

*The UK FFP Working Group
Response to Labour's
“Achieving Gender Equality in
Development” consultation*

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1. What defining features should a transformative policy to tackle gender inequality have?

a. Gender inequality: Where are we?

Women and girls experience a breadth and depth of reinforcing intersectional inequalities across health, including sexual and reproductive health, protection, livelihoods, education, access to technology and decision making in processes that directly affect them.

This includes:

- 19% of women aged 15 to 49 experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months[1].
- 200 women and girls in 30 countries have experienced Female Genital Mutilation[2].
- Only 55% of married or in-union women aged 15 to 49 make their own decisions regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights, based on data from 57 countries[3].
- 132 million girls miss out on school[4].
- Women spend an extra 2.5 hours a day more than men on unpaid domestic and care work[5].
- Women's unpaid care work alone adds value to the global economy of at least \$10.8 trillion a year[6].
- The global Internet use for women is about 48%, as compared to about 55% for men[7].
- Only 25% of national politicians are women[8].
- Between 1992 and 2019, women constituted, on average, 13% of negotiators, 6% of mediators, and 6% of signatories in major peace processes worldwide[9].
- Women's vulnerability to climate change is heightened, including because though they predominate in the world's food production (50-80%), they own less than 10% of the land[10].

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed and compounded these inequalities[11]. Finding feminist solutions based on genuine care has taken on an urgency as a result of the pandemic.

b. Seizing the momentum to achieve gender equality

The pandemic provides a unique opportunity to **build forward not just better - but differently**. We must seize this momentum and challenge ourselves to collectively create a new normal which advances equality across gender, race, economic and social lines in the world's response and recovery.

We also have the opportunity to **learn from and build upon the experience of others** who have recently rolled out feminist foreign and international assistance policies, including Canada, Sweden, and Mexico and, currently, France and Luxembourg.

c. Goal of international development policy

The goal of international development policy is to:

- **advance human and planetary thriving**
- **through sustainable peace and green sustainable development**
- **requiring feminist reconceptualisations of peace, security, and development.**

d. A feminist vision

A feminist vision sets forth the pathway to achieve the goal of international development policy.

It does this through advancing **transformation of multidimensional patriarchal structures, systems, patterns and behaviour that embody and sustain unequal power relations and perpetuate gender, racial, social and economic inequalities and injustice.**

A feminist vision does not endorse a universal formulation of feminism that subsumes a monolithic or simplified category of 'woman'. There is a need to acknowledge that not 'all women' face the same challenges and therefore that social equality vis-a-vis men may not be the primary goal of a feminist vision. Addressing the struggles that women face, in recognition that they may face multiple and intersecting forms of oppression based on race/class/ethnicity, would go a long way in correcting the racial biases of current gender equality measures and open space for a feminist vision of gender equality that does not seek to guarantee the rights and security of white women only.

e. Core strategies to implement the feminist vision

- Conduct research on the challenges women from different socio-economic, ethnic and other backgrounds face and adapt strategies to these challenges. [Avoid one-size-fits all gender equality measures]
- Ensure **local ownership and partnerships of trust**
- Reinforce **vertical, horizontal, and intersectional approaches**
- Measure **qualitative change** in the everyday lives of women and girls and the broader community

- **Develop 4 targeted and integrated evidence-based strategies** across the policy:
 - o Prevent and respond to **sexual and gender based violence, including increasing monitoring and accountability.**
 - o Strengthen **women and girls' leadership and decision making at all levels (household, community, and within the political sphere)**
 - o Support **women and girls' physical, psycho-social and emotional well-being**
 - o Strengthen **women and girls' grassroots organisations and movements**
- Ensure a coherent **whole of government approach to gender equality** as a government priority
- **Institutionalise feminist principles within Whitehall**, including through training, recruitment, cultural transformation and incentives to deliver results
- **Lead and advocate domestically and internationally** to advance global solidarity, norm setting, financial commitment and political action
- Ensure **long-term "courageous funding"**[12] to gender equality

f. Feminist principles to guide international assistance

- Act in **solidarity and collaboration (consciously move away from neoliberal feminist approach)**
- Use a **decolonialising lens** to shift access and power to local actors, including through humility, questioning of assumptions, mutual accountability and learning
- Adopt a **human rights based approach**, focusing on inclusion, participation, non-discrimination, and marginalised, excluded and vulnerable groups.
 - Adopt a self-reflexive and critical approach, asking how international assistance and development might reify power and racial hierarchies

g. Potential countries and areas of focus

Countries

- Low income countries
- Countries most impacted by climate change
- Fragile and conflict affected countries

Areas of focus

Crosscutting:

- Protection against sexual and gender based violence
- Women and girl's leadership and decision-making
- Women and girl's well-being
- Women's organisations and movements

Targeted:

- Health - *especially* reproductive rights and bodily autonomy
- Education
- Economic opportunities

- Political participation
- Rule of law
- Governance
- Migration and immigration
- Climate change
- Peace and security

[1] <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/proportion-of-ever-partnered-women-and-girls-aged-15-49-years-subjected-to-physical-and-or-sexual-violence-by-a-current-or-former-intimate-partner-in-the-previous-12-months>

[2] <https://www.unicef.org/protection/female-genital-mutilation>

[3] https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/20-033_SDG561-BrochureA4-v1.21.pdf

[4] <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education>

[5] <https://www.un.org/en/desa/world's-women-2020-heavier-loads-unpaid-work-keep-women-out-labour-market>

[6] https://webassets.oxfamamerica.org/media/documents/FINAL_bp-time-to-care-inequality-200120-en.pdf?_gl=1*vb7gri*_ga*MTIzOTI5ODE5MC4xNjxNTk4NTY5*_ga_R58YETD6XK*MTYyMTU5ODU2OS4xLjAuMTYyMTU5ODU2OS4w

[7] <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2020.pdf>

[8] https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#_edn7

[9] <https://wpp-v2-interactives1.pantheonsite.io/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/explore-the-data>

[10] <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/women-in-shadow-climate-change>

[11] <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/report/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women/policy-brief-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-women-en-1.pdf>; https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w26947/w26947.pdf;

<https://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Gender-Equality-Peace-and-Security-in-a-COVID-19-World-and-Beyond.pdf>

[12] November 2020, Peace Direct in collaboration with Adeso, the Alliance for Peacebuilding and Women of Color Advancing Peace and Security, convened a three-day online consultation to discuss the issue of structural racism and how to 'Decolonise Aid'. The recommendations identified call for donors to 'fund courageously' - "funding pathways that are more accessible and inclusive, as well as to accept greater levels of uncertainty and possible failure." See <https://www.peacedirect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PD-Decolonising-Aid-Summary-English.pdf>.

2. How can challenging the structural causes of gender inequality be articulated and practically implemented in international development policy?

a. Identifying the causes/ structural determinants of inequalities

"Structural determinants are the socioeconomic and political processes that structure hierarchical power relations, stratifying societies based on class, occupational status, level of education, gender, etc."¹ The structural causes of gender inequality should be identified early on as they shape people's ability to access services like education and healthcare and as a result, their ability to achieve their goals. Structural causes of inequality can be categorised into four determinants and the interplays of these factors:

- **Cultural:** What are the norms, gendered expectations and ideologies that further gender inequality? Gendered stereotypes and norms about femininity and masculinity justify hierarchical relations between men and women and often legitimise women's subordination. Identifying, tackling, and destabilising these norms are paramount in the fight for gender equality.

¹(PDF) [Structural determinants of gender inequality: Why they matter for adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health](#) p.1

- **Political:** Women's political representation, participation and access to leadership roles play an important part in the persistence of gender inequalities as many women have not had a chance to participate in decision making to shape their own lives. Addressing the political causes of gender inequality means asking 'who's present and who decides?', looking into political power distribution and identifying the visible and invisible obstacles to women's representation, participation and leadership. Ensuring that women are visible and meaningfully included in decision-making processes at all levels from community to national level is a key driver towards gender equality.
- **Legal:** There are legal constraints that impede gender equality, in particular those that discriminate against LGBTQ+ communities, such as the criminalisation of homosexuality, the absence of laws for same-sex marriage, as well as the absence of laws prohibiting and punishing gender-based violence, the criminalisation of abortion, and the lack of reproductive rights. The legal impediments to gender equality vary from country to country but certainly exist across the world.
- **Economic:** Structural inequalities are also rooted in economic factors which frequently negatively impact women, such as the lack of economic resources, access to jobs and employment, unpaid labour and the division of labour between market and reproductive labour, gender pay gap, occupational segregation, ownership, control and access to land and assets. An analysis of the economic drivers of gendered inequality in countries supported by the UK's development 'assistance' should be interwoven into the global political economy and connected to macroeconomics.

b. Applying the structural determinants of gender inequality in various areas of policy (asking how do these factors play out in these areas of policy):

- Healthcare (in particular sexual and reproductive health and maternal healthcare)
- Education (access to schools, further and higher education)
- Justice (access to and quality of justice)
- Employment, economic opportunities and salary/pay gap, vocational training
- Housing (land, property, inheritance, access to mortgages and credit)

c. Addressing the structural causes of gender inequality in international development policy:

- Ensure that financial aid and support is given to civil society actors and NGOs that focus on highlighting and dismantling the structural causes of gender inequality.
- Recommend changes at the structural level
- Advocate for gender responsive development strategies with bilateral and multilateral partners, including IFIs, to include, at least
 - root and branch reform of policymaking process through putting the people 'out there' at the centre of the consultation and implementation process i.e. implementing feminist vision from the outset and modeling feminist approach
 - Agreement on percentage of international development spend allocated to gender equality and women's rights

3. What challenges exist in defining and implementing a strategy to tackle the root causes of gender inequality?

Challenge One: Definitional.

- *Avoid collapsing 'gender' into 'women'.*

Given the complex nature of gender inequalities globally, there is a tendency to see 'gender' as meaning 'women' in policymaking frameworks designed to address gender issues. However, issues of gender (where gender is understood to be a social construct) affect everyone because they have important ramifications for how people behave/are perceived; thus, both men *and* women must contribute to tackling gender inequalities. Men have a significant role to play when it comes to addressing 'root causes' such as the social dynamics of unpaid care distribution, and ideas about masculinities (in relation to femininities) shape understandings of gender roles.^[1] An overfocus on women alone - as opposed to communities - in development practice can be counterproductive, and contribute to short-termism. Thus, gender should be understood in relational, context-specific terms.

- *Keep intersectional experiences in view.*

Institutionalising gender policy can produce template-based understandings of needs, experiences, and inequalities. A significant challenge is translating a conceptual recognition that inequalities are intersectional, into practice. The concept of intersectionality (coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989) addresses the ways in which gender interacts with race to form multiple layers of discrimination. Taking an intersectional approach allows for all members of society to be considered in policy making decisions, and helps to reinforce the idea that individuals may be subject to multiple forms of oppression that impact their daily lives. Thus, strategies must be subject to constant contextual refinement and shaped by those who experience the inequalities a policy seeks to address.

- *Defining root causes contextually, ensuring context-specific understandings.*

Challenge Two: Information and Communication.

- *Ensuring the availability of adequate gender disaggregated data.*
- *Ensuring full and open consultation with all stakeholders.*
- *Transparent and open lines of communication between stakeholders.*
- *Ensuring that those on the receiving end of policymaking have their voices heard; even better, involve them in directly shaping the policy and placing them at the center of decision-making processes.*

Challenge Three: A gender lens

- *Holistic adoption*

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for implementing gender-equal policies at all levels of an organisation. It is generally understood that gender mainstreaming creates better policy; however, in practice, complex systems of prioritisation can mean that gender is not holistically integrated across the entirety of development frameworks. Thus, it remains a challenge to apply a gender lens consistently across all areas of development work.

Challenge Four: Partnerships

- *Ensuring that partnerships are prevented from reproducing gender inequalities.*

Challenge Five: Crisis and Urgency

- *Ensuring gender stays on the agenda*

As evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis can compound gender inequalities. Moreover, in times of crisis, gender is often de-prioritised in service of objectives that are framed as more urgent. It is crucial that all crisis preparedness and response incorporate gender expertise and a gender lens. Gender equality must always be understood as a priority in crisis contexts including protracted emergencies, so that crises do not further exacerbate inequalities (as has been the case with the COVID-19 pandemic).

Challenge Six: Temporal

- *Ensuring mechanisms are in place for sustainable, long-term project work so that short-termism is avoided, and programming does not suddenly drop away if political priorities change.*
- *When implementing gender-focused programming, the sustainability of measures taken should be clear, and the long-term success of programming should not be dependent, for instance, on limited funding streams.*

Challenge Seven: Measurement

- *Implementing mechanisms, such as indicators, to measure policy success at both qualitative and quantitative levels.*
- *Ensuring any indicators are defined by, or delineated in collaboration with, local partners.*
- *Ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for stakeholders to complain about, contest and review UK gender-focused development policy.*

Challenge Eight: Consistency

- *Ensuring that gender equality policy is not solely outward looking and that principles are consistently applied in both domestic and development/foreign policy.*
- *Ensuring that other state policies and practices uphold gender equality equality policies and strategies e.g. review of arms exports*

[1] Henri Myrntinen (2019) 'Locating Masculinities in WPS', in *The Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace, and Security*, Eds Sara E. Davies and Jacqui True, (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

4. What should the FCDO, as an organisation, do to facilitate the delivery of policies to overcome gender inequality?

- **The delivery of high-quality policies to overcome gender equality funding requires political commitment and substantial long-term funding.**

The recent drastic cuts to UK aid by the current government have been criticised by former Conservative ministers, British and international charities and NGOs (including the International Rescue Committee² and International Planned Parenthood³) and British and international experts⁴ as having a **detrimental impact on women and girls in particular**. A flagship global programme on women's integrated sexual health is threatened, with the Director General of IPPF declaring that **"The expected cuts could be the same order of magnitude as when President Trump introduced the 'global gag rule.'"**⁵ Labour should commit to **reverse these cuts and to work with the organisations who have been impacted by them to ensure that these policies are reinstated**. Not only will this help to ensure that existing policies on women and girls are re-implemented, it will also allow the UK to **re-establish its position and credibility as a global leader in the fight for gender equality**.

- **The FCDO should build on historical strengths of UK foreign and development policy.**

The UK has been a leader in the areas of girls' education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The FCDO should focus on supporting and expanding the **existing knowledge base** and policies in these areas and **building capacity** in these areas. This should include working with longstanding partners in UK foreign aid delivery, including key British NGOs and charities.

² [Women and girls disproportionately affected by UK government's 'devastating' cuts to overseas aid | The Independent](#). Accessed 07/05/21.

³ ['Out of Trump playbook': UK accused of 'abandoning' women with cuts to aid | Global development | The Guardian](#). Accessed 07/05/21.

⁴ [UK government's foreign aid cuts put girls' education at risk \(theconversation.com\)](#). Accessed 07/05/21.

⁵ Ibid.

- **The FCDO should learn from other countries who have recently adopted a feminist approach to their foreign policy.**

The UK has the opportunity to work with other countries who are currently adopting a feminist foreign policy to **learn from them in terms of their policies and delivery**. The countries which are moving in this direction in their foreign policy are all of a similar standing to the UK on the world stage, and such a move can help to reorient the country **as it finds its position on the world stage post-Brexit**.

5. Which stakeholders should Labour be working with to develop policy recommendations to tackle gender inequality?

The United Kingdom (UK)'s feminist foreign policy should be diverse, inclusive, responsive and accountable. In doing so, the stakeholders should include the government and actors outside the government, including civil society organisations and any actor representing feminist movements and indigenous groups, as well as any stakeholders of the Global North and the Global South. At a granular level, in order to adopt an intersectional approach, stakeholders should be consulted, including women from various socio-economic classes, diasporas, Indigenous women and the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore, an effort should be made to take into account any unfair power dynamics and agents that cause systemic discrimination against women. In doing so, elements to consider include taking into account the individual as well as the collective narrative of women, as well as an understanding of intersectionality relating to girls, LGBTQ+ community members, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, immigrants and people of disabilities. Additionally, other stakeholders should be consulted including associated organisations, civil society organisations, development banks, activists, academics and human rights defenders in general located nationally and internationally as well as external communities that are most impacted by the foreign policy of the UK.

Areas of focus:

- Human Rights
- Economic Justice
- Peace and Security
- International Activists, Organisations and Experts
- Women of diverse background
- Public

Suggested Stakeholders Based on Area of Focus:

Human Rights

- Human Rights Watch
- The United Nations Association, Women's Advisory Council, UK
- The Aegis Trust
- REDRESS
- Save the Children UK
- Anti-Slavery International

- Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières)
- Equal Rights Trust
- ALQST
- ActionAid UK
- WaterAid UK
- JUSTICE
- Overseas Development Institute
- REPRIEVE
- Article 19
- The Refugee Council
- Freedom from Torture
- Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)
- The Traveller Movement
- Survival International
- Queer Space
- The Gender and Development Network
- Scottish Women's Aid
- Plan International
- National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO)
- Liberty
- International Rescue Committee
- International Committee of the Red Cross
- Girls Not Brides
- Amnesty International

Economic Justice

- ActionAid International
- CARE UK
- Oxfam UK
- Amnesty International UK
- Women's Aid
- UN Women
- UNDP
- ILO

Peace and Security

- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- GAPS UK
- PeaceWomen
- LSE Centre for Women, Peace and Security
- Women for Women International

International Activists, Organisations and Experts

- APCOM (Thailand)
- Equal Asia Foundation (Thailand)
- ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (Vietnam)
- OurCause (Canada/UK/Bangladesh)
- Action Against Hunger
- CFFP
- Involve
- Southall Black Sisters

Individuals

- Khushi Kabir, Nijera Kori (Bangladesh)
- Sultana Kamal, Advocate (Bangladesh)
- Kamla Bhasin, Activist (India)
- Tanzila Khan (Pakistan)
- Carmen Barroso, Activist and Export (Brazil)
- Edna Adan Ismail (Somalia)
- Pavan Amara (UK)
- Jessica Horn (UK)
- Jasvinder Sanghera
- Prof. Amartya Sen (US/UK/India)
- Prof Naila Kabir (UK/Bangladesh)

Development Banks

- Asian Development Bank
- World Bank
- IMF
- The Commonwealth Secretariat

6. How should we measure progress on tackling gender inequality?

Progress on tackling gender inequality must be measured at two levels: process and outcome. Inclusive and participatory, context-specific policy development processes are critical to ensuring those that policy seeks to help are involved in highlighting issues and crafting solutions.

All policies should include ex ante and ex post intersectional gender impact analyses which are embedded into a continual process of learning that feed into future policies. Impact analyses should employ feminist methodologies to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

7. What have been the successes and challenges for those countries who have implemented feminist foreign/development policies?

Feminist-informed foreign and development policies in general have provided greater visibility for gender equality in external policies of some countries including Canada, France, Luxembourg, Mexico, Spain, and Sweden.

For example, Canada's feminist-informed development policy has focused on the empowerment of women and girls and the promotion of gender equality through initiatives such as the Women's Voice and Leadership Initiative[1], which supports local women's organizations in developing countries, and the Partnership for Gender Equality[2]. These programmes have been particularly successful in supporting vulnerable Women Human Rights Defenders.

With respect to peace and security, Canada launched the Elsie Initiative under the aegis of the UN as a means to ensure gender parity within peace operations. Funding from the initiative has supported countries in Africa to increase the participation of women in the military and police in peace operations. While the intention of increasing women's participation of women in peace operations is said to make peace operations inclusive and more effective, this also allows for greater representation of women in an area where men have historically dominated.

Since declaring a feminist diplomacy policy, France has enthusiastically taken the lead to convene, with Mexico, the Gender Equality Forum (GEF)[3]. GEF is the largest international summit for women's rights since the Beijing conference in 1995. Building on the successes and addressing some of the blind spots of Beijing, the GEF is a platform for transformational change and progress towards gender equality brings together civil society organisations with government, philanthropies, and corporations.

As the only country in the Global South that has declared a feminist foreign policy, a key success for Mexico has been to link the domestic condition to transnational concerns around discrimination arising from structural differences and gender inequality. This approach allows the country to treat policy interventions into gender inequality and women's empowerment holistically at home and abroad[4].

In introducing feminism to the area of foreign policy, some of the states are compelled also to consider how various identities of women including their race, class, gender and sexuality and disability further impacts their experiences and marginalisation. They thus have adopted intersectionality, a concept stemming from radical Black feminist thought, and an important analytical frame that has the possibility for achieving gender justice[5].

Yet, while feminist and gender equality activists welcome the possibilities of feminism into foreign policy because its transformative potential for a more ethical foreign policy, the practice of feminist foreign policy, so far, is not without blind spots. A lack of overarching definition is a double-edge sword. On the one hand it allows for each state to reflect its own particular strengths, values and histories; on the other hand, its openness to a variety of transformation can strip it of its radical transformative potential for emancipatory change.

Feminist foreign policy is often siloed. For example, with respect to Canada, the focus has been on development policy while in France the focus is on diplomacy[6]. This does not allow a whole of foreign policy approach that allows contradictions in and undermines ethical foreign policy practices like increased militarism that impacts negatively on women's lives in the global South. Relatedly, and in more practical terms, the initiatives that underpin feminist foreign policies remain under resourced.

Feminist scholars and activists have further argued that feminism is being hollowed out when the "doing" feminist foreign policy serves to reproduce the hierarchical global order. This reproduction occurs when feminist foreign policy that allows global North states to claim superiority over global South ones, even as their own domestic policies undermine even the essentialist understandings which equate gender to women[7].

Overall, the majority of the countries that have declared feminist foreign policies have accelerated their commitments to the Goal 5 of the sustainable development goals[8] on gender equality, and the commitments to protecting women from sexual violence in conflict and increasing participation via the global normative framework, the Women, Peace and Security agenda[9]. At the same time, feminist foreign policy exists in a world order that reifies existing hierarchies and has thus far failed to reach its radical potential.

[1] https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/wvl_projects-projets_vlf.aspx?lang=eng

[2] https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/campaign-campagne/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/framework-cadre.aspx?lang=eng

[3] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/beijing-plus-25/generation-equality-forum>

[4] https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/545654/Note_6-Feminist_foreign_policy.pdf

[5] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7586002/>

[6] <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/>

[7] <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps/2020/07/28/race-justice-new-possibilities-20-years-of-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda/>; https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57cd7cd9d482e9784e4ccc34/t/5f7b03f0d5f05a388eb62c72/1601897463604/_Feminist+Foreign+Policy+So+White_%21.pdf

[8] <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5>

[9] <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security>