



EXPECTATIONS OF A FEMINIST DEVELOPMENT POLICY

In autumn 2021, the German government announced a feminist foreign policy in its coalition agreement. As a result, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) declared a feminist development policy to be one of their initiatives and as one of four political priorities.

The prevailing gender relations worldwide are the result of an historically grown unequal distribution of power. These are firmly anchored in a hierarchy of values that privilege men and boys. They are based on central mechanisms such as sexism, homophobia, racism, ableism and classism, which lead to exclusion and discrimination. These unequal gender relations and Eurocentric world view - as a legacy of colonialism - determine the power relations between states and social and political actors. Colonialism, therefore, has a structural effect on current development policy. A feminist development policy can contribute to overcoming patriarchal, colonial and racist power structures.

For the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Svenja Schulze, an effective development policy must be feminist. This should be guided by the three "Rs": rights, resources and representation.¹ For the BMZ, this means firstly promoting the rights of women and marginalised groups such as LGBTI people, people with disabilities, children and young people, older people, refugees, black people, people of colour and indigenous people. Secondly, there is a need for more resources for the promotion of equality and non-discriminatory access to these resources. Thirdly, an

increased commitment to the equal participation and empowerment of girls and women in all their diversity and of marginalised groups is necessary.

We welcome the plan of the present government to establish this policy in a comprehensive, financially backed Gender Action Plan (GAP) with the involvement of civil society. For the specific implementation of a feminist development policy, we offer the following proposals below.

In our view, the goal of a feminist development policy must be the equal political, economic and social participation of all people, irrespective of, for example, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation race and ethnicity, religion, nationality, age, disabilities or residence status. As women make up 50 per cent of the world's population, we attach particular importance to gender equality, also with a view to the intersection of different forms of discrimination. However, feminist development policy also means that particularly disadvantaged people must be able to realise their human rights and self-determined life plans as laid down in UN conventions. A feminist development policy also requires honest self-reflection of one's own privileges, and the financial and political power of interpretation and decision-making of the Global North that has grown out of the history of colonialism and capitalism.

In view of the growing anti-gender movements and increasing conflicts and wars worldwide, there is a

¹ The three Rs are described on the [BMZ](#) website.

growing danger that stereotypical and toxic masculinity² will be strengthened and feminist discourses devalued as insignificant and pushed to the margins. The aim of feminist foreign and development policy must be to overcome discrimination, conflicts, wars and violence within and between societies and to invest in peace.

Overcoming gender-based and structural violence as a goal of development policy

To only strengthen women and girls in all their diversity and marginalised groups within the existing economic and social structures is insufficient. Gender-based and structural discrimination in the form of unequal power structures must be made the starting point; overcoming them must be the goal of politics. Feminist development policy must be transformative, intersectional, postcolonial and human rights-based. These characteristics must be set as standards in all BMZ processes and be reflected, among other things, in project funding and policy dialogue.

In order to achieve this, VENRO calls on the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ),

- to consistently apply transformative approaches. This means critically addressing discriminatory social norms and gender roles in order to overcome existing gender-based and structural inequalities. Transformative approaches must work at all levels: to strengthen individual spaces for action, to change relationships between people and to dismantle discriminatory structures and norms.

- to carry out intersectional analyses, which shed light on the multiple discrimination of women and girls in all their diversity and marginalised people. Intersectional discrimination must become visible and recognised in order to be ultimately overcome. This can be achieved by implementing intersectional approaches.
- to critically reflect on Eurocentric and colonial patterns and power relations in development policy and cooperation, also with regard to the German colonial past and the crimes committed and address them in light of feminist politics.
- to consistently apply the human rights-based approach and the 2030 Agenda with the guiding principle "Leave no one behind", to focus on and strengthen discriminated and marginalised groups as rights holders and to hold the bearers of legal obligations, such as state institutions, accountable.
- to consistently implement the existing three-pronged approach of gender mainstreaming, focused projects and programmes on gender equality and marginalised groups, as well as high-level political dialogue on gender equality with partner countries, and further develop it in line with the standards called for here.

Feminist development policy needs adequate funding and participation

In 2020, only about 45 per cent of sectoral allocable bilateral development assistance (Official Development Assistance, ODA) went to projects and programmes that pursued gender equality as a secondary or main objective.³ In particular, the share of

² The term "toxic masculinity" refers to traditional ideas of masculinity and destructive ways of thinking and behaving on the part of men. Toxic masculinity is due to gender-specific socialisation.

³ See OECD (2022): [↘ Aid activities targeting gender equality and women's empowerment](#) (retrieved 30.05.2022).

projects that primarily aim to achieve gender equality remains negligible at two per cent of sectoral allocable ODA. This is not sufficient if development policy is to be feminist. Long-term, flexible and sustainable funding is needed to strengthen women's rights organisations and to implement feminist concerns and demands, especially in fragile and conflict-affected states. The substantial participation of women in all their diversity and marginalised groups must also be promoted at all levels and in all sectors with targeted activities. Marginalised groups and their perspectives must be brought to the forefront. The experience, expertise and knowledge of affected people and their organizations must be recognised and included.

In our view, particularly important issues for a feminist development policy are sexualised and gender-based violence, domestic and care work, health, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), peace and conflict prevention, rural development, economic and political participation and rights, climate justice, education and the rights and participation of marginalised groups.

VENRO calls on the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development,

- to spend at least 85 per cent of all funds on projects and programmes that pursue gender justice as a main or secondary objective, analogous to the EU Action Plan for Gender Equality.⁴ In the medium term, 20 per cent of all funds should flow into projects with gender equality as a main objective.
- to apply gender budgeting within the BMZ and encourage other ministries to draw up their budgets in a gender-just manner. As a first step, targets for the promotion and mainstreaming of

gender equality should be set for sections 05 and 23 of the BMZ budget and these should be communicated transparently.

- to strengthen and listen to feminist and intersectional civil society in the Global South. This includes needs-oriented, flexible and long-term funding and ensuring the substantial participation and co-design of affected persons and organisations in decision-making and implementation processes that affect them, as well as in international negotiations in which the BMZ participates. This gives feminist and intersectional civil society greater social influence and more scope to overturn patriarchal structures.
- to set a stronger focus on the thematic areas mentioned on page 3. In these areas significantly more GG2 projects should be implemented. Likewise, transformative approaches to overcoming structural inequality must be applied consistently in GG1 projects in all sectors and targeted measures to strengthen the rights of women and girls in all their diversity and marginalised groups must be initiated in all areas. Targeted promotion and mainstreaming of the inclusion of persons with disabilities should also be initiated in the BMZ with a corresponding indicator, based on the OECD proposal.⁵
- to improve the monitoring of projects and programs for gender equality, especially with regard to increasing the effectiveness and quality of gender mainstreaming and transformative approaches, as well as accountability towards stakeholders and civil society in the respective partner countries.

⁴ See Pillar 1 in EU Commission (2020): [↗ EU Action Plan for Gender Equality \(2021-2025\)](#).

⁵ OECD (2018): [↗ Proposal to Introduce a Policy Marker](#)

[in the CRS to track Development Finance that Promotes the Inclusion and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.](#)

Good coordination of feminist foreign policy and feminist development policy

Feminist development and foreign policy pursue the same goals. The development of strategies and action plans should therefore be based on common definitions and in close coordination. The three "Rs" (rights, resources, representation) mentioned in the coalition agreement offer an initial orientation.

VENRO calls on the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to

- work for a broader representation of feminist and intersectionally-oriented civil society in international bodies and initiatives. The instruments and actors of the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and its Feminist Foreign Policy (implementation of the agenda "Women, Peace, Security", support of civil society and human rights defenders through the embassies) and the BMZ (high-level policy dialogue, right of co-determination in multilateral organisations/initiatives, TC advisors) should complement and strengthen each other.
- develop transformative and intersectional approaches for the programs and projects implemented by both ministries within the framework of the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus - with the involvement of civil society – and promote their coherent implementation and transparently evaluate their effectiveness and challenges.
- build on the existing strategies, concepts and evaluations of the German Evaluation Institute for Development Cooperation when developing strategies for feminist foreign and development policy and further develop and consistently implement action plans and strategies with the involvement of civil society.⁶
- organise a regular and transparent exchange on good practices and lessons learned between all institutions that have committed themselves to a feminist policy.

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VENRO – Association of German Development and Humanitarian Aid Organisations e.V.
Stresemannstraße 72, 10963 Berlin, Germany

Phone: + 49 30 2 63 92 99-10

E-Mail: sekretariat@venro.org

Editors

Carla Dietzel, Carsta Neuenroth, Anke Scheid

Co-Editors

AG Gender

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⁶ Relevant are for example:

- BMZ (2011): Menschenrechte in der deutschen Entwicklungspolitik (Human Rights in German Development Policy) and the current evaluation of the human rights concept by DEval.
- BMZ (2019): Inclusion Strategy and the evaluation of the Action Plan for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities by DEval (2017).
- AA and BMZ (2021): LGBTI inclusion concept.
- Interministerial Working Group on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (2021): Federal Government Action Plan on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda 2021 - 2024.
- Results of the review of the Agents of Change on the implementation of children's and young people's rights in German development cooperation (currently in progress).