



RESEARCH REPORT ON FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

March 2023

Plan International Japan

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List of Abbreviations

BMZ	The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FDP	Feminist Development Policy
FFP	Feminist Foreign Policy
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning/Queer +
NAP	National Action Plan
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

1. Executive Summary

Feminist foreign policy is a relatively new global trend for which there is yet no internationally agreed definition. In general, it adopts a transformative approach that centers intersectionality¹ and human rights to promote gender equality across all areas of foreign policy, including but not limited to diplomacy, security, trade, and development cooperation.

Twelve countries have adopted or announced feminist foreign and/or development policies (hereafter referred to as FFPs) since Sweden adopted an FFP in 2014, and FFPs have gained momentum as more civil society organizations (CSOs) push governments: among the G7 countries, Canada, France, and Germany have adopted FFPs, and the G7 Leaders' Communiqué in 2022 committed to “feminist development, foreign and trade policies” in the area of sustainable development. The Communiqué also announced efforts to increase the proportion of bilateral allocable Official Development Assistance (ODA) that is contributed toward gender equality. Against this backdrop, Japan, as a member of the G7 and in light of its presidency of the G7 Hiroshima Summit, should consider adopting an FFP. With this in mind, this research was conducted to identify what an FFP is and make recommendations that are specific to the Japanese government.

The research found that the challenges of FFPs were (1) a lack of coherence, such as by prioritizing peace while increasing military expenditures, exporting arms, and supporting nuclear power; (2) unclear impacts in terms of implementation; and (3) the fact that commitment to policy is easily influenced by changes in government and leadership. On the other hand, an FFP can be effective in raising awareness of and commitment to gender equality within governments, especially in terms of financial commitments, such as increased support for women's rights/feminist organizations. Specifically, adopting and successfully implementing an FFP requires (1) a long track record of efforts to realize gender equality in the country, (2) a high level of commitment and institutional support, and (3) participatory policy and action planning through consultation with relevant ministries and CSOs.

To this point, Japan lags in its efforts to address gender equality, with a very limited understanding of the feminist approach and a low level of government engagement with CSOs. The preconditions for adopting an FFP are, arguably, not yet in place for Japan. The following recommendations, therefore, comprise a first step in a phase-by-phase approach to incorporate some FFP elements into existing development cooperation policies to improve and progress.

¹ A perspective that analyzes how identities and social dimensions such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, disability, etc., intersect to create discrimination and oppression. Often used as an inclusive perspective that pays attention to compounded discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender and other social dimensions.

Development Cooperation Charter

1. Make gender equality a priority.

Development Strategy for the Advancement of Women (hereafter referred to as the Development Strategy)

2. Incorporate human-rights-based and intersectionality approaches, which are key elements of FFPs.
3. Set targets to increase the proportion of bilateral allocable ODA that is contributed toward gender equality, especially to programs with gender equality as the principal objective and programs channeled through CSOs.
4. Narrow down priority areas and add strengthening the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.
5. Promote institutional gender equality within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
6. Establish an accountability framework by developing an action plan.
7. Change the name of the policy to "Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment."



2. Introduction

2-1. Research Background and Objectives

Since Sweden adopted an FFP in 2014, 12 countries have adopted or declared FFPs, and interest around the topic of FFP has grown. Among the G7 countries, Canada, France, and Germany have adopted FFPs, and in the United Kingdom, three political parties have pledged to pursue such policies. In the United States, a resolution expressing support for an FFP has been submitted in the House of Representatives.² Moreover, the G7 German Leaders' Communiqué for 2022 includes a sentence on “feminist development, foreign and trade policies” in the area of sustainable development and commits that efforts will be made to increase the proportion of bilateral allocable ODA that is contributed toward gender equality.³ More specifically related to Japan, at the G7 Hiroshima Summit 2023, FFP is one of the themes to be addressed by the G7's official engagement group, Women7 (W7).

Plan International is an international NGO that works in more than 75 countries with a particular focus on girls' and young women's rights and gender equality. The organization also engages in advocacy work to promote FFPs, and its Japan office has joined W7 Japan's working group on FFPs and is preparing recommendations for the G7 leaders. As of March 2023, Japan is in the process of revising its Development Cooperation Charter (2015), and discussions are underway to revise the Development Strategy for Women's Advancement (2016), which is a sectoral strategy of the Development Cooperation Charter, as well as to develop the third National Action Plan (NAP) of the WPS agenda.

Leveraging these opportunities, Plan International has conducted research to identify the elements and principles required for an FFP, the commonalities and differences of existing FFPs, and the challenges and results of FFPs to make policy recommendations that are specific to the Japanese government.

2-2. Methodology

2-2-1. Questions and Methods

The research questions are as follows:

1. What is an FFP?
2. What are the challenges and results of FFPs?
3. What are the processes and preconditions necessary to adopt an FFP?
4. Given the context of Japan, what recommendations can we make to the Japanese

² UN WOMEN. (n.d). *Feminist Foreign Policies: An Introduction*. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Brief-Feminist-foreign-policies-en_0.pdf

³ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. (2022). *G7 Leaders' Communiqué*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100376624.pdf>

government?

A literature review and key informant interviews were conducted between January and March 2023. The literature covered government-issued policy documents and evaluation reports, as well as reports and articles by CSOs and researchers. Key informant interviews were conducted in a semi-structured interview format with a total of 13 respondents from Japan and abroad. The interviewees included CSOs and experts/researchers in related fields who are FFP advocates or promote gender equality and one government official. Details of the key informants are as follows:

9 CSOs

- Center for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP)
- Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative
- International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)
- Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP)
- JAWW (Japan Women's Watch)
- Plan International Canada
- Plan International France
- Plan International Germany
- Plan International Sweden

3 Experts/Researchers

1 Government Official

- The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ)

Only one German government official was interviewed because the German government announced feminist foreign and development policies, but the information available was limited until its guidelines and a strategy were published in March 2023. Furthermore, as the recommendations from the research were focused on the field of development cooperation, only the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) was targeted for interviews, while the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BMZ respectively developed their own feminist foreign and development policies.

2-2-2. Scope and Constraints

The term “foreign” in this report indicates external actions including but not limited to diplomacy, peace and security, trade, development cooperation, etc. The term “development”

may or may not include emergency and humanitarian assistance, depending on the context, but for the purposes of this report, the definition of development includes emergency and humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. As Plan International is an organization that globally implements development projects, this study focuses on the development sector while providing an overview of FFPs in general. In addition, as the main objective of this research is to make policy recommendations to the Japanese government for the G7 Hiroshima Summit, the analysis focuses on Sweden and G7 countries Canada, France, and Germany.



3. Findings

3-1. Overview of Feminist Foreign Policy

3-1-1. Background and Current Situation

Although Sweden's FFP, the first in the world, was abandoned with the change in government in 2022, Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, Chile, Libya, Liberia, Colombia, Scotland, and the Netherlands have followed suit since 2017, either by adopting or announcing FFPs. Besides these countries, other governments have exhibited a growing interest in adopting FFPs as civil society pushes for them. For example, the UN manages the Feminist Foreign Policy Plus Group, a group of 16 countries that have announced or are interested in FFPs. Furthermore, at the Generation Equality Forum launched by UN Women and the Mexican and French governments, The Global Partner Network for Feminist Foreign Policy, consisting of governments and civil society, was established.

In the United States, the Coalition for a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States, a group of CSOs that advocates for an FFP, works with US foreign policy experts and feminist activists worldwide. The Coalition makes several recommendations—for example, assessing the Biden–Harris administration's foreign policy—according to its own criteria.⁴ The Coalition was run by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), but it is now managed by Feminist Foreign Policy Collaborative, and there are several coalitions and women's networks on FFP outside of the United States, such as in Australia and Germany.

Why is there such a growing international interest in FFPs? Considering the international arena, it has been suggested that this interest is due to the spread of the awareness of gender equality, starting from development cooperation policies and then moving into the areas of human rights, conflict, security, and now foreign policy in general.⁵ Moreover, the reasons behind the growing calls for FFPs include, first, concerns about the backlash against gender equality and feminism as well as the loss of progress toward achieving gender equality. A second reason is the disproportionate impact on women, girls, and marginalized groups of increasingly complex global issues such as COVID-19, humanitarian crises, and climate change. The complex intertwining of these issues on the global level calls for a more inclusive and transformative approach than conventional gender mainstreaming policies.

⁴ The latest report is: Coalition for a Feminist Foreign Policy. (2023). *Toward a Feminist Foreign Policy in the United States: A Midterm Review of the Biden-Harris Administration*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2023-Biden-Harris-Scorecard.pdf>

⁵ Thomson, J. (2022). Gender norms, global hierarchies and the evolution of feminist foreign policy. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(2), 173–190. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16354220233761>

3-1-2. Principles and Priorities

To understand the difference between gender mainstreaming across foreign policy and an FFP, the feminist approach must be defined. There are different types of feminism with different approaches. For example, the BMZ of Germany provided the following explanation in its feminist development strategy published in March 2023.

An Attempt Not to Define Feminism (Tentative Translation)

The BMZ recognizes that there is no one feminism. Feminist movements have been diverse and dynamic and have pursue(ed) different approaches and goals. One thing is clear: feminism is by no means an 'invention' of the West or of a White, Eurocentric perspective. All over the world, feminist theories and movements have emerged over the past 200 years, taking many forms, depending on the time and the social context. The diverse feminist movements have defined feminism differently. In one context, in addition to gender, ethnicity is more prominent than gender (e.g., Black feminism), while in other contexts, religion or class (for example, socialist feminism) is more prominent. One form of feminism places a priority on sexual and reproductive health and rights, while another feminism focuses more on equal economic or political participation of women. Common to all feminisms, however, is their resistance to discrimination and oppression and their commitment to gender-equal power relations.

Although there is no agreed definition of an FFP, generally, common principles and priorities include:

- A human-rights-based approach
- Intersectionality
- Structural change, a transformative approach
- Prioritizing gender equality, peace and security, environmental protection, and meaningful participation of women
- Prioritizing gender equality for foreign and development cooperation policy
- Coherence with all foreign and domestic policies
- A basis of international human rights conventions and commitments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS
- Systemic practices of gender mainstreaming
- Working with and strengthening support for women's rights/feminist organizations

Other commonalities include consulting with CSOs, establishing an accountability framework, and promoting gender equality in ministries implementing policies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Notably, through consultation with feminist activists and CSOs around the world, ICRW has found that the most important element of an FFP is “intersectionality.”⁶ Intersectionality is a concept first proposed by lawyer and activist Kimberly Crenshaw more than 30 years ago, described as a perspective that analyzes how race, class, gender, and other social identities intersect and overlap. It is now often used to highlight compounded discrimination and exclusion based on social identities such as gender, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, etc.

Intersectionality, in the context of FFPs, is also linked to decolonization and antiracism in relation to North–South issues and the accompanying localization movements. German feminist foreign and development policies are the most explicit in this regard, while the policies of Sweden and Canada, which were developed earlier, have been criticized for a lack of intersectional perspectives. However, there have been improvements over the years: Sweden, for instance, stated in a handbook published in 2018 that intersectionality is a central part of its FFP. Canada also discussed race, LGBTQ+, North–South, and local ownership issues and has a special program to support the LGBTQ+ community.⁷

3-1-3. Scope

FFPs cover a wide range of areas, including diplomacy, peace and security, trade and development, etc., and these should be addressed cohesively and linked to domestic issues and institutional commitments. However, some countries such as Canada and France have feminist policies focusing on international assistance/development cooperation. In this regard, CSOs particularly emphasize a coherent FFP, with some calling for the inclusion of wider areas such as environment and migration policy. To this point, ICRW has proposed an FFP framework and a set of core components for an FFP⁸ and has recently launched the Feminist Foreign Policy Index,⁹ which assesses countries’ progress toward an FFP. ICRW notes that while most existing FFP frameworks are geared towards donor countries, a framework is needed that suits a more diverse range of countries. To this end, the Index covers and assesses a total of 48 OECD member and candidate countries in thematic areas such as (1) peace and militarization, (2) ODA, (3)

⁶ Thompson, L., Ahmed, S. and Khokhar, T. (2021). *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>

⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherland. (2021). *Study on Feminist Foreign Policy*. <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2021/08/31/study-on-feminist-foreign-policy>

⁸ Thompson, L. (2020). *Feminist Foreign Policy: A Framework*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/publications/feminist-foreign-policy-a-framework/>

⁹ Papagiotti, F. (2023). *Feminist Foreign Policy Index: A Qualitative Evaluation of Feminist Commitments*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FFP-Index-2023.pdf>

migration and employment, (4) labor protection, (5) economic justice, (6) institutional commitment to gender equality, and (7) climate justice.

3-2. Country Analysis

This section provides a comparative analysis of existing FFP frameworks and a country-by-country analysis of their contexts and policy contents, focusing on Sweden and the G7 countries that have already adopted FFPs: Canada, France, and Germany. The country comparison table in the next section is limited to FFPs for which there are available policy documents.



3-2-1. Country Comparison of Feminist Foreign Policies

Table 1. FFP Country Comparison

Country (Year)	Objectives and Framework	Scope	Principles	Priority Areas
Sweden (2014, *Ended in 2022)	Promotion of gender equality and girls' and women's rights.	Diplomacy, peace and security, development cooperation, trade, and internal organizational initiatives.	Strengthening 3Rs (Rights, Representation, and Resources). Human rights, perspectives on intersectionality, and multilateralism (UN-centered, implementing international treaties)	6 priority areas: (1) women's human rights; (2) gender-based violence; (3) WPS; (4) women's political participation; (5) women's economic empowerment; and (6) sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
Canada (2017)	Reduction of poverty and creation of a more peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous world. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls are the most effective approaches to achieving this goal.	Development cooperation and internal organizational initiatives.	Emphasis on social norms, transforming power relations, human rights, intersectionality perspectives, evidence-based approach, sustainable development goals (SDGs) (aligning policy priorities with SDGs)	6 action areas: (1) gender equality and empowerment of girls and women; (2) human dignity (health, education, and protection); (3) economic empowerment; (4) environment and climate change; (5) inclusive governance; and (6) WPS.
France (2019) *Policy document is 2018)	International development cooperation addressing economic, diplomatic, cultural, and educational issues. A means to further gender mainstreaming external actions.	Development cooperation, diplomacy, and internal organizational initiatives.	3 principles: inclusive approach, human-rights-based approach, and gender-based approach (gender mainstreaming).	(1) Gender mainstreaming within organization; (2) gender mainstreaming in diplomacy; (3) gender mainstreaming in ODA; (4) transparency and accountability in the Foreign Ministry; and (5) working with CSOs and private- and research-sector stakeholders.

Country (Year)	Objectives and Framework	Scope	Principles	Priority Areas
Luxembourg (2019)	Recognize women's rights as human rights and systematically protect women's and girls' rights.	3Ds (diplomacy, development, defense).	Protecting women's political and economic rights and their right to self-determination over their sexuality. Promoting women's participation with regard to the 3Ds and the National Action Plan on WPS.	Protect women's political and economic rights and right to self-determination on sexuality. Items related to WPS, including women's participation in peace and security and prevention of/protection from sexual- and gender-based violence. *The new development policy has gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability as cross-cutting priorities.
Mexico (2020)	Incorporating feminist principles of gender equality into foreign policy, such as equality, freedom of choice, elimination of structural inequalities, and eradication of discrimination.	Diplomacy and internal organizational initiatives.	5 principles: (1) including a gender perspective and feminist agenda in foreign policy; (2) achieving equality in foreign ministries; (3) addressing gender-based violence within the Foreign Ministries; (4) making feminist foreign policy visible; and (5) incorporating an intersectional perspective into all foreign policy.	*The priorities are incorporated into an action plan in accordance with the principles.
Spain (2021)	Place gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the heart of foreign policy.	Diplomacy, peace and security, development cooperation, trade, and internal organizational initiatives.	5 principles: (1) transformative approach; (2) leadership; (3) ownership; (4) fostering inclusive participation and networks; (5) intersectionality and diversity.	5 priority areas: (1) WPS; (2) violence against women; (3) women's and girls' rights; (4) women's participation in decision-making processes; (5) economic justice and women's empowerment.

Country (Year)	Objectives and Framework	Scope	Principles	Priority Areas
Germany: Foreign policy (2023)	Gender equality and realizing the rights of all people, aiming for diversity, reflecting on power relations, and focusing on transformative and intersectional perspectives	Diplomacy, security, humanitarian aid, climate change, trade and foreign investment, cultural and social diplomacy, and internal organizational initiatives.	Strengthening 3Rs (Rights, Representation, and Resources)	10 guidelines: (1) peace and security; (2) humanitarian assistance and crisis management; (3) human rights; (4) environmental and energy diplomacy; (5) foreign trade and investment; (6) cultural and social diplomacy; (7) gender equality within the Foreign Ministry; (8) working environment and regulations within the Foreign Ministry; (9) diversity; (10) dialogue with stakeholder (civil society and international partners); *(7) to (10) are initiatives within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
Germany: Development policy (2023)	An approach focusing on an intersectional perspective that aims to tackle the social structure of inequality and achieve equality of social, political, and economic participation for all.	Development cooperation and internal organizational initiatives.	Strengthening 3Rs (Rights, Representation, and Resources). Emphasis on decolonization, antiracism, and intersectionality.	4 action areas: (1) 3Rs in development cooperation policy; (2) adopting a feminist approach and promoting gender equality; (3) international coordination; and (4) internal actions.

3-2-2. Country-Specific Details

This section provides a country-by-country overview of the situations and FFPs in Sweden (the first country to adopt an FFP) and the G7 countries: Canada, France, and Germany.

3-2-2-1. Sweden

Developments in Feminist Foreign Policy

In Sweden, following a change in government in 2014, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven launched a ‘feminist government’ that made gender equality a priority for the government,¹⁰ and Foreign Minister Margot Wallström launched the world's first FFP in the same year. The announcement of this policy, which brought feminism to the forefront, was met with mixed reactions. However, the FFP was maintained until the change in government in 2022, with other countries following suit.

During the policy development process, extensive consultation was carried out with relevant officials, including those from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and embassies. This participatory process is seen as a factor that contributed to the policy's success.¹¹ The Swedish Government also published a handbook in 2018 to share the various initiatives and methods that have been undertaken under the FFP and the experiences from the policy's implementation.

An independent evaluation of the FFP was conducted prior to the change in government in 2022. However, as of March 2023, the report has not yet been published, and the results and challenges emerging from an independent third-party evaluation have not yet been reported. Regarding the impact of the abandonment of the FFP, key informants shared concerns that one possible implication could be a decrease in bilateral allocable ODA programs with gender equality as the main objective.

Feminist Foreign Policy

The Swedish FFP was characterized by having the most comprehensive and coherent policy document with gender equality as a key foreign policy objective. It combined existing policies in the areas of diplomacy, peace and security, development, and trade and was also linked to domestic policies and gender mainstreaming within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The policy was pursued on the basis of binding commitments to human rights and gender equality under international agreements, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action,

¹⁰ Government of Sweden. (2015). *Step it Up for Gender Equality*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Initiatives/StepItUp/Commitments-Speeches/Sweden-StepItUp-CommitmentText-201509-en.pdf>

¹¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands. (2021). *Study on Feminist Foreign Policy*. <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2021/08/31/study-on-feminist-foreign-policy>

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on WPS, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The policy's approach was to strengthen women's and girls' rights, representation, and resources and create structural transformation, referred to as the "3Rs." In terms of policy implementation and an accountability framework, an action plan for 2019–2022 (ended in 2022) and annual plans were in place, with priority issues such as human rights, violence, women's participation in conflict resolution and prevention, women's political participation, economic empowerment, and SRHR, and progress reports were provided accordingly.

Table 2. Scope of Swedish FFP

Areas	Priority and Action Areas
Diplomacy, peace, and security.	(1) Peace and security; (2) human rights, democracy, and rule of law; (3) disarmament and non-proliferation; and (4) export control with WPS being a central element. Prevention of gender-based violence, women's participation in disarmament and other areas, and support for CSOs and women's rights groups.
Development cooperation and humanitarian assistance	(1) International development cooperation; (2) humanitarian assistance; (3) environment and climate change; (4) gender equality. Increase the proportion of gender-focused projects in bilateral allocable ODA. Development of sectoral strategies for gender equality and women's rights in development cooperation, including approaches to address the nexus between humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding.
Trade	(1) Trade; (2) promotion; and (3) sustainable business and decent work. Participation of women in trade business, economic empowerment of women through support for women business owners.

The FFP handbook provides specific methods for implementing the policy. For example, through a process of annual reviews of gender mainstreaming in regular operations, identifying the availability of tools to support gender budgeting, and conducting a gender analysis of proposals. In addition, the methods for promoting gender equality within the workplace are well-developed, including increasing the proportion of women in management positions and ambassadors in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; providing seminars for managers in particular to learn about gender equality, WSP, and women's rights; and the Gender Coach Programme, in which personal coaches support managers to improve gender mainstreaming in their work.



3-2-2-2. Canada

Development of the Feminist International Assistance Policy

In Canada, the new government took office in 2015. Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who positions himself as a feminist, this government launched the Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017. This Canadian policy is groundbreaking, as it situates a feminist approach at the core of policy regarding development cooperation. Its uniqueness lies in the scale of the consultation process and the engagement of civil society leading up to its development. Following a mandate from Prime Minister Trudeau to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in 2016, Global Affairs Canada launched a draft policy that centers on a feminist approach. For the consultation process, the government established a forum for exchanging views, including not only domestic civil society but also women's organizations from the Global South, which reached more than 15,000 people in 65 countries. The policy was widely welcomed by CSOs from the outset, as recommendations submitted by CSOs were adopted during this process.¹²

In 2018, the year after the policy was adopted, the G7 Summit was held in Canada, with gender equality and women's empowerment as priority themes. At the same time, the W7 organized by CSOs was held in Canada for the first time, becoming the official G7 engagement group and demonstrating Canada's leadership in this field.

¹² Akio Takayanagi (2018). Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy by Justin Trudeau's Liberal Government. *The journal of global and inter-cultural studies*. 2018. 20. 85–107. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/228880305.pdf>

Feminist International Assistance Policy

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, which aims to reduce poverty and achieve a peaceful, more inclusive, and more prosperous world, considers gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the most effective approaches to achieve this goal. These approaches tackle discrimination not only based on gender but all social identities and are themselves based on human rights. Another distinctive point is that the Policy's six priority areas align with the SDGs, which include gender equality and cross-cutting issues as the main objectives, and with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Regarding the specific targets delineated in the Policy, at least 95% of bilateral allocable ODA was contributed to gender equality in 2021–22 and the support of local women's organizations. In addition, the accountability framework requires reporting under the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act. The Policy also mentions the need for an approach to integrate gender mainstreaming in areas other than development, such as diplomacy, trade, and peace and security; however, as a policy document, it does not address all areas as comprehensively as Sweden's FFP.

3-2-2-3. France

Developments in Feminist Foreign Policy

In 2017, President Emmanuel Macron took office and made gender equality a top priority for France. The following year, the French Government developed a third International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018–2022) in the field of development, and in 2019, it declared an FFP. Although a clear definition of feminist diplomacy has not been established, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs has stated that gender equality is a top national priority and that the country will fulfill its commitment through an FFP. Furthermore, according to the Ministry, the focus of the French FFP is stated in the International Strategy on Gender Equality.¹³ In the case of France, as the policy document and the year of the declaration on FFP are different, the main developments are listed in chronological order in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Main Developments in FFPs in France

Year	Main Movements
2017	Macron took office and declared gender equality a top priority for France.
2018	Third International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018–2022)
2019	G7 summit; gender equality was one of the priority areas; Declaration on Gender

¹³ The Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France. Feminist Diplomacy. <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/feminist-diplomacy/#:~:text=They%20call%20on%20States%20to,Women%2C%20Peace%20and%20Security%20Agenda> (Accessed on 2.10.2023)

	Equality was issued. French government announced feminist diplomacy.
	Establishment of The Support Fund for Feminist Organizations in ODA partner countries.
2021	Enactment of a development sector law, The Programming Act on inclusive development and combating global inequalities. Gender equality became one of the priority areas.
	Generations Equality Forum was held in France.

Third International Strategy on Gender Equality (2018–2022)

The French Government developed its Strategy on Development and Gender in 2007, which was subsequently revised into the second and third strategies. The opening of the third International Strategy on Gender Equality mentions that gender equality is a top priority of the Presidential Directive and will be the main objective and cross-cutting theme. The Strategy's principles and objectives are as follows:

Principles

- 1. Comprehensive approach:** Gender mainstreaming in all French external actions; aligning the SDGs with France's external actions; and mainstreaming gender in all French diplomacy (not only development cooperation but also actions in political, economic, soft diplomacy, cultural, and educational fields). The inclusive approach also includes a commitment to gender equality within the Ministry.
- 2. Human-rights-based approach:** Based on respect for women's rights, gender equality, and the elimination of gender discrimination; integrating human-rights norms, rules, and international principles into development and humanitarian assistance policies and projects addressing violence against women.
- 3. Gender-based approach:** The inclusion of a gender perspective in the goals of policy, scope of activities, and methods of action for all external actions in a cross-cutting and concrete manner.

Objectives and Indicators (Examples and Extracts)

Main objective: Systematically mainstream gender equality and gender issues into France's external actions.

Specific objective:

- 1) Promote a stronger institutional culture of gender equality and consideration of gender issues within the Ministry and its agencies.

Examples of indicators: Annual follow-up meetings; improved ratio of women in senior management and women ambassadors, number of HR tools to promote equality in the workplace including pay, percentage of ministry staff trained on gender.

2) Strengthen France's political advocacy efforts on gender equality.

Examples of indicators: Number of political advocacy activities undertaken in conjunction with the directorates; a framework for bilateral consultations and dialogues on gender set by diplomatic posts in the host countries.

3) Increase and improve the quality of gender equality programs in ODA.

Examples of indicators: By 2022, 50% of ODA programs contribute to gender equality; the Development Agency aims to grant 700 million EUR annually to programs with gender equality as the main objective and applies the OECD–Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker to 100% of projects.

4) Strengthen and improve the visibility, transparency, and accountability of the Ministry and relevant agencies regarding their actions to achieve gender equality.

Examples of indicators: Semi-annual evaluation and reporting by the government's High Council for Gender Equality; annual self-evaluation conducted by the European Foreign and Development Agency.

5) Strengthen partnerships between civil society actors, the private sector, and research stakeholders to address gender inequalities.

Examples of indicators: Events are organized, information on strategy implementation is shared, and working groups are funded in addition to plenary meetings of a platform that links different stakeholders in the field of gender and development.

The strategy is accompanied by an action plan as an accountability framework, which details expected outcomes, indicators, stakeholders, and timelines for each goal. The action plan, compared to other countries' action plans, has more detailed and measurable indicators. The strategy is being prepared for revision in 2023, and an evaluation report by the Higher Council for Equality is due.

3-2-2-3. Germany

Developments in Feminist Foreign and Development Policies

In Germany, civil society advocated for the adoption of an FFP before the 2021 general elections and after the new Scholz Government took office, it declared feminist foreign and development policies. Subsequently, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BMZ initiated a consultation process with stakeholders in the development of an FFP and Feminist Development Policy (FDP), respectively. In March 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs formally published the

guidelines for the FFP while the BMZ formally published the FDP's strategy.

According to the BMZ official interviewed, in developing the strategy for the FDP, consultation was first carried out with German CSOs before a framework and draft of the strategy were prepared. These actions were taken because of the recognition that there is criticism around how some governments conduct consultations, in which CSOs comment on drafts prepared by the government. The BMZ also wanted to base the strategy on CSOs' input and expertise. The strategy was then developed on the basis of a consultative process with CSOs in the Global South as well as the Global North, relevant ministries and agencies, and experts. The main action areas defined in the new FDP that was based on these inputs were (1) implementing feminist principles and increasing measures targeted at gender equality; (2) strengthening the 3Rs: rights, representation, and resources of women and girls; (3) strengthening international alliances and civil society cooperation; and (4) organizational reform in line with feminist principles. The BMZ has compiled the recommendations from the CSOs in the consultation into a report,¹⁴ which is available on its website.

Germany held the presidency of the G7 summit in 2022, where feminist foreign and development policies became one of the G7 themes for the first time. Significantly, the achievement was the inclusion of a sentence on “feminist development, foreign and trade policy” in the G7 Leaders’ Communiqué.

Feminist Foreign and Development Policy

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' FFP covers diplomacy, peace and security, humanitarian assistance, climate change, trade and foreign investment, and cultural and social diplomacy, while the BMZ's FDP is for development cooperation. Both policies focus on strengthening the Swedish approach and the “3Rs”: women's and girls' rights, representation, and resources. In addition, Germany's FFP emphasizes diversity and inclusion of LGBTQI+ people and other marginalized groups more than other FFPs. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the BMZ's internal institutional actions also include the promotion of diversity based on social identities other than gender, which has not been seen in other FFPs to date. There is also a greater emphasis on decolonization, anti-racism, and intersectionality in development policy.

Feminist Foreign Policy.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs determines the principles, content, and methods to be addressed in its FFP guidelines. Table 4 below presents the main principles and action areas.

¹⁴ The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany. (n.d.) *Synthesis of Contributions by Civil Society. Consultation Process on the Feminist Development Policy of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)* <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/129538/synthesis-of-contributions-consultation-german-feminist-development-policy.pdf>

Table 4: Area-Specific Guidelines

Areas	Examples of Principles and Approaches
Peace and security	(1) Participation of women and vulnerable groups in peace processes; (2) gender-based violence prevention and survivor support in armed conflict; (3) strengthening gender-sensitive approaches in arms control and arms export controls, enhancing humanitarian arms control, and advocating for a safe world without nuclear weapons.
Humanitarian assistance and crisis management	Consideration of the particular needs of women and marginalized populations; participation and gender-specific risk considerations of women and marginalized groups; gender transformative approaches in international crisis management.
Human rights	(1) Promotion of SRHR; (2) eradication of female genital mutilation (FGM); and (3) prevention of discrimination and violence against LGBTQI+ people.
Climate diplomacy and external energy	Recognizing and responding to inequalities and vulnerabilities exacerbated by the climate crisis; responding to the climate crisis for women and diverse vulnerable groups and ensuring their participation as key stakeholders in climate and energy diplomacy.
Trade and foreign investment	Promoting the participation of women and marginalized groups; working towards fair and safe international standards in the digital sector.
Cultural and social diplomacy	Promoting equitable participation of women and marginalized groups and raising their visibility in arts and culture, research, science, education, and the media; protection of vulnerable groups.
Internal actions	Promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; equal and non-discriminatory work environment, ongoing dialogue with civil society and international partners.

Feminist Development Strategy

There are four areas of action in the FDP: (1) the 3Rs in development cooperation policy; (2) adopting a feminist approach and promoting gender equality; (3) international coordination; and (4) institutional commitment. According to the interview with the BMZ official, the differences between previous gender policy for development cooperation and the FDP are that the FDP seeks to change the structures that lead to inequalities and has a higher commitment to ODA's programs for gender equality. Rather than placing the burden of overcoming inequality on women, girls, and other marginalized groups, the feminist approach seeks to transform the

structures that cause inequality (e.g., colonial racism, structures deeply rooted in patriarchy) and therefore builds on the responsibility of society as a whole, including male change agents.

Moreover, a feminist approach means prioritizing not only gender equality but also marginalized people and places, which are at the heart of development cooperation. One quantitative difference is that the FDP sets a target of 93% of bilateral allocable ODA contributing to gender equality by 2025 (i.e., 85% of programs integrate gender activities and 8% of programs set gender equality as the main objective). As for an accountability framework, a “Gender Action Plan” will be developed for the FDP’s strategy with specific targets and indicators to measure its impact.



3-3. Results, Challenges, and Preconditions/Success Factors

FFPs constitute a relatively new policy framework, which means that FFP frameworks and years of implementation vary from country to country, and there is a lack of sufficient evidence on their impact. The limitation is that it is therefore difficult to measure whether policy efficiency has been systematically improved in the foreign policy field and what the overall impact has been. Under these conditions, this section analyzes the results and challenges of FFPs, focusing on Sweden and Canada, which have had sufficient years of implementation.

3-3-1. Results

Ministry Commitments

Firstly, FFPs have contributed to the increasing awareness of and commitment to gender equality within ministries and agencies, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for implementing these policies.¹⁵ For instance, the Swedish government reported that it surveyed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Embassy staff in 2018, and many responded that the FFP approach significantly impacted their own work and had driven change in the organizational culture of the Ministry.¹⁶ Significantly, while Sweden has been a country with a strong commitment to achieving gender equality, the change from a gender equality policy to the FFP has further reinforced the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁷

Additionally, it has been reported that internal reforms have increased the ratio of women in management positions and women ambassadors. In Sweden, the proportion of women ambassadors reached 50% in 2022, compared to 40% in 2016, making it one of the highest in the world alongside Canada.¹⁸ This improvement in the leadership gender ratio may have occurred without the FFP. However, as noted in the Swedish policy analysis, the clear directions and institutionalization of methods within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote gender equality in the FFP handbook may have contributed to increased internal awareness and commitment.

Financial Commitments

Financial commitments include funding for women's rights/feminist organizations and increasing the proportion of bilateral allocable ODA contributed to gender equality. An assessment conducted by the ICRW on FFPs and development financing for gender equality¹⁹

¹⁵ Kouvo, S. (2020). A Challenging Agenda for Troubled Times: The Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy. *Retfærd* 4: 65–88.

https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Kouvo_-_Swedish_FFP.pdf

¹⁶ Council on Foreign Relations. *Advancing Gender Equality in Foreign Policy*. 2020-4-7 <https://www.cfr.org/report/advancing-gender-equality-foreign-policy> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

¹⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden. (2019). *Handbook Sweden's feminist foreign policy*. <https://fojo.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/handbook-swedens-feminist-foreign-policy.pdf>

¹⁸ Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy. (2022). *Women in Diplomacy Index 2022*. <https://www.agda.ac.ae/docs/default-source/Publications/women-in-diplomacy-en-mar-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

¹⁹ Papagiotti, F., Thompson, L., and Ahmed, S. (2022). *Feminist Foreign Policy and Development Finance for Gender Equality: An Assessment of Commitments*. International Center for Research on Women <https://www.icrw.org/wp->

found that FFPs are often accompanied by increased commitment and announcements of new funds, which suggests that increased commitment to funding for gender equality is an important element of FFP. The CSOs interviewed also saw increased financial commitment as a positive result of FFPs.

Establishment of Special Programs and Funds

Sweden increased its support for women's rights organizations by 35% between 2015 and 2016 and in 2017 co-founded and committed SEK 200 million to the "She Decides" movement on SRHR.²⁰ As part of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, the Canadian government announced in 2017 that it would commit CAD 1.82 billion to the Women's Voice and Leadership Program, which supports women's rights organizations in the Global South, and CAD 300 million to The Equality Fund for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in 2018. The Women's Voice and Leadership Program has been evaluated by CSOs and Global Affairs Canada. Although some challenges have been cited, particularly regarding the initial procedures and transparency of Global Affairs Canada, the program has been highly praised as a good example of achieving increased support for women's rights organizations in the Global South, where funding is hard to come by.²¹

In addition, while Canada's FFP has been criticized for its singular focus on women and girls and a lack of LGBTQ+ inclusion and intersectional perspectives, some improvements have been made after the announcement in 2019 of CAD 30 million²² over 5 years for programs supporting LGBTQ+ people.²³ France, which declared an FFP in 2019, also announced in the same year that it would provide EUR 120 million over 3 years from 2020 to 2022 to feminist organizations in ODA partner countries through a fund to support feminist organizations that would be jointly managed by the European Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency.²⁴

Proportion of Gender-Focused Projects in Bilateral Allocable ODA

The proportion of projects contributing to gender equality in the bilateral allocable ODA, measured using the OECD–DAC's Gender Equality Policy Markers, is one of the indicators for

[content/uploads/2022/09/Feminist-Foreign-Policy-and-Development-Finance-for-Gender-Equality_web-version_rev.pdf](#)

²⁰ Thompson, L., Ahmed, S., and Khokhar, T. (2021). *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy: A 2021 Update*. International Center for Research on Women. <https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Defining-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-2021-Update.pdf>

²¹ Akio Takayanagi (2023). The Implementation of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). *The journal of global and inter-cultural studies*. 25 111–130, 2023-03

²² Global Affairs Canada. *News release Canada announces new funds in support of LGBTQ2 rights*.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/02/canada-announces-new-funds-in-support-of-lgbtq2-rights.html> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

²³ Akio Takayanagi. (2023). The Implementation of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP). *The journal of global and inter-cultural studies*. 25 111–130, 2023-03

²⁴ French Development Agency. *Support Fund for Feminist Organizations*. <https://www.afd.fr/en/support-fund-feminist-organizations> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

FFPs. According to the DAC definition,²⁵ to be classified as a gender-focused project, a project must promote gender equality and women's empowerment, there must be an intention to reduce gender-based discrimination and inequality, and the project documentation must explicitly state that it promotes gender equality through the following activities:

- 1) Reducing inequalities in social, economic, or political power between women/girls and men/boys and ensuring that women benefit equally from their activities as men, or tackling any existing discrimination.
- 2) Developing and strengthening gender equality or nondiscrimination policies, laws, and systems.

Table 5. Gender Equality Policy Marker

DAC Classification	Definition
0: Not targeted	Not applicable.
1: Significant (gender activities are integrated into programs)	Activities contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment are integrated.
2: Principal (gender equality is a main objective of programs)	Gender equality and women's empowerment are the main objectives.

However, a look at the amount and percentage of OECD–DAC gender-focused programs (significant and principal objectives in total) in the past decade shows an overall increasing trend, regardless of the FFPs.²⁶ It is difficult to establish a causal link with FFPs because of external factors, such as the outbreak of COVID-19 changing priorities for assistance. Furthermore, Sweden and Canada had high ratios of gender-focused programs even before the adoption of FFP and Feminist International Assistance Policy.

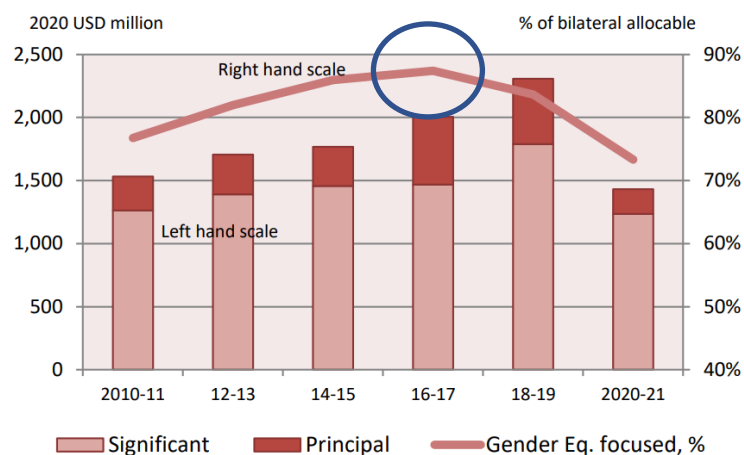
Nevertheless, as shown in Graphs 1 to 3 below, the data show a marked increase in the ratio in the year of the policy's announcement or the following year. In particular, Canada has set a target of 95% gender-focused programs (80% "significant" and 15% "principal" programs). The proportion of programs for which gender equality is a "principal" objective, which was 2.1% in 2015, exceeded the target in 2018, reaching 18.3%. The latest data (2020–21 average) show

²⁵ OECD. (2018). Converged Statistical Reporting Directives For the Creditor Reporting System (CRS) and The Annual DAC Questionnaire. [https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/STAT\(2018\)9/ADD2/FINAL/en/pdf](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)9/ADD2/FINAL/en/pdf)

²⁶ OECD. *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

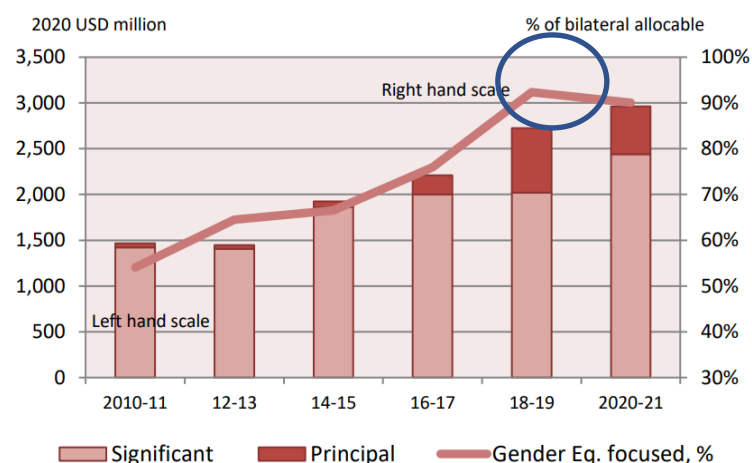
that the proportion of gender-focused programs is 90%, the highest level among the OECD–DAC members.²⁷

Graph 1. Sweden’s amounts and percentages of gender-focused bilateral ODA: 210-21 (FFP adopted in 2014)



Source: OECD. (2023). Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Donor Chart.²⁸

Graph 2. Canada amounts and percentages of gender-focused bilateral ODA: 210-21 (Feminist International Assistance Policy adopted in 2017)

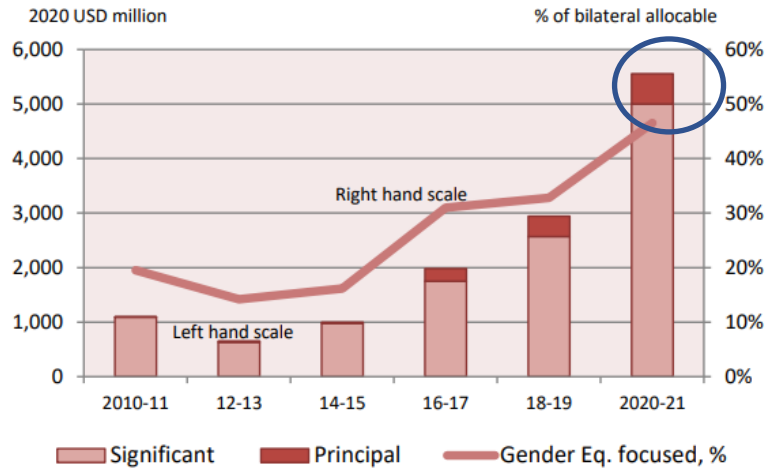


Source: OECD. (2023). Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Donor Chart.

²⁷ OECD. OECD.Stat. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

²⁸ OECD. (2023). Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Donor Chart. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts.pdf>

Graph 3. France's amounts and percentages of gender-focused bilateral ODA: 2010-21 (Third International Strategy on Gender Equality adopted in 2018)

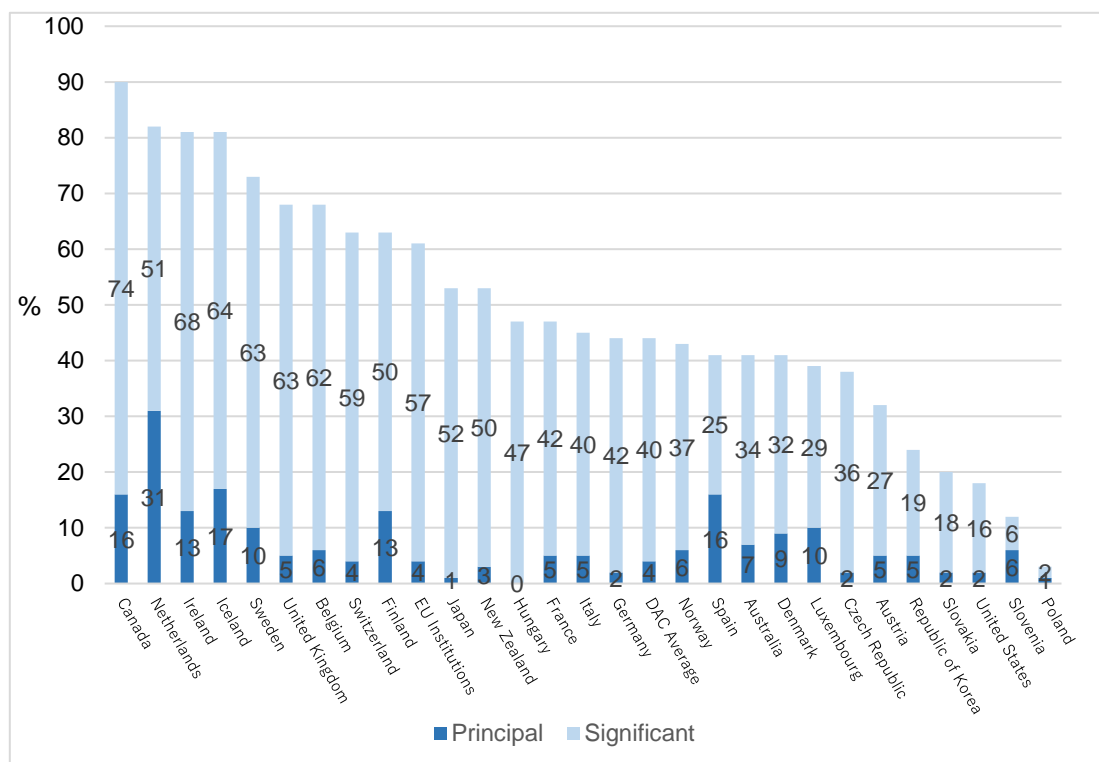


Source: OECD. (2023). Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Donor Chart.

Across OECD–DAC members, the latest data (2020–21 average) show that USD 57.4 billion (44%) in bilateral allocable ODA has been contributed toward gender equality. Of this, the proportion of “principal” programs is low at only 4%, as illustrated in Graph 4.²⁹ While there has been an upward trend in the percentage of “significant” programs, doubling from 17.2% in 2012 to 38.3% in 2021, the ratio of “Principal” programs has remained low and has shown little improvement over the past decade.

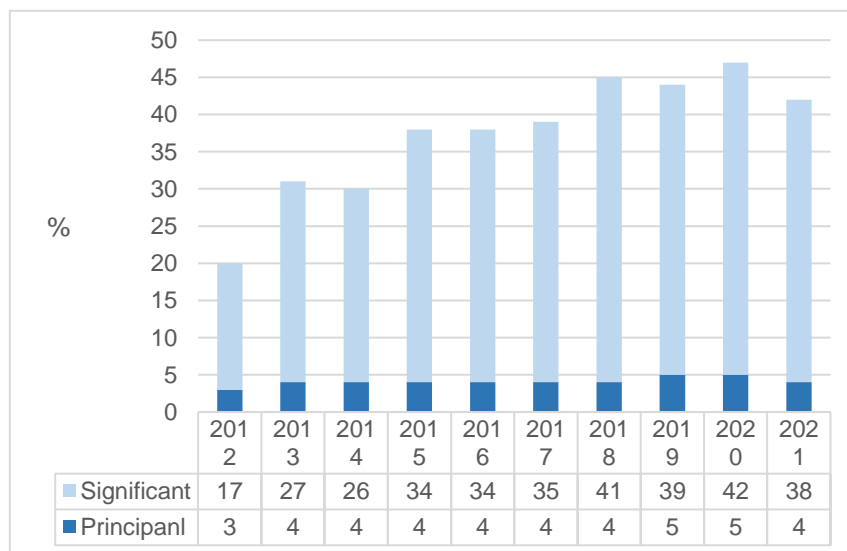
²⁹ OECD. *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

Graph 4. Percentage of gender-focused programs in bilateral allocable ODA for DAC members (2020–21 average)



Source: Prepared from OECD "Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment."³⁰

Graph 5. Average percentage of gender-focused programs in bilateral allocable ODA in DAC member states (2012–21 average)



Source: Prepared from OECD database.³¹

³⁰ OECD. *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

³¹ OECD. OECD.Stat. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER (Accessed on 3.4.2023)

Funding for women's rights organizations and movements in bilateral allocable ODA over the past 5 years has averaged USD 690 million in 2018–19,³² USD 707 million in 2019–2020,³³ and USD 574 million in 2020–21.³⁴ The W7 recommends that 100% of ODA programs contribute to gender equality, of which programs with gender equality as the main objective (“principal”) and programs that support women's rights organizations and movements should comprise 20% and 10%, respectively.³⁵



³² OECD. (2021). *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2021 snapshot*.

<https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Development-finance-for-gender-equality-2021.pdf>

³³ OECD. (2022). *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment: A 2022 snapshot*.

https://www.oecd.org/dac/Gender_ODA_2022.pdf

³⁴ OECD. *Development finance for gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm> (Accessed on 2.24.2023)

³⁵ W7 Germany. (2022). W7 Communique.

<https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/198142/bb21a08a3ea8e48c0eb35ad5528d59fb/20220525-w7-kommuniqu%C3%A9-data.pdf>

3-3-2. Challenges

The three main challenges to FFPs are identified as follows. The first is that there is a lack of coherence, which was pointed out by the CSOs interviewed. Specifically, CSOs have criticized having peace as a priority of FFPs while also increasing military expenditures, trading arms, and supporting the retention of nuclear power.³⁶ Serious violations of women's rights within a country are also an issue, as such violations contradict a feminist approach in their foreign policy. Overall, the issue is that FFPs must be practiced coherently, as a country's actions are all compounded and interlinked within the global community.

Second, FFPs' impacts in terms of policy implementation are not clear yet. It has been pointed out that Sweden's FFP, which is considered the most comprehensive, has not provided a thorough impact evaluation of the policy's implementation.³⁷ In this regard, Sweden's first independent third-party evaluation was conducted in 2022; however, as of March 2023, the report has not yet been published. FFPs' goals of systematic change and having intersectionality as a core principle are also often conceptual and unclear regarding how they are to be measured and evaluated in practice: for example, the OECD–DAC's gender equality policy marker, which looks at financial commitments to ODA, is based on a binary understanding of gender equality (i.e., between men and women) and has limitations, such as not including diverse gender identities and intersectional perspectives.

Third, as the Swedish case demonstrated, FFP commitments are susceptible to changes in government and leadership. The CSOs interviewed expressed concerns that the same situation could happen in other countries. In this regard, a feminist approach shows the need to be viewed as a universal value in the future.

3-3-3. Preconditions/Enabling Factors

The number of countries that have adopted or declared an FFP has reached 13, including countries in the Global South, with a diversity of national circumstances and backgrounds. Although not common to all countries, the preconditions and enabling factors of an FFP can be summarized as follows:

- Progressive in gender equality and has a proven track record of gender equality in the country.
- A high-level commitment to gender equality.
- Advocacy from CSOs in many countries, often accompanied by a change in government and the appointment of a woman foreign minister.

³⁶ Thomson, J. (2022). Gender norms, global hierarchies and the evolution of feminist foreign policy. *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, 5(2), 173–190. <https://doi.org/10.1332/251510821X16354220233761>

³⁷ Thompson, L., and Clement, R. (2019). *Defining Feminist Foreign Policy*. International Center for Research on Women. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ICRW_DefiningFeministForeignPolicy_Brief_Revised_v5_WebReady.pdf

- Respect for civil society spaces, especially women's rights/feminist organizations.
- Participatory policy and action-planning processes; consultation with officials from ministries and relevant agencies and CSOs, including from the Global South.
- Institutional support through guidelines and training.

3-4. Gender Policy in Japan's Development Cooperation Sector

This section provides an overview of Japan's gender policy in the field of foreign affairs, with a particular focus on development cooperation. Turning first to the state of gender equality in Japan, Japan ranks 116th out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index 2022,³⁸ with a large gender gap and serious challenges in relation to gender equality. In the field of foreign affairs, the proportion of women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the national civil service is 56.3%, while the decision-making level is dominated by men. Of those in the position of head of section or above, only 8.4% are women,³⁹ and only 2.5% of those in the position of ambassador are women.⁴⁰ In the aforementioned Feminist Diplomacy Index, Japan ranks 39th out of 48 countries, with the main reason for its low ranking being its lagging position in areas such as institutional commitment to gender equality and migration policy.

To address this gender gap, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan has identified strengthening cooperation with UN Women as a means of gender mainstreaming in international efforts. Specific initiatives include supporting the Women Entrepreneurship Fund Initiative in low- and middle-income countries, organizing the World Assembly for Women (WAW!), participating in international discussions, implementing the WPS agenda, supporting the Prevention of Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative and the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-related Sexual Violence, and supporting the Global Fund for Survivors of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.⁴¹ The central theme of this gender equality initiative is women's economic empowerment in accordance with the Kishida government's "new capitalism" concept, which was also been discussed at WAW! organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴²

As for a specific policy, the Development Charter, adopted in 2015, is undergoing revisions in 2023 following a review of its basic policy. During this revision, civil society in Japan voiced

³⁸World Economic Forum. (2022). *Global Gender Gap Report 2022*. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>

³⁹ Cabinet Office, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. (2021). *Status of Women in Each Ministry and Agency and Status of Enforcement of the Law for the Promotion of Women's Empowerment*. <https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/seisaku/kagayakujosei/dai11/siryou2-1.pdf>

⁴⁰ Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy. (2022). *Women in Diplomacy Index 2022*. <https://www.agda.ac.ae/docs/default-source/Publications/women-in-diplomacy-en-mar-2022.pdf?sfvrsn=4>

⁴¹ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Gender equality and women's empowerment*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofai/gaiko/women/index.html> (Accessed on 3.1.2023)

⁴² Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *WAW!2022 Concept Note, General Comments: Gender Mainstreaming Toward a New Capitalism*. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofai/fp/hr_ha/page22_003944.html (Accessed on 3.1.2023)

concerns about the use of development cooperation as a tool of diplomacy and the enforcement of non-military principles, leading to requests in October 2022 for the following additions:⁴³

- 1) Clarification that “development” denotes that “international cooperation activities’ primary purpose is the development of low- and middle-income countries.”
- 2) Adherence to the principle of avoiding military application and use of military force to reinforce international and domestic conflicts.
- 3) An explicit mechanism to reflect the views of the affected people, placing environmental and human rights approaches at the heart of development cooperation.
- 4) Improvement of CSOs’ (NGOs’) status and strengthening engagement with CSOs.
- 5) Explicit gender mainstreaming in development cooperation.
- 6) A declaration that aid is to be urgently suspended or reviewed for countries where serious human rights violations are occurring.

As noted in the above request, one problem with the current Development Charter is that it only uses the phrases "promotion of women's participation" and "equality between men and women" and makes no reference to "gender mainstreaming."

Table 6. Gender Policy Framework of Japanese Government's Development Cooperation

Year	Policy Framework
2005	Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative (2003 ODA Charter)
2015	National Action Plan on WPS agenda Action plan based on UN Security Council resolution on women's participation in the peace and security sector. It has been implemented since 2016, including the second action plan (2019–22) and a third action plan currently under development. The NPA consists of five pillars: participation, prevention, protection, humanitarian and reconstruction assistance, and monitoring and evaluation. The main content refers to Japan as a donor country but also addresses some national issues.
2016	Development Strategy for the Promotion of the Advancement of Women Strategy for the promotion of women's advancement in the field of development cooperation, based on the 2015 Development Charter and the adoption of the SDGs. It promotes the advancement of women on the basis of the principle of

⁴³ NGO Request for Revision of Development Charter. *Philosophy and Principles of Development Cooperation: Aiming to Achieve Human Security through Non-military Means and Strengthening Partnerships with Civil Society*. (October 19, 2022). <https://hrn.or.jp/news/22799/>

	human security. One of the approaches is to “further gender mainstreaming in programs and organizations.”
2016	Implementation guidelines and action plans for SDGs Gender equality is treated not only as target 5 of the SDGs but also as a cross-cutting issue: in response to one of the priorities of the 2019 Revised Implementation Guidelines (the "realization of gender equality and a society in which all people play an active role"), the 2021 Action Plan's specific initiatives include "gender mainstreaming and promotion of women's activities."

Evaluation of National Action Plan on the WPS Agenda

The third NAP on the WPS agenda (2023–28) is currently under development, with a call for public comments on the draft NAP in March 2023. The NAP evaluation is conducted every two years, the latest evaluation having been conducted in 2021 by the Evaluation Commissioners covering the period 2018–19. However, the third NAP is being developed without the report evaluating the second action plan having been released.

The 2018–19 evaluation report⁴⁴ provides an overview of the international cooperation sector in conflict-affected areas. The results include (1) an increase in the number and quality of initiatives and (2) increased efforts to protect and support women and girls in humanitarian crisis situations. The challenges include (1) the lack of initiatives to promote women's political participation; (2) the insufficiency of women's empowerment activities to transform social systems and norms; (3) the need for legal reform and capacity building by judiciary actors to transform gender norms and practices that underlie gender-based violence; and (4) the unclear correlation between the increase in WPS-related projects and overall ODA contributions in bilateral ODA funding.

Key informants have mentioned that the development process of the first WPS NAP back in 2013 was unprecedented, engaging civil society in consultations on many occasions, although there has been criticism regarding ensuring the equal participation of civil society and the equal expression of its views. On the other hand, issues were also raised, such as the fact that the NAP does not have legal enforcement powers, as it did not go through a Cabinet decision, and the lack of strong commitment by the relevant ministries and agencies in terms of implementation.

Moreover, in 2022, there was also an accusation of sexual violence by a woman member of

⁴⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2021). *Evaluation Report on the Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2019*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/files/100181961.pdf>

the Self-Defense Force,⁴⁵ and some voiced concerns about the Ministry of Defense's response, a lack of awareness of human rights, and the safety of women officers in charge of peace and security at the Self-Defense Force. Furthermore, an issue regarding the accountability framework was also raised: the lack of indicators to measure the overall impact and target values for these indicators. For example, for the goal of "increasing women's participation in the peace process," the indicator "percentage of women's participation in peace negotiations and peace processes" is mentioned, but there is no target value set. Therefore, achievement status cannot be assessed, and the evaluation methodology must rely on case reporting.

Evaluation of the Development Strategy for the Promotion of the Advancement of Women

The Strategy for the Advancement of Women is a sectorial strategy in the field of international cooperation developed under the 2015 Development Charter. The strategy includes emergency humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding, and the pillars of the priority areas are (1) respect for the rights of women and girls, (2) unlocking women's potential, and (3) improving women's leadership in the political, economic, and public sectors. From 2019 to 2020, an external evaluation of Japan's ODA policies on gender equality and women's empowerment (hereafter referred to as "the third-party evaluation") was conducted, resulting in the report titled *ODA Evaluation on the Promotion of Women's Empowerment*.⁴⁶ The policies assessed were the Gender and Development (GAD) Initiative (2005–15) and the Development Strategy for the Promotion of Women's Advancement (2016–). From a development and diplomatic perspective, the policies were evaluated according to each of the following criteria, with case samples selected from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) projects: relevance of policy, effectiveness of results, appropriateness of process, and diplomatic importance and impact. Each criterion was highly rated in the third-party evaluation report.

One of the objectives of the third-party evaluation was to identify lessons learned and make recommendations for the next revision of the strategy, which is due to be revised after 2020. The recommendations are (1) forming Japan's flagship gender project, (2) implementing results-based management into ODA policies for women's empowerment, and (3) expanding resources for and institutional commitments to women's empowerment. At the NGOs–Ministry of Foreign Affairs ODA Policy Consultative Meeting in March 2022, the Ministry of

⁴⁵ The Ministry of Defense. *Defense Minister Press Conference*. (December 16, 2022). <https://www.mod.go.jp/j/press/kisha/2022/1216a.html> (Accessed on 3.1.2023)

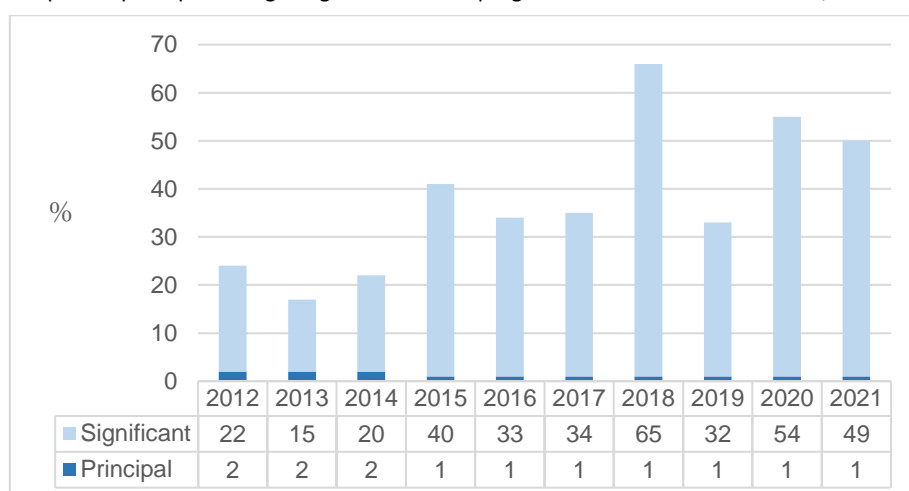
⁴⁶ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (2020). *ODA Evaluation: ODA for the Promotion of Women's Empowerment (Third-Party Evaluation) Report*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/100051071.pdf>

Foreign Affairs stated that the specific timing for revising the strategy is under consideration.⁴⁷

Financial Commitments to ODA

Regarding financial commitments, the third-party evaluation report notes that Japan's total ODA disbursements contributing to gender equality in 2013–18 amounted to approximately USD 11.8 billion, achieving support above the USD 6 billion pledged but below the OECD–DAC average in terms of percentage from data up to 2017. Japan's ODA amount in 2021 was USD 176.34 million, placing it third after the United States and the United Kingdom. Therefore, this section examines percentages of ODA rather than amounts in financial commitments.

Graph 6: Japan's percentage of gender-focused programs in bilateral allocable ODA, 2012–21

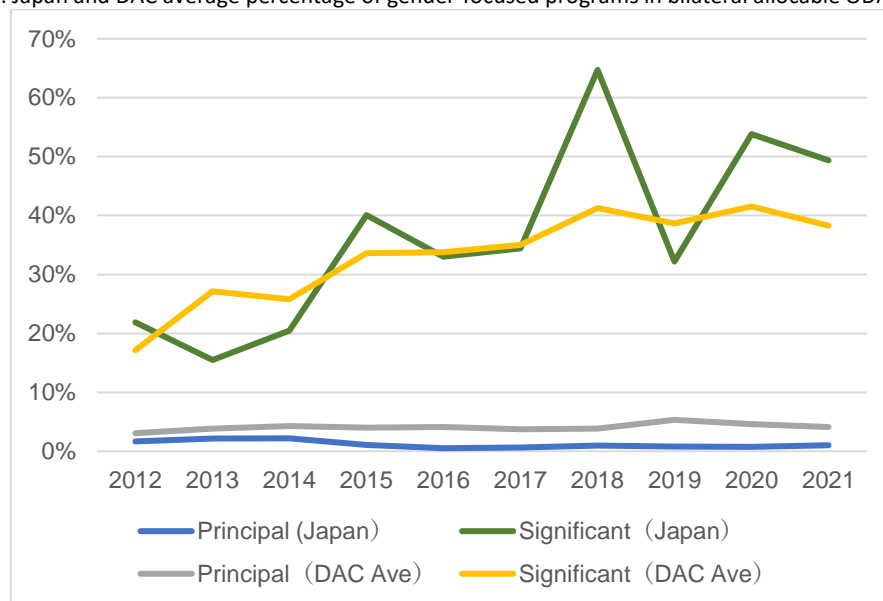


Source: Prepared from OECD database.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Meeting minutes on FY2021 NGOs-The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ODA Policy Consultative Meeting. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/files/100336989.pdf>

⁴⁸ OECD. OECD.Stat. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER (Accessed on 3.4.2023)

Graph 7: Japan and DAC average percentage of gender-focused programs in bilateral allocable ODA, 2012–21



Source: Prepared from OECD database.⁴⁹

According to the latest data, Japan's average percentage of gender-focused programs in 2020–21 was 53%, compared to 44% for OECD–DAC members. There is an increasing trend in Japan similar to that of the OECD–DAC member average. While this trend is commendable, it should be noted that a large proportion of Japan's ODA goes to the infrastructure sector, which is also reflected in the proportion of gender-focused programs. For example, large-scale infrastructure projects such as JICA's infrastructure project to introduce women-only cars in the metro to support women's economic participation in India have significantly affected the proportion of gender-focused projects.

Additionally, one problem with Japan's ODA is that the percentage of programs for which gender equality is the “principal” objective is only 1% according to the latest data, a quarter of the 4% average for OECD–DAC members. This is the second lowest out of 29 countries, along with Poland, and has shown no improvement over the past decade. The proportion of programs with gender equality as the “principal” objective has also remained low on average for OECD–DAC members. An increase in programs with gender equality as the main objective is essential for social transformation. This issue was discussed at the House of Representatives Special Committee on ODA in March 2022, where the Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi

⁴⁹ Ibid.

stated that it is important to "strive to bring the percentage of ODA projects with gender equality as the main objective closer to the average of DAC member countries."⁵⁰

JICA, the implementing agency for ODA, has set a target of 80% gender-focused projects (on a project basis) by 2030 and is strengthening its efforts toward gender equality and women's empowerment in various areas, including gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment.⁵¹ On the other hand, as ODA is not implemented solely by JICA, an overall target needs to be set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The third-party evaluation on women's empowerment in ODA also recommends results-based management that is based on specific targets and action plans and mentions that this was a point of reference for the 2014 OECD–DAC Peer Review of Development Cooperation with Japan.

Collaboration between the government and CSOs is also an issue concerning financial commitments. Partnerships with CSOs, particularly women's rights/feminist organizations, are an important element in gender policy, but the Japanese government's level of engagement with CSOs is limited compared to other countries. In 2021, among OECD–DAC members, the proportion of bilateral ODA provided through CSOs was 2%, second from the bottom.⁵² The CSOs interviewed pointed to a low level of recognition by CSOs of the Development Strategy for the Advancement of Women, as there was no consultation with CSOs when the strategy was developed.

3-5. Conclusion

Applying a feminist approach in foreign policy may receive mixed reactions, as there is still resistance to feminism in many societies. As in the Swedish case, there is a concern that an FFP can be easily abandoned when a future change in government takes place. On the other hand, despite their challenges, FFPs can contribute to increased awareness and commitment to gender equality within the government, particularly support for women's rights/feminist organizations.

In practice, it is more important that feminist principles and elements are incorporated and practiced than merely applying a feminist label to policy. However, the implications of having the feminist label are that the government must make a stronger commitment to gender equality and is expected to perform with higher standards, both nationally and internationally. Evidently, countries with an FFP are being watched by the international community and civil

⁵⁰ Proceedings of the Diet. "208th Diet Session, House of Councilors, Special Committee on Official Development Assistance, etc., and Okinawa and Northern Territories Issues, No. 3, March 15, 2022.

<https://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/#/detailPDF?minId=120815359X00320220315&page=13&spkNum=98¤t=1>

⁵¹ Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*.

<https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/issues/gender/index.html> (Accessed on 3.1.2023)

⁵² OECD. (2021). *Aid for Civil Society Organisations. Statistics based on DAC Members' reporting to the Creditor Reporting System database (CRS), 2018-2019*. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-for-CSOs-2021.pdf>

society with higher expectations and criteria, which in turn contributes to improved quality and enhanced accountability.

Japan lags behind the rest of the world in its efforts to address gender equality, and its understanding of the feminist approach and government engagement with CSOs are low on average compared to countries that have adopted feminist foreign and/or development policies. Unfortunately, there is a lack of enabling factors to adopt an FFP in Japan. Despite this challenge, Japan, as a G7 country, needs to start considering an FFP, as was committed in the G7 Leaders' Communiqué last year.

Considering the current conditions in Japan, Plan International calls on the Japanese government to implement a phase-by-phase approach to improve the existing policies. While an FFP must be comprehensive and coherent across all foreign policy areas, Plan International proposes first incorporating the principals and elements of FFP into development corporation policies as much as possible.



4. Recommendations

Plan International calls on the Japanese government to make the following improvements regarding the Development Cooperation Charter and the Development Strategy for the Advancement of Women, which are due to be revised.

Development Cooperation Charter

1. Make gender equality a priority.

The current version of the Development Cooperation Charter contains only the phrases “promotion of women's participation” and “equality between men and women,” with no reference to gender equality or gender mainstreaming. Countries with FFPs make gender equality a priority as well as a cross-cutting issue in their FFPs. We call for gender mainstreaming, which requires gender analysis and a response to the analysis, to be explicitly committed, and for gender equality to be a priority area in the Development Cooperation Charter.

Development Strategy for the Advancement of Women (Development Strategy)

2. Incorporate human-rights-based and intersectionality approaches as key elements.

A human-rights-based approach means gender equality for the realization of individual rights rather than the “advancement of women for economic growth.” Such an approach must incorporate an intersectional and inclusive perspective and tackle compounded discrimination and exclusion based not only on gender but also on other social identities such as age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and (dis)ability. Specifically, a human-rights-based approach calls for support not only for women but also for LGBTQ+ people and women with disabilities, etc., and for stronger partnerships with CSOs that support marginalized people.

3. Set targets to increase the proportion of bilateral allocable ODA contributed to gender equality, particularly programs with gender equality as the main objective or programs channeled through CSOs.

To bring about transformative change, increasing projects with gender equality as the main (principal) objective and collaborating with CSOs are essential. Japan has the lowest percentage of projects for which gender equality is the principal objective among the OECD–DAC members, and there has been no improvement over the past decade. Therefore, within 5 years, the percentage of projects with gender equality as the principal objective should be increased from the current 1% to at least 4% of the OECD–DAC average. In addition, the percentage of projects integrating gender equality (i.e., with gender equality as a “significant” objective) should be increased from the current 52% to at least 75%. We also call for an

increase in projects managed through CSOs from 2%, the lowest level among OECD–DAC members, to at least 15% of the OECD–DAC average and for an increase in gender-focused projects managed through CSOs, including direct support to local CSOs, especially women's rights/feminist and youth organizations.

4. Narrow down priority areas and improve implementation of the WPS agenda.

The current development strategy has 15 priority issues under 3 themes. We call for the following actions: narrowing down priority areas and including WPS, which is a priority in many FFPs; clarifying which parts of ODA are relevant to the implementation of WPS; increasing funding for and awareness-raising activities regarding the WPS agenda; and addressing the nexus between humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, and development. Furthermore, as Japan's ODA is significantly weighted towards the infrastructure sector, funding for areas other than WPS should be prioritized, such as girls' education, SRHR, and girls' and women's leadership.

5. Promote institutional gender equality in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The current development strategy urges “greater gender mainstreaming in projects and organizations,” but the only specific reference is to promoting gender equality in ODA through the Gender Officer and does not include a specific action plan for promoting gender equality within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We call on the Japanese government to specify in its development strategy ways to tackle the issues of the gender imbalance in management positions and the gender pay gap, implement training to promote gender equality, and strengthen resources, including Gender Officers. In particular, the ratio of women in management positions above section heads in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should reach at least 30% by 2030 from the current 8.4% and the ratio of women ambassadors to reach at least 30% from the current 2.5% in line with the targets set by the Government of Japan in its Fifth Plan for Gender Equality.

6. Establish an accountability framework through the development of an action plan.

The third-party evaluation conducted in 2019–20 also noted the lack of an accountability framework in the current development strategy due to the absence of an action plan with specific targets and indicators. Japan's government should develop an action plan with clearly set targets, quantitative and qualitative indicators, and timelines for achievement. The policy cycle should be based on results-based management, with annual reporting in line with the action plan and a third-party evaluation at the end of the action plan.

7. Change the name of the policy to “Development Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.”

We are concerned that the term “women's advancement” is limiting and does not broadly reflect the content of the development strategy, giving the impression that gender is a women-only issue. We therefore call for the policy name to be changed to “Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment” in line with the SDGs.

8. Consult CSOs, including those in the Global South.

In developing FFPs, collaboration and a participatory approach with CSOs, especially women's rights/feminist organizations, are urged, as well as consultation with CSOs in Japan and the Global South—especially women's rights/feminist organizations and youth, LGBTQ+, and people with disabilities organizations—and gathering input from the public at large through public commentary.

Policy Documents

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About Plan International

Plan International is an international NGO dedicated to bringing positive change to communities and solving the challenges facing the world by harnessing the inherent power of girls. Plan International operates in more than 75 countries around the world. With a global network and a wealth of knowledge based on many years of experience, Plan International works to realize a world in which girls, who are often placed in vulnerable situations, are respected and can make decisions about their lives.

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