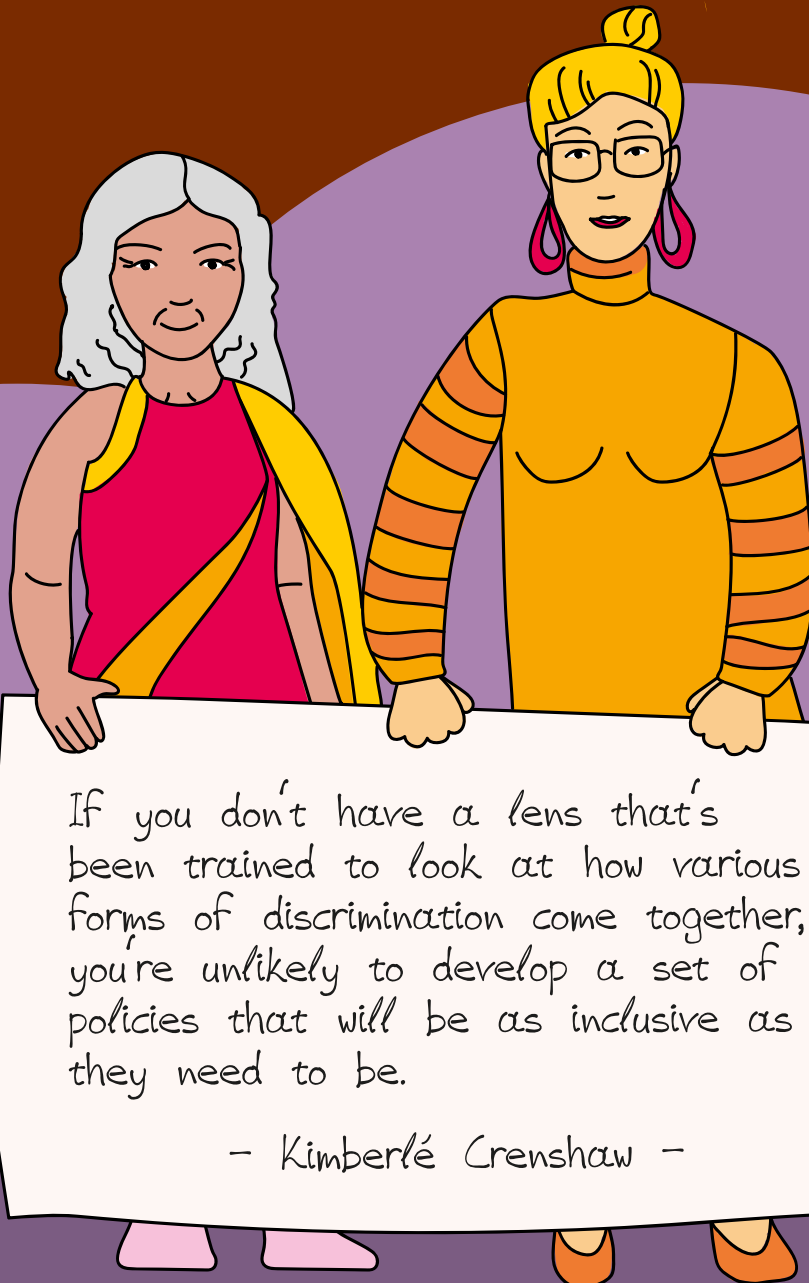


Girls participate in public speaking training to strengthen their self-confidence, Vietnam
© Plan International

Core funding, power, and gender norms are central principles in this context, which is very similar to the shifting power debate. 'We must continue to point out that gender plays a very important role, that gender influences every aspect of our lives and that no issue or activity can be seen as gender neutral'. It is particularly challenging to plan humanitarian aid projects in a gender-transformative manner which is why we need to invest in training, guidelines, and human resources. In addition: changes in consciousness and reflection on power, privileges, and reservations take a lot of time.



CHAPTER 3: STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN ORGANISATIONS



If you don't have a lens that's been trained to look at how various forms of discrimination come together, you're unlikely to develop a set of policies that will be as inclusive as they need to be.

- Kimberlé Crenshaw -

WALK THE TALK

Since 2020, the Fair Share Monitor has been investigating gender distribution in the management and supervisory boards of civil society organisations. As a result, it becomes transparent which NGOs already adequately represent all genders in their structures and which do not. Because participation, equality, and justice are central objectives of civil society organisations, the Fair Share Monitor is a particularly exciting example of walking the talk. For the Monitor 2023,¹⁵ around 200 NGOs, foundations, welfare organisations, and other civil society organisations were reviewed.

According to the results presented in March 2023, women are still structurally underrepresented in management positions and significant progress towards gender-equitable representation is still lacking. For instance, one-third of the organisations do not have a woman on the management board. Moreover, although the workforce is approximately 70 per cent female, women only hold about 40 per cent of management positions. For the first time, figures on non-binary employees were collected. Despite the small amount of data, this information increases transparency.

In presenting the results, Lisa Tatu Hey, Co-Managing Director of FAIR SHARE of Women Leaders, emphasises: ‘By primarily taking into account the perspectives of white, cis-sexual men, organisations endanger their own sustainability, limit the impact of their programmes and reduce their attractiveness as an employer and recipient of donations. In addition, they lose their credibility as actors for social justice if they do not implement it in their own structures’.

What constitutes a feminist organisation?

To date, 24 organisations have signed the Fair Share Commitment and new solutions are being

discussed in network meetings, for example. Our member organisations ADRA, Plan International, and CARE—whose work we present in more detail in this NGO report—are also involved.

These organisations not only want to make their project work but also their organisational levels more feminist. Their experiences teach us how this new self-image affects internal processes. It is not an easy process, yet it is worth the effort.

In discussions with the employees of the VENRO member organisations, who are featured in this chapter and who (wish to) adopt a feminist approach, eight aspects stood out in particular:

1. Reflection: regularly questioning one’s own culture, structures, and approaches;
2. Safe spaces: creating safe spaces for exchange and dialogue;



Women’s March in Zambia 2022

© WAFE – Women’s Alliance for Equality

3. Provide opportunities: to detect powerlessness and imbalances;
4. Learning from each other: learning from women's organisations in the Global South;
5. Less paternalism: more empowerment of employees;
6. Quotas can ensure more diversity in the workforce;
7. Language: introduce discrimination-sensitive language;
8. Shared power: power should be shared, for example, through co-leadership approaches.

Get inspired by reading the examples of how organisations such as ADRA Germany, the North-South-Bridges Foundation, and medica mondiale position themselves from a feminist perspective.



A participant in a project in her Hibiscus field in Togo © ADRA

ADRA GERMANY: FEMINISTS IN PROGRESS

The aid organisation ADRA describes itself as 'Feminists in Progress' and began its journey to become a feminist NGO just over a year ago. Many have already recognised the need for this transformation, but, in an effort to convince and 'bring everyone along', the NGO is striving for a participatory process to fundamentally adapt its organisational structures.

Initiated by the Protestant Free Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency Germany (ADRA Deutschland e.V.) was founded in Darmstadt, Germany, in 1987. Professional development cooperation started in the USA as early as 1965, and there are now more than 113 ADRA country offices worldwide. 'Officially, we are on our way to becoming a feminist organisation, even if you can't see it on the website yet', explains Bianca Belger.

It was only a matter of time because all decision-makers supported this process. In a way, the idea to implement the new feminist approach in a very participatory and therefore relatively slower process to bring everyone along was a feminist decision in itself. After all, it concerns not just the ADRA employees in Germany, but sooner or later, the entire network.

Gender Equality as a Central Component

Gender equality is a central component of all projects and a gender assessment initially examines gender-specific and other identity features. Additionally, the requirements of the donors, such as the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development or the German Federal Foreign Office are considered. Belger: 'Basically,

the requirements concerning gender – the keyword is gender marker – are designed in such a way that it is impossible to not deal with this topic'.

The gender marker primarily consists of a questionnaire that must be considered in the planning phase of a project: Which target group do we address? Which target group is disregarded? Does a marginalised group have the same access to the project or does it need to be adjusted for the planned measures? This not only allows for a reflection on gender, but also, for example, age or social origin. The German Federal Foreign Office has been working with a gender-age-disability marker since 2019 and the European Union since 2017.

For Belger, gender transformative work is characterised by the fact that all possible dimensions of identity are considered. 'In addition, existing injustices and discrimination are analysed so that they can be tackled at their source'. According to Belger, feminist project work must take place on an equal footing with the partners.

'We are not on-site, so the actors should decide what they need', she explains. Because not all gender identities have access, it would be desirable, but not always easy, to involve them. Gender-sensitive language and an inclusive or intersectional approach are a further step towards ensuring gender equality.

Together We Are Strong

ADRA is active in Ukraine, where a relatively large programme exists, which, due to its network structures, also reaches the border regions and



A project employee in Ukraine © ADRA

neighbouring countries. Shortly after the attack by Russia, protection gaps for women and children were already apparent at the end of February 2022. ‘With regard to the reconstruction of the country, the gaps that ADRA has already identified and warned about at an early stage play a central role’, says Bianca Belger. The challenge is to close them.

The advocacy work at ADRA is divided into external and internal sections: In recent years, the NGO has tried to join forces with other organisations to increase pressure on government agencies and, at the same time, promote an internal awareness-raising process within the organisation.

‘We initiate discussions that are basically not new. But now we have more resources and employees who can organise this’, says the gender expert. This includes, for example, a language policy with guidelines on non-discriminatory language for all employees from other departments for whom gender-appropriate language does not come easily. ‘We have also occasionally played an intermediary role’.

After the change of government in 2021 in Germany, there was a great sense of optimism due to the commitment to a feminist foreign and development policy by the ruling coalition, especially in the first months of this process. Belger: ‘There was a different mood and a different narrative at conferences’. When the BMZ presented its feminist strategy paper in the spring of 2023, this impression was confirmed by intersectional panels and a minister who made time to include civil society positions.

For civil society organisations, the goal of development cooperation and humanitarian aid is to eliminate injustices and end global poverty. This cannot be achieved with a political system based, among other things, on colonialism and racism. Gender transformative project work is the path to address this and would permeate to the organisational level in the medium and long term.

THE NORTH-SOUTH BRIDGES FOUNDATION: THE JOURNEY IS THE REWARD

In 2019, the North-South Bridges Foundation decided to implement a more feminist approach. In an internal process, appropriate measures were initiated at the organisational level. The Process Coordinator, Cora Steckel describes Minister Schulze's feminist development policy as an essential milestone towards more gender equality in development projects in Germany and abroad.

The North-South Bridges Foundation supports, among other things, the projects of small East German and Berlin-based associations in development policy that pursue the vision of a fairer world and a good life for all.

With an annual budget of 3.5 million euros, the foundation employs nine full-time employees. In 2022, 180 NGO projects were funded—a third of which were based in the development area. The vast majority were educational projects in East Germany and Berlin with globally relevant issues. The funding comes from the BMZ as well as from the four German federal states of Brandenburg, Saxony, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, and Berlin.

The small East German or Berlin-based associations are funded for a) development education and information work, and b) international development projects.

Steckel is responsible for four programmes that are based on the global SDGs and focus on knowledge transfer and the improvement of local living conditions. 'This means that we are also promoting

the debate on these topics within these association structures', says Steckel.

Steckel is certain that this is how important feminist impulses for the work can be set. With regard to feminist development policy, she emphasises that her organisation not only runs conventional development projects in the Global South but also supports educational work in Germany.

Initiating and Implementing New Processes

The initiative for more gender equality was sparked by the commitment of several board members from recent committee periods. In particular, they called for a more specific focus on the rights and needs of women and girls in projects. According to Steckel, there is a need for '[...] people who support it and always include the issue on the agenda when evaluating projects'.

Steckel was commissioned within the team to lead and coordinate this process, which is only partially financed through the funding programmes. 'There are no explicit resources for this, but it just happens on the side'. The foundation was guided by the question: What can we do on a small scale? As it turns out, Steckel explains, implementation is only possible in an '[...] incredibly extensive and structured process – on several levels'.

A working group identified key areas for project funding, namely advising and qualifying associations, processing and making decisions on project

applications, reviewing the project reports, contextual assessment of the project environment, and the analysis of applied gender-sensitive mechanisms. This resulted in ideas concerning how the foundation can consolidate the gender perspective in the projects, for example, through an internal policy on gender-equitable language.

Childcare during the workshops and dual leadership

As a result of the newly developed self-image, childcare is now offered at workshops. Moreover, for the foundation committees, the diverse dual leadership of Ana Paulina Rosas Perez and Reinhard Hermle is in place as a feminist principle.

In the further implementation process, the expertise of small East German associations from the network will be incorporated: 'There are individual associations that are already doing a lot of very good work on the issue'.

The foundation also wants to include migrant, diasporic, and postcolonial perspectives in this process to prevent colonial continuities. The Foundation's attempts to decolonise its work and implement antiracist approaches are also featured in VENRO's NGO report [Shifting Power](#). The foundation has hired an employee to review and monitor the issues of power redistribution and diversity, avoiding discrimination, and inequality. In terms of feminist orientation, the Foundation wants to revise the funding policy of BMZ projects to provide greater scope for gender justice, including other gender identities. According to Steckel, a 'much broader, intersectional perspective' is required, which larger NGOs probably have an easier time integrating into their structures.

'For smaller organisations like us, it is a much more difficult operation to initiate, accompany, persevere and continue such processes'. In principle, more resources would be needed, for example, to set up a special position for the coordination of this process within the organisations.

Gender Perspective in Educational Projects

Development educational work in Germany also has to shed light on power relations and discrimination. However, so far, '[...] women and girls have very rarely been specifically addressed in educational projects', says Steckel and a lack of gender equality needs to be addressed at home to tackle it consistently worldwide. The focus in the Global North would then be on awareness-raising processes, globally entrenched inequalities, patriarchal privileges, and respective power structures.

'We dealt with this internally and found that we could only identify a negligible number of educational projects that explicitly disclosed different genders and their active participation', says Steckel. Educating on climate change from a feminist perspective, for example, would mean also showing its consequences for children, women, and society as a whole worldwide, and highlighting how its consequences affect the genders differently and how these differences can be addressed by projects.

The questions concerning women's involvement in the projects, which have long been listed in the application forms of their funding programmes, were usually answered only quantitatively and not qualitatively. Hence, the new expanded feminist approach is intended to reduce the obstacles that women face in accessing education, health care, and income.



Women in Black demonstration in Serbia. Break the taboos surrounding sexualised war violence and build empathy for survivors: that's what the partner organisation Women in Black in Serbia aims to achieve.
© Marija Jancovic/medica mondiale

MEDICA MONDIALE: FEMINISM AS PART OF THE DNA

While some NGOs have set out in recent years to become feminist organisations, medica mondiale is already further along in this. It was already an essential part of its DNA when it was founded in 1993 – and the NGO can thus now be a role model for others when it comes to anchoring feminist principles in the organisation.

The NGO medica mondiale was founded 30 years ago to combat and prosecute sexualised (war) violence and foster the development of a gender-equal society. Today, the international women's rights organisation based in Cologne plays a pioneering role for other NGOs seeking to restructure and realign themselves and their work according to a

feminist paradigm. Jana Ongoma Schwerdtfeger has been Head of International Programs since July 2022. According to her, the organisation is constantly questioning itself, its culture, and its structures and approaches.

This is sometimes difficult, but essential for a feminist organisation: 'Our vision is a gender-equal and non-violent world. This means that we always want to question and transform structural injustices – and that naturally includes us in our work and our self-image'. In this respect, the NGO often poses challenging and uncomfortable questions about the balance of power, patriarchal and post-colonial structures and norms – both in Germany and abroad.

An Intersectional Approach is Pivotal

Currently, *medica mondiale* is active in 13 countries and has an annual total budget of around 12 million euros. There are about 80 employees in Germany. With regard to intersectionality, Schwerdtfeger says: ‘This approach must be central because we have learned that feminism cannot be feminist if it is not thought of as intersectional’. This is why the projects are not only about working directly with women who have survived sexualised (war) violence but also about other dimensions of power imbalance and multiple discrimination.

According to Schwerdtfeger, all international projects take these aspects into account. She welcomes the fact that German NGOs have increasingly discovered women as an essential target group for themselves. ‘My freedom as a woman is based on the freedom of the woman next to me’, says Schwerdtfeger.

‘And if two women stand next to each other and one woman lives in a crisis region and is affected by sexualised warfare or violence, and also belongs to a minority in her country that has no access to education and other resources, then it is not beneficial to only help one of them, rather I have to consider that the reality and the context for the second woman are completely different’.

Keyword: Leave no one behind

Accordingly, a society cannot develop further if only an exclusive group – such as white women – is supported. Instead, everyone should be considered: older women, women with disabilities, women with non-heteronormative sexuality, women with diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds and identities, and women who come from financially disadvantaged contexts.



Raising awareness and sensibility within the community is an important step to prevent violence against women. Two women at a forum theatre on violence against women in Burundi

© Irina Tishkova und Maria Massaro/*medica mondiale*

‘This does not mean that we weigh up the suffering or needs of women against each other. Rather, you have to see both together and bear in mind that societies can only develop sustainably if everyone is included’, says Schwerdtfeger. If this aspect is not considered, the exact opposite would happen, namely that patriarchal structures would not be transformed but further propagated instead.

To ensure that the partners are also sensitive to multiple discrimination, an assessment is carried out before each cooperation: in the process, both sides get to know each other and understand their respective backgrounds, contexts, basic values, objectives, structures, and working methods.

Subsequently, a decision on cooperation is made on both sides. An internal cross-departmental process in the run-up to a project decision should ensure that basic values and strategic objectives are consistently incorporated into project ideas.

A ‘learning organisation’

The NGO *medica mondiale* sees itself as a ‘learning organisation’ that strives to build a diverse network on the ground and does not limit its work to one organisation or a specific group of women. It has three strategic priorities for its current work:

First: the prevention of sexualised (war) violence, whereby the term ‘sexualised violence’ is intentionally chosen over ‘sexual violence’ to highlight that sexual acts against the will of a person are not primarily about sexual satisfaction but about the exercise of power, control, and oppression.

Second: The reaction to sexualised (war) violence.

And third: The building of feminist movements – Action and Movement Building. In Ukraine, for example, the NGO works with a network of activists that sensitively accompanies Ukrainian women and girls.

‘We are rarely on-site ourselves to work directly with survivors’, says Schwerdtfeger. Instead, activists and partner organisations are supported with money and special training. They pursue a holistic approach in which first responders play a central role. These provide survivors of sexual violence with access to trauma- and stress-sensitive psychological, medical, and legal services.

In Afghanistan, after the Taliban seized power in August 2021, the organisation helped around 100 former and endangered employees and supporters to leave the country with their families and relatives. They are supported psychosocially as well as in communicating with the authorities in Germany and with administrative matters. As for many other NGOs, their local work in Afghanistan has become much more difficult since then.

Positive Disruptive Factor

Schwerdtfeger recommends that NGOs that want to act in a more feminist way, especially at the organisational level, should give room to feel powerlessness and imbalances and cooperate more with female-led women’s organisations. On the positive side, she sees numerous organisations questioning themselves, going through painful processes, and deliberately breaking through established post-colonial, patriarchal structures.

However, it is legitimate that not every organisation is moving in this direction and a feminist attitude should not be prescribed to anyone. ‘I can make people aware that such change and development processes are relevant and essential and hope that other institutions, organisations and individuals will also come to this realisation, but I cannot force anyone’.

The strengthened anti-feminist movement and the backlash in the course of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted just how important it is to raise awareness: ‘We want to continue to be a positive disruptive factor, because the feminist movement is still necessary’.



The employees of EMMA Shekhan Centre in North Iraq offer professional training courses for women in their women's centres. In all courses, women not only learn how to read, write, or sew but also about their rights. © Hanna Hilger/medica mondiale

Current politics as a window of opportunity

White male right-wing politicians, in particular, try to dismiss feminism as a fad and do not take it seriously, which is probably because feminism aims to critically question fundamental social structures and power relations—and to change them sustainably. Schwerdtfeger describes feminist development policy as an '[...] incredible window of opportunity' and is pleased to be able to critically accompany the process as a representative of civil society.

Germany can initiate discussions across national borders in its commitment to a gender-equal and non-violent world: 'First of all, we take a positive view of the fact that this process is currently taking place'. Significantly, medica mondiale does not do development cooperation in the traditional sense but runs international programmes and cooperations with feminist organisations and movements in the Global South, because it sees itself as part of the international feminist movement.

It is important to check: What do we mean by development policy? Who gets money for what and under what conditions? Schwerdtfeger advocates a fundamental reform of the structures in Germany, the German Federal Ministry for Development, and the entire state-based development cooperation. This also applies to cooperation with civil

society. The current debate on feminist foreign and development policy alone is not sufficient if we want to change long-established processes and structures and achieve real transformation.

Do we need a new name for the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ)?

As a consequence, Schwerdtfeger suggests that the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) should consider renaming itself. The name implies that every country should reach an economic prosperity level similar to that of Germany but climate change reveals the limited resources available. Consequently, fundamental changes and a shift away from neoliberal development paradigms are necessary in the Global North.

The NGO is involved in the field of socio-economic empowerment of women but wants to critically review the existing structures. The term 'economic cooperation and development' may no longer be applicable today against the background of colonialism and post-colonialism.

Schwerdtfeger points out that, at the moment, it is largely civil society structures that existed for a long time, with a relatively high, normatively defined de-

gree of organisation that is funded and everything necessary to establish and develop them in the first place is rarely taken into account. However, this should explicitly be included in feminist international cooperation.

Organising safe spaces in a self-determined way

‘The focus is on enabling women – people – to organise themselves in a self-determined way, to offer safe spaces so that women can come together to discuss how they want to position themselves and how they want to act’, says Schwerdtfeger. This must be adequately financed, although the established

approaches to development cooperation based their success on quantitatively measurable outputs.

She wants to see more direct funding and less patronage of civil society organisations on the ground so that they can act more independently and flexibly within the context of binding regulations. They need to be able to implement the work that is relevant from their local perspective and expertise. This is not about percentage shares in projects that specifically benefit women. ‘That’s not gender-transformative. Just a right, albeit insufficient step’.

Transformative work means working with women’s organisations and letting them set the agenda.



The Organisation Lotus Flower in North Iraq empowers girls and young women in their self-confidence and self-determination. © Hanna Hilger/medica mondiale



ANNEX



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BIPoC

Black, Indigenous and People of Color

BMZ

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

BMFSFJ

German Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

DC

Development Coordination

FFO

Federal Foreign Office

GAP

Gender Action Plan

LGBTI

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* and intersex people

NGO

Non-governmental organisation

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

SDGs

Sustainable Development Goals

SRHR

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

VENRO

Association for Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid

UN

United Nations

WHO

World Health Organisation

SOURCES

Cited sources (last accesses on 27/10/2023):

- 1 **World Economic Forum (2022):**
Global Gender Gap Report 2022, available at
 ↘ <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022>
- 2 **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023)**
Feminist development policy – for just and strong societies worldwide, available at
 ↘ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/153806/bmz-strategy-feminist-development-policy.pdf>
- 3 **Belger, Bianca (2023):**
Feministische Außenpolitik: Was bedeuten die neuen Leitlinien für die Humanitäre Hilfe [Feminist Foreign Policy: What do the new guidelines for humanitarian aid mean, Venro blog post], available at ↘ <http://blog.venro.org/feministische-aussenpolitik-was-bedeuten-die-neuen-leitlinien-fuer-die-humanitaere-hilfe/>
- 4 **Lenz, Ilse (2018):**
Was ist Feminismus? [What is feminism?], Gunda-Werner-Institut, available at
 ↘ <https://www.gwi-boell.de/index.php/en/2018/05/25/was-ist-feminismus>
- 5 **Winkel, Heidemarie (2019):**
Postkolonialismus: Geschlecht als koloniale Wissenskategorie und die weiße Geschlechterforschung, Handbuch Interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung [Postcolonialism: Gender as a Colonial Category of Knowledge and White Gender Research, Handbook for Interdisciplinary Gender Research] (p. 293 ff.), available at ↘ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/330148478_Postkolonialismus_Geschlecht_als_koloniale_Wissenskategorie_und_die_weiße_Geschlechterforschung
- 6 **Christian Blind Mission (2021):**
Inklusive Entwicklungszusammenarbeit – unsere Forderungen [Inclusive development cooperation – our demands], available at ↘ <https://www.cbm.de/unsere-politische-arbeit/inklusive-entwicklungszusammenarbeit.html>
- 7 **Khaled-Ibrahim, Radwa; Schaefer, Karoline (2022):**
Mut zur Komplexität [Courage for Complexity], OXI, available at ↘ <https://oxiblog.de/feministische-entwicklungszusammenarbeit-mut-zur-komplexitaet/>
- 8 **UN Women (2020):**
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, available at ↘ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>
- 9 **Federal Foreign Office (2021):**
The German Federal Government’s Action Plan for the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (2021 to 2024), available at ↘ <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/resource/blob/610626/d7d78947490f454a5342c1dfff737a474/aktionsplan1325-engl-data.pdf>
- 10 **Hentschel, Gitti (2022):**
Einflüsse feministischer Frauen-Friedens-Bewegungen auf Bündnis 90/Die Grünen [Influences of feminist women’s peace movements on Bündnis 90/Die Grünen], available at ↘ <https://www.boell.de/de/2022/07/29/einfluesse-feministischer-friedens-und-frauenbewegungen-auf-buendnis-90die-gruenen>

11 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023):

Feminist development policy – for just and strong societies worldwide, available at <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/153806/bmz-strategy-feminist-development-policy.pdf>

12 Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2023):

Feminist development policy – for just and strong societies worldwide, available at <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/153806/bmz-strategy-feminist-development-policy.pdf>

13 Bread for the World (2022):

Atlas der Zivilgesellschaft 2022 (Schwerpunkt Digitalisierung) [Atlas of Civil Society 2022 (focus on digitization)], available at https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/fileadmin/media-pool/Atlas_der_Zivilgesellschaft/2022/Atlas_der_Zivilgesellschaft_2022_online.pdf

14 Federal Foreign Office (2022):

Feministische Außenpolitik gestalten – Leitlinien des Auswärtigen Amts [Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy – Federal Foreign Office Guidelines], available at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blueprint/servlet/blob/2585076/4d2d295dad8fb-1c41c6271d2c1a41d75/ffp-leitlinien-data.pdf>

15 Petter, Jan (2023):

Feministische Außenpolitik muss nicht pazifistisch sein [Feminist Foreign Policy does not Need to be Pacifist], SPIEGEL, available at <https://www.spiegel.de/ausland/norwegen-feministische-aussenpolitik-muss-nicht-pazifistisch-sein-a-fa3e3c0d-ae21-476e-9593-1f6863051f65>

ADDITIONAL LITERATURE

Adichie, Chimimanda Ngozi (2014):

We Should All Be Feminists, Fourth Estate

Bücker, Teresa (2022):

ALLE_ZEIT – Eine Frage von Macht und Gerechtigkeit [ALL_TIME – A Question of Power and Justice], Ullstein Buchverlage

Delap, Lucy (2022):

So sieht Feminismus aus – Die Geschichte einer globalen Bewegung, Karl Bissing Verlag

Elbe, Ingo et al. (ed.) (2022):

Probleme des Antirassismus: Postkoloniale Studien, Critical Whiteness und Intersektionalitätsforschung in der Kritik [Problems of Antiracism: Postcolonial Studies, Critical Whiteness and Intersectionality Research in Critique], Edition Tiamat

Ernst, Andrea (et al.) (2022):

Global female future: Wie feministische Kämpfe Arbeit, Politik und Ökonomie verändern [Global female future: How feminist struggles are changing work, politics and the economy], Verlag Kremayr & Scheriau

Fraser, Nancy (2023):

Der Allesfresser – Wie Kapitalismus seine eigenen Grundlagen verschlingt [The omnivore – How capitalism devours its own foundations], Suhrkamp Verlag

Haruna-Oelker, Hadija (2022):

Die Schönheit der Differenz – Miteinander anders denken [The beauty of difference – Thinking differently together], btb

Hasrat-Nazimi, Waslat (2022):

Die Löwinnen von Afghanistan – Der lange Kampf um Selbstbestimmung [The Lionesses of Afghanistan – The Long Struggle for Self-Determination], Rowohlt Verlag

Lunz, Kristina (2022):

Die Zukunft der Außenpolitik ist feministisch: Wie globale Krisen gelöst werden müssen [The future of foreign policy is feminist: How global crises must be solved], Econ Verlag

Roig, Emilia (2021):

Why we matter – Das Ende der Unterdrückung [Why we matter – The end of oppression], Aufbau Verlag

Sahebi, Glida (2023):

„Unser Schwert ist die Liebe“ – Die feministische Revolte im Iran [“Our Sword is Love” – The Feminist Revolt in Iran], S. Fischer Verlag

Winkler, Gabriele (2009):

Intersektionalität: Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten [Intersectionality: An Analysis of Social Inequalities], transcript Verlag

INTERVIEW PARTNERS

Isabel Armbrust

Editorial team, Solidarische Welt, public relations, Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt e.V.

Shitaye Astawes

Project Manager, Light for the World

Angela Bähr

Deputy Managing Director, German Foundation for World Population

Bianca Belger

Advocacy Officer, ADRA Germany

Kirstin Lee Bostelmann

Specialist in Gender Transformative and Inclusive Programming, Plan International

Katrin Bröring

Gender Expert, Kindernothilfe

Carla Dietzel

Gender Advocacy Officer – Gender Advocacy Manager, CARE Deutschland e.V.

Julia Ehrt

Managing Director, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association

Mona Girgis

Head of Tanzania Country Office, Plan International

Regina Göhlert

International Foundation Coordinator, Light for the World

Esther Hirsch

Deputy Head of the Institute, DVV International

Rosebell Kagumire

African Feminist Network

Carsta Neuenroth

(former) Gender Advisor, Bread for the World

Dr. Magdalene Pac

Advocacy Expert, Kindernothilfe

Jana Ongoma Schwerdtfeger

Director of International Programs, medica mondiale

Cornelia Sperling

Project Coordinator, Lesbian and Gay Association

Cora Steckel

Domestic Coordinator – Cross-Reference, North-South Bridges Foundation

Mathilde Umaraza

Gender Expert, Light for the World

VENRO MEMBERS

A

@fire Internationaler Katastrophenschutz
Deutschland e.V.
action medeor
ADRA Deutschland e.V.
AGIAMONDO
Aktion Canchanabury
Aktion gegen den Hunger*
AMICA e.V.
ANDHERI-HILFE e.V.
Apotheker helfen e.V.
Apotheker ohne Grenzen e.V.
Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland
Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Eine-Welt-Landesnetz-
werke in Deutschland (agl)
Arbeitsgemeinschaft Entwicklungsethnologie
arche noVa
Ärzte der Welt
ASW – Aktionsgemeinschaft Solidarische Welt
AT-Verband
AWO International

B

Behinderung und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit
(bezev)
BONO-Direkthilfe
BORDA e.V.
Brot für die Welt – Evangelischer
Entwicklungsdienst
Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend (BDKJ)
Bundesvereinigung Lebenshilfe

C

CARE Deutschland e.V.
Caritas International
CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission (Christian Blind
Mission e.V.)
CHANGE e.V.
ChildFund Deutschland
Christliche Initiative Romero

D

Dachverband Entwicklungspolitik Baden-
Württemberg (DEAB)
Das Hunger Projekt
DED-Freundeskreis
Deutsche Entwicklungshilfe für soziales
Wohnungs- und Siedlungswesen (DESWOS)
Deutsche Kommission Justitia et Pax
Deutsche Lepra- und Tuberkulosehilfe (DAHW)
Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevölkerung (DSW)
Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband
Deutsch-Indische Zusammenarbeit e.V.*
Deutsch-Syrischer Verein e.V. (DSV)
DGB-Bildungswerk BUND – Nord-Süd-Netz
Difäm – Deutsches Institut für Ärztliche Mission
Don Bosco Mondo
DVV International – Institut für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit des Deutschen Volkshoch-
schul-Verbandes

E

ECPAT Deutschland e.V.*
Eine Welt Netz NRW
EIRENE – Internationaler Christlicher Friedensdienst
Energypedia UG
EPIZ – Zentrum für Globales Lernen in Berlin
Erlassjahr.de – Entwicklung braucht Entschuldung
Evangelische Akademien in Deutschland (EAD)

F

Fairtrade Deutschland e.V.
Fairventures Worldwide
FIAN Deutschland
ForAfrika Deutschland
Forum Fairer Handel
FUTURO SÍ



G

Gemeinschaft Sant'Egidio
German Doctors
German Toilet Organisation
Germanwatch
GLS Zukunftsstiftung Entwicklung

H

Habitat for Humanity Deutschland
Handicap International
Help – Hilfe zur Selbsthilfe
HelpAge Deutschland
Hilfe für Afrika e.V.
Hoffnungszeichen / Sign of Hope
humedica

I

Indienhilfe
INKOTA-netzwerk
Internationaler Bund (IB)
Internationaler Hilfsfonds
International Justice Mission Deutschland
Internationaler Ländlicher Entwicklungsdienst (ILD)
Islamic Relief Deutschland

J

Johanniter-Auslandshilfe

K

KAIROS Europa
Karl Kübel Stiftung für Kind und Familie
KATE – Kontaktstelle für Umwelt und Entwicklung
Kinderhilfswerk Stiftung Global-Care
Kindernothilfe
Kinderrechte Afrika
KOLPING International Cooperation e.V.

L

LSVD+ – Verband Queere Vielfalt
Lichtbrücke
Light for the World

M

Malteser International
Marie-Schlei-Verein
Masifunde Bildungsförderung e.V.*

materra – Stiftung Frau und Gesundheit
medica mondiale e.V.
medico international
MISEREOR
Missionsärztliches Institut Würzburg

N

NETZ Partnerschaft für Entwicklung und
Gerechtigkeit e.V.
Neuapostolische Kirche-karitativ e.V.
nph Kinderhilfe Lateinamerika e.V.

O

OIKOS EINE WELT e.V.
Ökumenische Initiative Eine Welt e.V.
Opportunity International Deutschland
Ora International Deutschland
OroVerde – Die Tropenwaldstiftung
Oxfam Deutschland

P

Partnership for Transparency Fund e.V.
(PTF Europe)*
Plan International Deutschland

R

Rhein-Donau-Stiftung

S

Samhathi – Hilfe für Indien
Save the Children Deutschland
Senegalhilfe-Verein
Society for International Development Chapter
Bonn (SID)
SODI – Solidaritätsdienst International
SOS-Kinderdörfer weltweit
SOS Humanity*
Stiftung Childaid Network
Stiftung der Deutschen Lions
Stiftung Entwicklung und Frieden (SEF)
Stiftung Kinderzukunft
Stiftung Nord-Süd-Brücken
Street Child Deutschland e.V.*
SÜDWIND – Institut für Ökonomie und Ökumene
Susila Dharma – Soziale Dienste



T

Tearfund Deutschland e.V.
Terra Tech Förderprojekte
TERRE DES FEMMES
terre des hommes Deutschland
Tierärzte ohne Grenzen (ToG)

V

Verband Deutsch-Syrischer Hilfsvereine e.V. *
Verband Entwicklungspolitik Niedersachsen (VEN)
Verbund Entwicklungspolitischer Nichtregierungs-
organisationen Brandenburgs (VENROB)
Verein entwicklungspolitischer Austauschorgani-
sationen e.V. (ventao)

W

W. P. Schmitz-Stiftung
Weltfriedensdienst
Weltgebetstag der Frauen – Deutsches Komitee
Welthaus Bielefeld
Welthungerhilfe
Weltladen-Dachverband
Weltnotwerk der KAB Deutschlands
Werkhof Darmstadt
Westfälisches Kinderdorf e.V.
Werkstatt Ökonomie
World University Service
World Vision Deutschland

Z

ZOA Deutschland gGmbH

* Guest member

VENRO currently has 144 members
(July 2024)



IMPRINT

Publisher:

Association of German Development
and Humanitarian Aid NGOs (VENRO)
Stresemannstraße 72
10963 Berlin
Tel: +49 30/26 39 299-10
Email: sekretariat@venro.org

Author: Pauline Tillmann

Concept and editing: Lili Khoury and Betül Bahar Tekkılıç

Final editing: Janna Völker

Proofreading of the German Version: Silke Pachal, Berlin

Layout & illustrations: Florence Kumani and Isabell Wirtz, all codes are beautiful

English translation: Language Buró

English proofreading: Wissenschaftslektorat & Englisch-Training Kelly GmbH

Berlin, Januar 2025

This publication was supported by ENGAGEMENT GLOBAL with funds from the



VENRO is solely responsible for the content of this publication; the positions presented here do not reflect the position of Engagement Global or the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.



VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The organisation was founded in 1995 and approximately 140 organisations belong to it. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development cooperation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy.

VENRO's central goal is to construct a just globalisation, with a special emphasis on eradicating global inequalities and poverty. The organisation is committed to implementing human rights and conserving natural resources.

VENRO

→ represents the interests of development and humanitarian aid NGOs vis-à-vis the government;

→ strengthens the role of NGOs and civil society in development cooperation and humanitarian aid;

→ sharpens public awareness of development cooperation, humanitarian issues, and sustainable development.

VENRO – Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid NGOs

www.venro.org

