



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

IOB Evaluation

Gender mainstreaming in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Beyond 'add women and stir'?

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Preface

In 2015, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB) published its most recent gender policy evaluation: [Gender sense & sensitivity – Policy evaluation on women’s rights and gender equality](#). Like other studies on gender mainstreaming that were released around that time,¹ IOB’s report made it clear that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had not shown sufficient leadership and had lacked the knowledge, skills and means to really put the Dutch gender mainstreaming policy into practice. IOB’s first recommendation was therefore that the time had come ‘*to move beyond rhetoric and to start making gender mainstreaming ... a reality and that gender issues should be included in the design and implementation of all policies, programmes and projects, and not just in those dealing with women or sexual reproductive health and rights*’. The [Government’s reaction to the policy evaluation](#) recognised this and improvements were promised to step up gender mainstreaming in aid programming, planning and implementation.

Now, five years on, with the Government’s policy note ‘[Investing in Global Prospects](#)’ (2018) once more underscoring the importance of gender mainstreaming, the question is what has happened since then and what has changed to ensure that gender was effectively mainstreamed and not ‘streamed away’? The urgent need to focus consistently on gender has been reconfirmed by the reported impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic: from job losses to spikes in domestic violence, the effects of the pandemic have hit women the hardest.²

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Marieke van Egmond and Paul de Nooijer from IOB conducted the evaluation with internal peer review provided by Anne Bakker, Rob van Poelje and Marit van Zomeren. A reference group advised the IOB research team. It consisted of the following members: from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Hinke Nauta (Task Force for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality), Frank Huisingh (Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid), Adriaan van Velthoven (Sustainable Economic Development Department), and from outside the ministry: Marleen Dekker (Leiden University), Wendy Janssens (VU Amsterdam and Amsterdam Institute for Global Health and Development) and Serena Cruz (Amsterdam University Medical Centers).

IOB appreciates the advice and support they have provided throughout the evaluation process. A special word of thanks is due to all interviewees.

As usual, final responsibility for this report rests with IOB.

Wendy Asbeek Brusse
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¹ Operations Evaluation Department African Development Bank Group, 2012, [Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A Road to Results or a Road to Nowhere?](#) European Commission, 2015, [Strategic evaluation of EU Support to Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Partner Countries \(2010-2015\)](#).

² <https://eige.europa.eu/news/covid-19-derails-gender-equality-gains>

List of acronyms

| | |
|--------|---|
| Bemo | Beoordelingsmemorandum (Assessment memorandum) |
| BHOS | Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation) |
| BIS | Office for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| CSO | Civil society organisation |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (OECD) |
| DAF | Sub-Saharan Africa Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DAM | North Africa and Middle East Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DDE | Sustainable Economic Development Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DGGF | Dutch Good Growth Fund |
| DGIS | Directorate-General for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DGPZ | Directorate-General for Political Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DMM | Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DSH | Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DSO | Social Development Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| DVB | Security Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| EU | European Union |
| EUR | Euro |
| GFP | Gender Focal Point |
| IGG | Inclusive Green Growth Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| IOB | Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| IWRM | Integrated Water Resources Management |
| LGBTI | Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| MFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Netherlands |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| SDG(s) | Sustainable Development Goal(s) |
| SGBV | Sexual and gender-based violence |
| SRHR | Sexual and reproductive health and rights |
| TFVG | Taskforce voor Vrouwenrechten en Gendergelijkheid (Task Force for Women's Rights and Gender Equality) |
| ToC | Theory of change |
| UN | United Nations |
| WASH | Water, sanitation and hygiene |

Executive Summary

In its report [Gender sense & sensitivity: Policy evaluation on women's rights and gender equality \(2007-2014\)](#) of 2015, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (IOB) recommended that the time had come for the ministry 'to move beyond rhetoric and to start making gender mainstreaming ... a reality and that gender issues should be included in the design and implementation of all policies, programmes and projects, and not just in those dealing with women or sexual reproductive health and rights'. Now five years later, this report shows what follow-up has been given to this recommendation and what more is needed to further enhance gender mainstreaming throughout the ministry.

Policies, priorities and concepts

The Dutch international policy on gender equality and women's rights has not changed drastically since 2015. Women's rights are human rights, and equal opportunities for women and girls in political, economic and societal processes are seen as a condition for sustainable development. To accomplish gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, efforts in all aspects of policy are needed. The gender policy's aims have changed little as well and focus on the following themes: (political) decision-making and female leadership, economic empowerment, violence against women and girls and the role of women in conflict prevention, conflict situations and peace processes. There is more attention for the link between gender equality, women's rights, inclusiveness and intersectionality, though this does not yet figure consistently in key policy documents.

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These same documents make clear that gender is by and large seen as synonymous with 'women' and that gender mainstreaming generally equals getting more women (and girls) on board in decision-making or as beneficiaries. In humanitarian assistance, they are considered a vulnerable group, and there is little recognition for the knowledge and skills women and girls have. Addressing the power dynamics between men and women is still challenging, even more so within a broader agenda of inclusiveness addressing other dimensions of inequality. Gender mainstreaming does not deal with the more fluid gender identities such as transgender or non-binary identities; this is still only done in human rights and women's rights policies, programmes and projects as well as recent multi-annual country and regional programmes. Though people are generally aware of and subscribe to the importance of such a fluid interpretation of gender, the evaluation shows that it is particularly challenging to apply this in a gender mainstreaming strategy.

According to IOB, evaluation findings suggest that:

- i. The Task Force Women's Rights and Gender Equality could provide more guidance on the optimal use of fluid gender identities and on ways to more systematically link gender and intersectionality;
- ii. Ministry Departments should move from describing women as a 'vulnerable' group or as victims towards more empowering phrasing, which also addresses the roles and responsibilities of men in the development towards gender equality.

Institutional aspects of gender mainstreaming

The Task Force Women's Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG) was established in 2014 within the Social Development Department of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS). It is responsible for gender diplomacy, the management of women's projects, programmes and partnerships and for promoting gender mainstreaming. In addition, there are gender focal points (GFPs) in thematic departments and embassies. Views on this institutional set-up are generally positive. Nevertheless, the evaluation identified the following issues: (i) the institutional embedding of the TFVG has not been conducive to advancing gender mainstreaming in the ministry's other directorates-general (DGs); (ii) the term Task Force does not do justice to the fact that gender mainstreaming requires continuous attention – also in the future; (iii) the Task Force has remained small, especially in comparison to the increased portfolio it has to manage, which has translated in insufficient capacity to carry out the gender mainstreaming tasks in a meaningful way; (iv) there is no task description for the position of GFP, nor are there any formal prerequisites for becoming one and there are different interpretations of what the GFP's role is across the ministry. Even though gender mainstreaming is everyone's responsibility, there is a tendency for gender-related work to be assigned to the often relatively young female GFPs by default. There is a desire for more interaction among the GFPs as this could further improve the ministry's gender mainstreaming performance; (v) while the importance of accountability for gender mainstreaming is recognised, efforts to include it in the appraisal cycle of the ministry's management have not been successful. Moreover, opinions within the ministry differ on the question for what people in the ministry can be held accountable: taking all the necessary steps for making mainstreaming happen – or for results?

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IOB recommends:

- i. To maintain a central entity with gender expertise but to consider changing the name of the TFVG to emphasise that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of all Dutch development *and* foreign policy. This entity should have sufficient human resources to perform its gender-mainstreaming task.
- ii. To explore different options to the institutional positioning of a gender unit, which would facilitate it to extend its reach to other directorates-general of the ministry. Building on recent experience, senior gender expertise could also be made available for all of the ministry's DGs.
- iii. To draft terms of reference for the GFPs as this could help to create more uniformity in how incumbents interpret and put their gender-related tasks into practice. The TFVG ought to maximise the potential of the GFP-network by clarifying its objectives and facilitating the exchange among GFPs and between the GFPs and the TFVG, also when decisions are made on the programming of the TFVG's activities. At the same time, the GFPs should have sufficient time, conditions and financial resources to permit them to perform their tasks. Preferably more men are designated as GFP to enhance diversity.
- iv. To agree on what senior management's accountability for gender mainstreaming means and to incorporate this into their performance appraisal.

Gender awareness and training

Within the ministry, people agree on the importance of women's rights and support gender mainstreaming. Increasingly equity arguments that focus on the intrinsic value of gender equality are used to explain this, which signals a break from the past. The evaluation shows that while TFVG offers training, guidance materials and external gender expertise to support ministry staff, more practical hands-on information and examples are needed also on more advanced topics such as the development of gender policy objectives or gender-transformative evaluation methods. Furthermore, since the training is not mandatory, it is questionable whether it contributes to mainstreaming gender awareness among staff that is less familiar with the subject or to changing the attitudes of the few that still remain indifferent.

IOB recommends the ministry:

- i. To consider making the basic gender training obligatory for all new staff and to incorporate it into the training programme for new policy officers.
- ii. To give GFPs the opportunity to acquire more gender-related (thematic) expertise and advocacy skills and *other* ministry staff the opportunity to increase their awareness and knowledge of gender equality issues for example through internal awareness raising, learning events, sharing best practices and facilitating informal information exchange.
- iii. To involve local expertise, including the GFPs and experts from local partners in the South, to build up these information sources, keeping in mind that 'context matters' for gender as well. The possibility of linking gender awareness raising to similar efforts related to the ministry's diversity and inclusion agendas could be examined as well.
- iv. To stay on the ball, the TFGV could undertake regular participatory organisational gender audits. These audits could come up with ideas to further strengthen the ministry's organisational capacity for gender mainstreaming and could be the basis for developing a ministry-wide, gender-related training strategy that takes into account different training needs of junior staff, gender focal points and senior management as well as different training modalities. Training on evaluation design and reporting ought to be addressed in this process.

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Gender analyses

Gender analyses are conducted to an increasing degree, also in the most recent multi-annual country and regional programmes. The quality of these analyses is variable and at country level, attention for women's rights and gender equality does not necessarily translate into a gender mainstreaming strategy or gender equality goals. The TFVG offers advice on how to conduct a gender analysis on its internal webpage. However, it neither systematically monitors the quality of these gender analyses nor reviews what happens as follow-up to the findings of these analyses. Gender focal points indicated that a better understanding is needed of how the gender analysis influences the subsequent stages of the policy cycle, including evaluation design.

IOB's recommendations are as follows:

- i. To make sure that the results of gender analyses translate into a strategy, activities and resources that are needed to address women's rights and gender equality; the importance of doing so is also underscored in the evaluations that were analysed for this report.
- ii. To address the quality of the analyses, the TFVG could offer training and tools and best practices of high-quality gender analyses and hands-on advice on how to conduct gender analysis in priority policy themes. IOB would also welcome introducing a process of quality control of the gender analyses that are done during programme or project appraisal.

Gender marker

Since 2015, the ministry has made more use of the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker, a statistical tool to record aid activities that target gender equality as a policy objective. The evaluation shows that the share of projects with gender equality as a significant objective or as the principal reason of an intervention has increased to over 75% in 2019. However, whether this better score really reflects more attention to gender on the ground is not evident: the gender marker reflects donor intentions at the design stage. The data for the period 2015-2019 shows that scoring for the different development cooperation sectors is variable. Areas like sexual and reproductive health and rights, social infrastructure and services, water supply and sanitation, business and other services as well as agriculture, forestry and fisheries score (well) above average. In areas such as banking and financial services, employment creation, humanitarian aid and emergency response the scores have improved. Conflict, peace and security consistently performs below average and although scores have improved, the low score of just over 50% for the area of human rights is difficult to understand, given the priority attached to gender in this field.

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IOB's recommendations are twofold:

- i. To introduce the gender marker as an obligatory element in project and programme proposals submitted to the ministry; and
- ii. For the ministry to provide clear instructions with examples that illustrate the correct application of the gender marker labels.

Conceptual approaches, indicators and results frameworks and evaluations

Evaluations that were done in the period 2015-2019 have used a variety of gender approaches: from 'gender sensitive', 'gender responsive' or 'gender transformative' to 'gender blind' or 'gender positive'. These concepts are usually not clearly defined and are used interchangeably. This is problematic because different measurements and indicators are associated with these concepts while mixing these terms and their associated implications for measurement leads to confusion about the ways in which evaluations should address gender equality and the indicators they are supposed to use.

An assessment of the the different results frameworks that the ministry has introduced draws attention to the following issues: (i) there is an almost exclusive focus on women/men and/or on the number/percentage of women that is expected to participate in certain types of activities and/or to profit from these activities. There is too little attention for indicators with a more (qualitative) gender-transformative character or for information on the roles or positions that women take on or the obstacles they need to overcome to participate in project, which may have longer-term negative effects (e.g. additional costs for childcare); (ii) at times, indicators are overly complex and key monitoring terms (for example: women's voice and meaningful participation) are not explained; (iii) insufficient distinction is made between indicators at the outcome and output levels; (iv) the fact that the ministry is expected to report annually on higher policy goals such as changes in norms and values and changes in behaviour shows little consideration for how long it generally takes for fundamental changes in gender equality to occur and endure. Reporting as well as mid-term and end-of-project evaluations at this level should be done cautiously, since change at this level takes much longer than the typical lifetime of projects, programmes or partnerships of 4-5 years at most; (v) finally, the benchmarks for the quantitative indicators tend to be donor-driven and frequently aim for objective gender equality with a 50/50 participation of men and women. This may be realistic in some contexts, but in other situations, a participation of 20% of women could already be labelled as progress if women were previously never included.

The analysis of 95 evaluations on their findings about gender equality in priority sectors and themes shows amongst others the following: (i) nearly 70% reported on the **engagement of women and/or girls** in project activities with seven of them finding that the targets for women's participation had not been reached. The lack of reporting on gender outcomes was said to be due to factors such as absence of gender evaluation expertise and the fact that the demand-driven nature of the project had not permitted addressing a topic as sensitive as gender equality in the local context; (ii) the lack of quality gender-disaggregated data remained an issue. This is in line with the more general observation that, at times, evaluations give little if any information on whether intended final beneficiaries were actually reached, irrespective of their gender; (iii) when a Theory of Change (ToC) had been used, evaluations saw gender as a cross-cutting theme which was outside the ToC. As a result, no specific project activities were designed to contribute to this goal and no specific indicators were developed for the evaluations to track. The fact that gender was put outside of the ToC, may contribute to the fact that where a gender strategy was absent, so were activities and the resources to implement them; (iv) only some 15% of the evaluations discussed the question of whether the project managed to transform gender norms Where changes were observed, this was often due to strong engagement of traditional, religious and community leaders, or of boys and men more generally; (v) the evaluations confirm that **gender analyses** did not automatically translate into an explicit gender *strategy* with gender-specific activities to address the findings from the gender analysis; (vi) evaluations from 2019 and 2020 pay more attention to gender equality and provide a better analysis of how a project influenced gender relations (and where progress is yet to be made). Similar observations are made in several of IOB's own evaluation reports, which concluded among others, that gender did not receive high priority, a strategy or formal mandate was lacking, working on gender equality exceeded the goals of the project, or gender disaggregated data was not available.

IOB's recommendations are:

- i. Examine whether the current quantitative and qualitative outcome and impact indicators can be used for annual reporting on gender equality and women's rights;
- ii. Ensure that a more consistent distinction is made between outcome/impact and output indicators;
- iii. Systematically introduce gender-disaggregated indicators in all relevant policy areas and systematically collect and analyse related data;
- iv. Strive for consistency in the use of conceptual approaches toward gender in both evaluations and the programme design stage'; and
- v. Ensure that, apart from gender-related questions and the need to undertake a gender impact assessment, a budget is set aside for involving gender expertise – or explain why this is not necessary.

Future perspective

In conclusion, true gender mainstreaming goes beyond the 'add women and stir' approach where women are invited to participate in interventions, the design of which has not changed. If gender mainstreaming aims to be transformative, a more comprehensive approach is needed. Such an approach would include the integration of gender equality targets throughout all phases of the policy cycle and take male perspectives on board. Expectations for transformative change in short-term and small-scale projects should however always be treated realistically and only be addressed in projects and evaluations that are able to reflect on such high-order processes, such as country-level evaluations that review a period of 10 to 15 years.

1

Key gender evaluation terminology, questions and approach

Introduction

This chapter explains why this evaluation was undertaken, what questions it answers, what methods were used to provide these answers and what the limitations have been. It also briefly describes relevant gender terminology and its use in this evaluation and gives a reading guide for the remainder of the report.³

What is gender mainstreaming and why this evaluation?

Gender mainstreaming starts from the recognition that gender differences shape policy processes and outcomes. It is a strategy that aims to achieve gender equality and combat discrimination.⁴ It is about integrating a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures, decision-making of organisations and governments and spending programmes.⁵ It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral dimension of those processes, policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated (see also Text box 1).⁶

Text box 1: Gender mainstreaming: its origin and challenges

Gender mainstreaming has been popular in international development since it was adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women and integrated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of September 1995. The conference provided an impetus for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to adopt a [gender mainstreaming strategy](#). Conceptualised as a transformative strategy, gender mainstreaming transcended earlier strategies such as the ‘women in development’ approach of the 1970s – which sought to move women from the margin to the mainstream of policy by creating projects with a special focus on women – and the gender and development paradigm of the 1980s, which aimed to transform the broader social and

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³ **Gender** refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviour and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. **Gender equality** implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality concerns and fully engages men as well as women. Equality between the two is seen as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development. Equality means that women’s and men’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born female or male. **Gender norms** are ideas about how women and men should be and act. Internalised early in life, gender norms can establish a life cycle of gender socialisation and stereotyping. **Gender identity** refers to a person’s deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person’s physiology or designated sex at birth.

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming>; UN ECOSOC, 1997:28.

⁵ True, 2003.

⁶ For a historical overview of the Dutch international gender policy, see IOB, 2015: Annex 5. For a critical assessment of gender mainstreaming, see e.g. Brouwers, 2013: 4, 16, 22; Milward et al., 2015: 75-76; Derbyshire, 2012: 406; NORAD, 2006: 7-8; Davids, et al., 2013; Parpart and McFee, 2017: 244-246; Scala and Paterson, 2017: 579-580; Monday, 2018.

institutional context that produces gender injustice and unequal outcomes. Because gender mainstreaming has not been easy to put into practice and its impact has been more limited than initially expected, it has been criticised by scholars and practitioners. Nevertheless, it currently still stands as a leading approach for achieving gender equality.

Gender mainstreaming has a long history in Dutch development cooperation policy. Its importance was reconfirmed in the government’s most recent overall development policy note ‘Investing in Global Prospects’ of May 2018. Together with gender-specific programmes and gender diplomacy, it is one of the three pillars of the Netherlands’ international effort towards Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Despite this long history, IOB’s gender policy evaluation of 2015 showed that although the government’s position on gender mainstreaming had been consistent, really putting it into practice throughout the organisation had been a major challenge. IOB’s first recommendation was that the time had come ‘to move beyond rhetoric and to start making gender mainstreaming a reality and that gender issues should be included in the design and implementation of all policies, programmes and projects, and not just in those dealing with women or sexual reproductive health and rights’. The [government’s policy reaction](#) that accompanied the report to parliament acknowledged that the practice of gender mainstreaming had been ‘unruly’ and promised remedial action. The ministry translated this political promise into an internal *Action Plan on the integration of women’s rights and gender equality in the ministry’s foreign trade and development cooperation agenda* of February 2016 (see the summary overview in Table 1).⁷

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| General | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of gender into theories of change (ToC), different phases of the policy cycle (from formulation, strategic planning to M&E), guidelines, multi-annual strategic plans, annual plans, M&E instruments • Consistent application of gender analysis • Budget holders formulate targets for gender equality within their own mandate • Stimulate and test novel approaches on gender mainstreaming. • Ensure consistent application of the gender marker (see Text box 2) • Improve monitoring of results |
| Personnel management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender expertise becomes part of strategic staff planning • Basic knowledge on gender becomes a core competence for senior management positions • Gender focal points nominated in departments • Result agreements on gender become an element in the appraisal of management |

⁷ Its objective was twofold: (i) create a corporate culture that inspired, motivated, and facilitated the commitment to women’s rights and gender equality; and (ii) achieve better results in different key sectors and themes by making women’s rights and gender equality the ministry’s core business. Ministry-wide gender mainstreaming was planned for the second phase of this Action Plan.

| Table 1: Action points from the 2016 women's rights and gender equality Action Plan | |
|---|---|
| Capacity development and training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the role of the Task Force for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG, set up in 2014) as a knowledge centre and knowledge broker • Develop training courses or make them accessible • Develop specific expertise at department level that is relevant for Dutch aid themes and priorities • Provide funding to get access to external gender expertise through the so-called gender resource facility that was also set up in 2014⁸ |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender issue is taken on board in the initial briefings for heads of mission in countries that are key partners of Dutch development cooperation |

Evaluation questions, methods and limitations

Evaluation questions

Now, five years on, this evaluation answers two main questions: (i) what has been done since 2015 to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed into Dutch foreign policy and development cooperation policy, and what do we know of the results? (ii) what needs to be done to further improve gender mainstreaming practices? More specifically, it addresses the following research themes:⁹

- The way in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has operationalised the notion of 'gender' since 2015.
- The way in which the ministry has addressed specific gender needs and interests in its policies and subsequently incorporated these needs and interests into its agreements with other organisations and into the different phases of the policy cycle, i.e. from the design, implementation and monitoring to the evaluation of projects and programmes¹⁰.
- On the basis of existing evaluations of these projects and programmes, the different outputs and outcomes that were produced for women, also in terms of unintended consequences.
- The way in which this ministry has addressed organisational and human resources issues (including attitudes, norms, commitment, technical skills and knowledge, incentives and accountability) to put its gender-mainstreaming policies into practice.
- Based on the analyses, earlier experiences in the Netherlands and elsewhere, what the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could do to further improve gender mainstreaming.

⁸ For more details on this facility, see Chapter 3.

⁹ Given the focus of the evaluation, the aim is not to provide a critical assessment of gender mainstreaming itself but of how the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has put gender mainstreaming into practice. The full terms of reference for the evaluation can be found on IOB's [website](#).

¹⁰ Sources: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus> and https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1.

Evaluation methods

IOB used two qualitative research instruments: a literature review and a series of semi-structured online interviews.

The interviews were held with 40 respondents, including members of the ministry's Task Force for Women's Rights and Gender Equality, gender focal points in The Hague and at embassies, staff from other ministry departments, and individual gender experts from outside the ministry. Interviews were also held with staff from gender departments at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Canada, France, Germany and Sweden.¹¹

For the literature review, IOB used a broad range of sources, including parliamentary documents, thematic theories of change and results frameworks, multi-annual plans of the Dutch embassies, as well as action plans that most the ministry's thematic departments had developed in response to the findings of IOB's 2015 policy evaluation. Furthermore, IOB used evaluation reports and mainstreaming statistics (using the so-called [gender marker](#)) that could be found on the [government's website](#) and in the ministry's internal administrative system.¹² Finally, IOB used documents, including recent evaluations, from the above donor countries plus relevant grey literature on gender mainstreaming. Annex 1 gives an overview of the documents used.

Limitations

As this evaluation focuses on the mainstreaming pillar of the ministry's gender policy, it does not address the other two pillars of this policy: international gender diplomacy and the various programmes that were set up to support women's organisations in developing countries.¹³ Moreover, although internal gender policies may contribute to the success of gender mainstreaming, the evaluation was not designed to address the gender balancing act within the ministry's own personnel policy. IOB relied on existing evaluations of Dutch-supported development cooperation programmes and projects across policy domains. At times, these evaluations do not cover recent years, and even recent evaluations were unable to capture the effect of recent changes in policy and implementation practices.

Moreover, the available documentation that is reviewed, including action plans, assessment memoranda (Bemo's) and evaluations, primarily refer to policy themes that fall under the

¹¹ Systematic benchmarking using a combination of sources that were not feasible, while the interviews and the available documentation available primarily served to identify lessons learnt that could benefit Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

¹² Before incorporating the findings of these reports into the analysis, IOB conducted a quality assessment of the reports to make sure that only credible evidence is used. IOB's own evaluations were also used.

¹³ This concerns: Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women, the National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, the three gender-specific strategic partnerships under Dialogue and Dissent and the Leading from the South Fund.

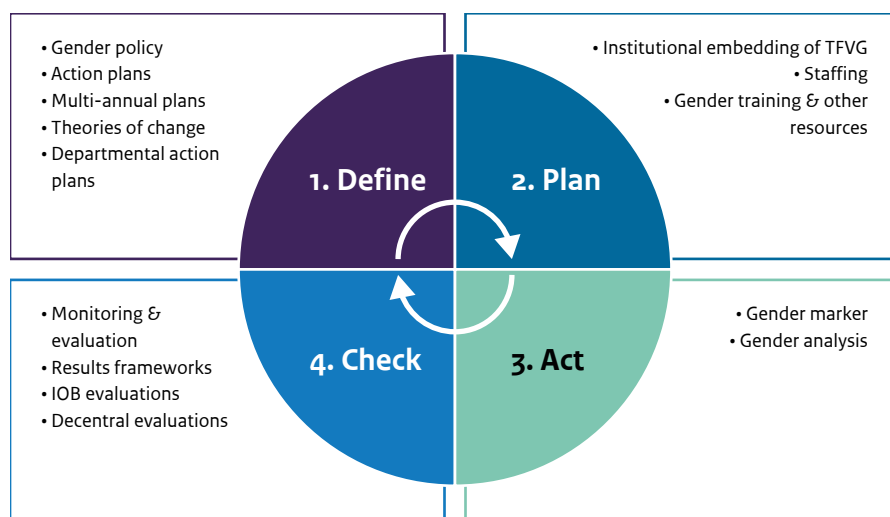
development cooperation pillar of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, gender diplomacy is an activity which receives more attention in the area of foreign trade and political affairs. Since the review focuses on gender mainstreaming activities, which primarily refers to the listed types of documents, the review is better positioned to provide a comprehensive overview of progress in the domain of development cooperation than in the pillars of international trade and political affairs.

The evaluation focuses on the period between 2015 and early 2020 and therefore does not deal with the responses to the gender consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Reading guide

The remainder of this report analyses the gender mainstreaming process in relation to the different phases of the policy cycle. This is summarised in Figure 1. The different chapters will follow this structure.

Figure 1: Gender analysis and policy cycle



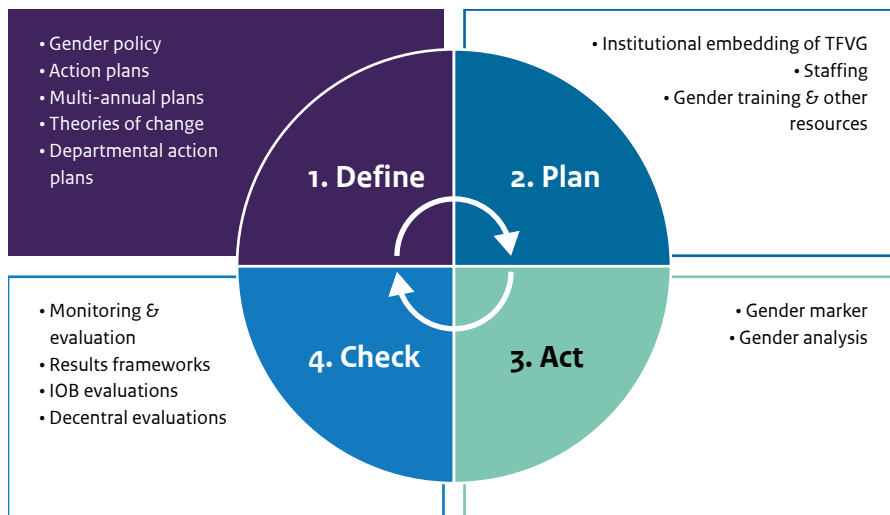
Chapter 2 describes the main features of Dutch gender policy and its priorities since 2015. The chapter also provides an update of gender in thematic theories of change and in the plans of embassies and ministry departments in The Hague. As such, it focuses on the ‘define’ phase of the policy cycle. Chapter 3 deals with the ministry’s gender-related organisational set-up, focusing on the TFVG and its counterparts in embassies and departments – the gender focal points, as well as issues of accountability and capacity building (phase 2 of the policy cycle: ‘plan’). Chapter 4 deals with the topic of gender analysis, a key instrument for gender

mainstreaming to take place from programme design onwards and the ministry's use of the gender policy marker. These are important elements of the 'act' phase of the policy cycle. Chapter 5 focuses on the fourth phase of the policy cycle: 'check'. It analyses different results frameworks and indicators that were introduced in recent years as key elements of the ministry's monitoring of gender mainstreaming. It also includes an assessment of current evaluation practices related to gender mainstreaming and women's rights. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary of main findings and recommendations.

2

Dutch gender mainstreaming policy since 2015

Introduction



This chapter starts with a sketch of the main characteristics of the ministry’s gender mainstreaming policy. It pays particular attention to the developments that have taken place since 2017, when a new government came to power. Following the steps identified in the above-mentioned DGIS-wide gender action plan of February 2016, it then assesses how these general policy principles were translated into thematic theories of change (ToCs)¹⁴ and action plans and annual plans of ministry departments and embassies respectively.

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Overall Dutch policy on gender equality and women’s rights

Through its international policy on women’s rights and gender equality, the Netherlands seeks to contribute to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were agreed upon in September 2015 and the internationally agreed [targets](#) of SDG 5. Gender equality is not only a goal in and of itself, but it is also conceived as a means and condition for achieving other SDGs.¹⁵ Promoting women’s rights and gender equality implies a focus on equal power relationships between women and men. It is intimately linked to sustainable and inclusive development, which is only possible when all people have a chance to equally participate in society and society allows for equal access to goods, opportunities, tools and rewards.¹⁶

¹⁴ In 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs introduced the ToC concept for the priority themes of Dutch development assistance and shared its thematic ToCs with Parliament in 2015 and 2018. The first ToCs for humanitarian assistance and migration became available in 2018; for other themes, there are ToCs in both years. The climate change ToC is from 2016.

¹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019, Policy document women’s rights and gender equality: 1. See also the policy framework ‘Versterking Maatschappelijk Middenveld, Subsidie-instrument Power of Women; Een kader voor financiering van maatschappelijke organisaties voor de periode van 1 januari 2021 tot en met 31 december 2025’: 1.

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, Subsidie-instrument Power of Voices Partnerschappen: 6.

Dutch policy on gender equality and women's rights underscores the importance of women's rights as *human rights*, and gender is a priority in its human rights policy.¹⁷ Equal opportunities and rights for women and men in political, economic and societal processes are seen as a condition for sustainable development.¹⁸ Moreover, 'both domestically and internationally, the government remains committed to freedom and equal rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) persons' and, '(under) the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is calling specifically for the abolition of the criminalisation of homosexuality, action to combat discrimination and violence, and the promotion of social acceptance'.¹⁹ As the ToC on sexual and reproductive health and rights of 2018 underlines: 'The universality of human rights requires a focus on specific groups facing additional challenges, whether they are (unmarried) young people, child brides, women undergoing an abortion, injecting drug users, sex workers or LGBTQI+' (4).

While in the past mainly instrumental arguments were used to justify and stimulate attention for gender, the interviews conducted for this evaluation show that a focus on the intrinsic value of gender equality has become more prevalent.²⁰

As stated in the policy note 'Investing in Global Prospects', gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a cross-cutting goal throughout Dutch development cooperation policy, and (improving) gender equality requires an active effort in all aspects of policy' (23). This effort requires the use of all foreign policy instruments.²¹

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In line with this position, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has continued its approach to gender equality and women's rights that comprises the following, mutually reinforcing, strands:²²

¹⁷ As the ToC on gender and women's rights of 2018 states, '(the) world will not move forward if half the population remains disadvantaged and their potential contribution to sustainable security, peace and prosperity is systematically underused. This asks for extra efforts on women's rights and gender equality from a human rights perspective and for an effective and inclusive foreign policy' (1). This emphasis on human rights helps to explain the importance attached to international norms in relation to women's rights and gender equality in the Dutch gender diplomacy.

¹⁸ 2015 ToC on gender equality and women's rights: 3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020; Mensenrechtenrapportage 2019: 29; KST 35570-V-2, 2020: 31.

¹⁹ Gender & LGBTI Equality Policy Plan 2018-2021: 15. See also Human Rights report 2018: 6.

²⁰ Instrumental arguments were: including women's rights and gender equality was said to be good for economic development and poverty reduction (smart economics), for more inclusive decision-making and more stable and sustainable societies (smart politics), and for international security (smart security) – even though the evidence base for these arguments was small (see also IOB, 2015a: 16 and 52 and Brown and Swiss, 2017: 118-119). At the same time, they have not entirely disappeared, as the ToC of 2018 shows: 'From the realization that sustainable development, peace, stability and human rights benefit from equal opportunities and rights for men and women, the Netherlands, with its international policy on women's rights and gender equality, wants to contribute to the realization of the SDG agenda and specifically the internationally agreed (outcome) goals of SDG-5' (2).

²¹ KST 35570-XVII-2, 2020: 61; KST 35571-1, 2020; KST 35570-XVII-2, 2020: 7.

²² This tallies with the OECD-DAC recommendation that donors adopt an approach to gender equality that combines gender mainstreaming and dedicated programmes or projects for gender equality and women's empowerment (OECD, 2018a).

- **Strengthening of women's and civil society organisations** that are committed to advocating women's rights and gender equality to promote female leadership.²³
- **Gender diplomacy** – silent and not so silent – at the level of the United Nations and the European Union, in the latter case, for example, in relation to the EU Gender Action Plan and the European Consensus on Development of June 2017²⁴ as well as in the bilateral political dialogue with individual countries, including countries with which the Netherlands has bilateral trade and/or development assistance relations.²⁵
- **Gender mainstreaming** aims to ensure that women can influence and profit from Dutch support to and investments in development cooperation, foreign trade, security and human rights²⁶. This is consistent with the Beijing Platform for Action's assertion that focusing on women's rights and gender equality ought to be part and parcel of donors' foreign and development policies, programmes and projects. Mainstreaming should be based on gender analyses that give insight into women's needs and interests and the obstacles they face so they can be addressed. Dutch gender policy recognises that equal participation requires changes in norms, values and codes of conduct for women and men. In early 2020, the Task Force drafted a gender mainstreaming strategy, outlining the relevance and reasons for gender mainstreaming. It also provides a brief on awareness raising, knowledge management and institutionalised elements of gender mainstreaming.

²³ These organisations play a crucial role in promoting, putting on the agenda and monitoring women's rights, as well as addressing accusations of violations of these rights. With a role in contributing to a gender-enabling environment, these organisations have been supported through programmes such as [Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women](#); the [National Action Plan for UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security](#) and three partnerships funded under the Dialogue and Dissent programme, i.e. Count Me In!, the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action and the Girls Advocacy Alliance. For the years ahead, a new SDG 5 Fund was established uniting four subsidy instruments: *Power of Women*; *Women, Peace and Security*; *SRHR Partnership Fund*; *Leading from the South*. Women's projects are also financed from the Human Rights Fund.

²⁴ For example, at the UN Human Rights Council session of June 2018, the Netherlands led negotiations on violence against women on behalf of the EU. Also in 2018, it used its membership of the UN Security Council to campaign for equal rights for women and girls under the theme of women, peace and security.

²⁵ Covid-19 is putting additional pressure on issues such as gender equality, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including HIV/AIDS. The cabinet will therefore continue to practice silent and loud diplomacy to counter the 'pushback' against women's rights, gender equality and SRHR (KST 35571-1, 2020; KST 35570-XVII-2, 2020: 7).

²⁶ As stated in the 2015 ToC for gender equality and women's rights: 'Harnessing the potential of women and girls means, in addition to removing obstacles, actively involving them in policy formulation, project design and planning' (3).

The targets with respect to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, as presented in the 2018 policy note *Investing in Global Prospects* (see also the ToC in Figure 2),²⁷ are as follows:

- Increase women's participation in political decision-making and other decision-making and female leadership
- Increase economic empowerment and improve the economic climate for women²⁸
- Prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls
- Strengthen the role of women in conflict prevention and peace processes, and protect them in conflict situations

In July 2020, the ministry published a *Revised Theory of Change Diagram and Results Framework – Women's Rights and Gender Equality* (see Figure 2). This revised ToC document is an attempt to capture, in one go, the above three strands of the gender policy, its four priority areas, together with a range of complex and composite output and outcome indicators, which are linked to the SDGs and the EU Gender Action Plan (see on the M&E aspects Chapter 5).

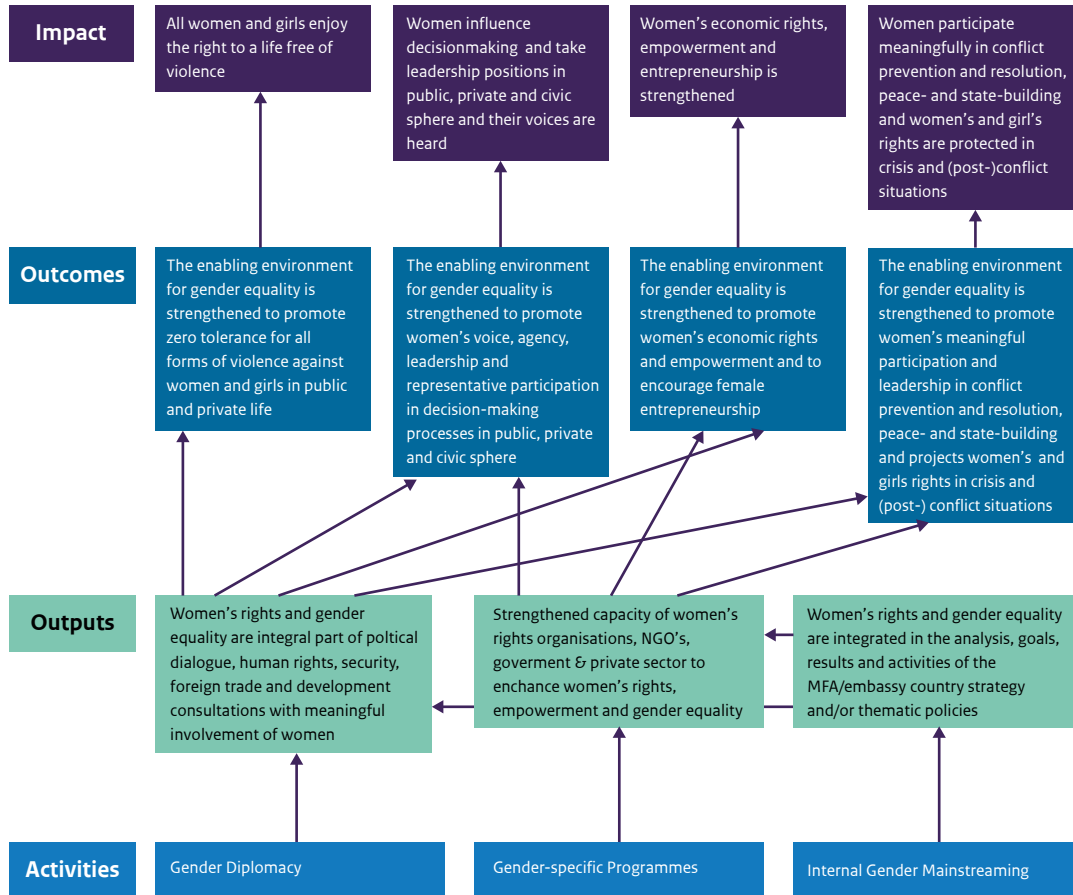
Recent documents, furthermore, emphasise the link between gender equality, women's rights and inclusiveness: in all cases, the focus is on equal participation in social, economic and political fields, with every individual, independent of gender, sexual orientation, wealth, family, age, social position and (dis)ability having equal chances and opportunities and the possibility to use these. Moreover, as stated in the policy framework for the subsidy instrument *Power of Women of 2020*, '(different) aspects of identity can come together, such as being a woman and a disabled person or belonging to an indigenous group and being homosexual. For that reason, gender equality and inclusion have a clear relationship with intersectionality'.²⁹

²⁷ These priorities for gender and women's rights are not too different from the past and quite similar to the gender priorities of like-minded countries on this topic such as Canada and Sweden or the United Kingdom (see Ravesloot, 2020: 5, 8 and DFID, 2018: 13-14).

²⁸ See *Mensenrechtenrapportage 2019*: 29. The Dutch trade agenda, for example, announces that: (1) the Netherlands wants to make explicit agreements about gender in future trade agreements; (2) the ministry will support Dutch women entrepreneurs, who are less active in international markets, as they have the greatest untapped potential for international entrepreneurship and the greatest need for government help to open doors abroad; and (3) women ought to account for at least 25% of the participants in international trade missions.

²⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020, *Subsidie-instrument Power of Women*: 7. Intersectionality refers to how people in all their diversity embody multiple identities, face intersecting oppressions and suffer differently from the same structural and institutional power imbalances. It offers an analytical lens through which one can see and understand from various angles where/how various levels of power and privilege interface and cross in a given context.

Figure 2: Theory of change diagram for the policy on women's rights and gender equality



Analysing the revised ToC diagram reveals the following:

- Intersectionality does not yet feature consistently in the analysis (with the exception of age) and the indicators that are introduced to measure results and progress.
- The ToC focuses on women and girls and does not really operationalise the notion of 'gender equality'. Instead, the traditional women-men divide is maintained and a more fluid interpretation of gender is not used.³⁰ Interviews conducted as part of this evaluation confirmed that when speaking about implementing gender as a dimension in other types of thematic policies, the distinction between men and women remains dominant.

Thematic theories of change

In addition to the overall theory of change on women's rights and gender equality, there are the ToCs for the priorities of Dutch development cooperation. Following the structure of the budget for development cooperation, key features of the most recent theories of change are summarised below in Text box 2. This presentation is followed by IOB's analysis and assessment.

Text box 2: *Attention for gender in thematic ToCs*³¹

- According to the ToC for **private sector development**, equal economic opportunities for women are a necessary condition for achieving inclusive growth and development. Given the focus on women's economic empowerment as a specific policy aim, the ToC refers to creating better opportunities for women to find employment and gain an income, to strengthening their economic position as entrepreneurs and employees and to ensuring that the private sector respects women's rights. The aim is also to ensure that female entrepreneurs have equal access to financial services, for example.
- In the **food security** ToC, gender is an important cross-cutting and contextual factor and the notion of 'gender responsive agriculture' is used to indicate topics that need particular attention (low productivity, access to land and land use, and other means of production).
- The ToC for **water and sanitation** underscores the importance of a gender component when deciding on investments in urban infrastructure, of giving women a bigger say in water management and of guaranteeing their water-use rights, also in the case of water for agriculture. Better access to safe water reduces inequality for the poorest of the poor and improves health, education and income, especially for women and girls. The ToC also acknowledges that disaster response mechanisms are more effective when they are gender sensitive.

³⁰ This would, for example, refer to the idea that there is no dichotomy man/woman and that certain social roles do not necessarily need to be exclusively assigned to men or women. It also covers the idea that one can be transgender, intersex, queer or not have a fixed gender identity from birth.

³¹ This text box is based on the ToCs for private sector development (2018: 1, 4, 5, 7-8), food security (2018: 2, 4, 6, 8); water and sanitation (2018: 3-6), climate change (2016: 4), SRHR (2018: 2-3), security and rule of law (2015: 7; 2018: 7), humanitarian assistance (2018) and migration (2018: 3, 4 and 12).

- In the ToC for **climate change**, the ministry commits to paying special attention to poor women and women farmers, since they are the first and most affected by climate change. Explicit attention is paid to the role of women as important agents of change and enhancing their resilience, the idea being that climate funding also benefits poverty alleviation and gender equality.
- The fundamental starting point of Dutch policy on **sexual and reproductive health and rights** is the freedom of choice and say of both women and men over their own sexuality. The ToC emphasises that all actions need to contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, with particular attention for combatting sexual intimidation, gender-based violence, child marriages and other discriminating and criminal practices.
- In the area of **security and rule of law**, a gender transformative approach is propagated, promoting the role of women and gender sensitivity in peacekeeping and peacekeeping missions (UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security³²), involving women in (political) decision-making processes, preventing and combatting sexual and gender-based violence and providing access to justice and legal support. The ToC also refers to the importance of conducting a gender analysis as part of conflict analysis.
- The ToC for humanitarian assistance refers to women and girls as members of broader '(most) vulnerable groups' in conflict-related crises and natural disasters whose rights require special attention.³³ To be effective, it is necessary that humanitarian response plans do justice to women's and girls' needs and that their role in crisis situations – in identifying needs and the planning and implementation of emergency response – is enhanced. While women are seen as victims of marginalisation who deserve to be treated differently and there is an emphasis on addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, the Netherlands also supports women's leadership during and after a disaster or conflict and in the reconstruction of society after a crisis.
- The 2018 ToC for migration stipulates that gender will be mainstreamed in all activities and promises an active approach that takes the interests and needs of women and girls into account in all phases of the policy cycle. Reference is also made to special attention for vulnerable groups such as children, women and people with a disability and addressing sexual violence, child marriages, and girls' access to contraceptives and education.

³² The Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 refers to the Dutch National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 as 'an inextricable part of our integrated foreign and security policy' and the 'special position of women and gender in conflict areas, including implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Working Worldwide for the Security of the Netherlands, An Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022).

³³ For humanitarian assistance, these vulnerable groups also include people with a trauma or handicap. Furthermore, the ToC for humanitarian assistance of 2018 states: 'We further integrate gender, age and conflict sensitivity in all our programmes and activities and pay particular attention to differences in vulnerability, local context and dynamics of conflict and possible harmful effects of aid' (6, 3).

An analysis of these ToCs shows the following:

- The ToCs address women's rights and gender in generic terms, which is understandable given their broad geographical mandate – the priority countries and regions of Dutch development cooperation.
- Most have incorporated women's rights – rather than gender equality – as a key element. In the case of private sector development, the term gender is only used when the SDGs are quoted, while the ToC for climate change only refers to gender in relation to the management of international climate funds.
- For the priority themes food security, water and sanitation, migration, and security and rule of law, reference is made to a gendered approach and, in the latter case, to the gender sensitivity of programming, policy and practice.³⁴ Still, in agriculture, this approach does not clearly translate into attention for gender at the level of the interventions in the ToC – even though eight million small-scale farmers (male/female) are being targeted by 2030.³⁵
- In an area such as humanitarian assistance, women and girls are included among the 'vulnerable populations' that are targeted. This phrasing suggests an interpretation of gender issues with an emphasis on 'women as victims'. Although this addresses women's vulnerability to risk by virtue of their gender and the associated power dynamics, it also implies that they possess a decreased level of free will and an inability to make informed choices. It does not do justice to the knowledge and skills that women and girls possess, in particular in the domains in which they are key agents (e.g. water management and food security).
- As in other ministry documents that pay attention to gender mainstreaming in development cooperation, the ToCs focus on increasing the number and percentage of women involved in decision-making, as project beneficiaries or increasing female participation in the labour force. Little attention is paid to the question of how enhanced inclusiveness should be combined with women's (gendered) duties and responsibilities to care for others or the unintended consequences of changes in power relations between women and men.

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Like the overall gender ToC, none of the thematic ToCs uses a fluid concept of gender. As a consequence, LGBTQI+ persons remain outside the scope of gender mainstreaming. At the same time, they feature as an important target group in the areas of human rights – incorporated in the budget of the ministry of Foreign Affairs – and in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) where LGBTQI+ persons are included among the key populations.

Within the ministry, opinions differ as to whether this fluid gender concept ought to find its way into the gender mainstreaming agenda or whether the more traditional concept (women-men) and the more fluid concept can co-exist as is the case in the Dutch overall policy [Gender & LGBTI Equality Policy Plan 2018-2021: Putting principles into practice](#). In the

³⁴ ToC Security and rule of law, 2018: 5, 8. The ToC underlines that for conflict-sensitive policy it is important to map conflict and instability risks; thorough conflict, power and gender analyses are necessary for doing so.

³⁵ It is not evident whether context-specific gender analyses are planned to assess women's priorities and needs, whether they will be able to participate in/benefit from the same activities or whether special activities focused on women farmers are needed.

interviews conducted for this evaluation, the following arguments were put forward: (i) progress still needs to be made when it comes to integrating power differences between men and women. Further broadening the gender concept jeopardizes the advancement of the Dutch gender equality policy, for it conflates the ambitions in the domain of women with those in the LGBTQI+-domain. Since the latter is much more controversial in specific developing countries, if not illegal, there is a high chance that the inclusion of LGBTQI+-goals under the umbrella of gender mainstreaming creates resistance against the wider ambitions in the domain of gender equality; (ii) there are to date, also in countries with a feminist foreign policy, no practical tools that can help to mainstream a fluid gender concept in a broader foreign policy and development assistance agenda.

Departmental gender action plans

On the basis of the DGIS-wide gender action plan of February 2016 mentioned above, different departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have prepared their own gender action plans (see Text box 3 for some highlights)³⁶ An analysis of these plans shows that they have the following common features:

- Most plans do not elaborate on the notion of gender equality. When they promise to integrate gender better and more systematically into their work and that of key partner organisations, gender remains more or less synonymous with ‘women’. Little is said in the plans of an active role for women (and men) in the design and implementation of interventions.
- In most cases, there is little attention for the transformation of inequality between women and men in the different countries in which partner organisations work.³⁷ There is little reflective discourse on whether a gender-sensitive approach or a gender-transformative approach is more appropriate and these terms are at times used interchangeably, with little regard for any associations that these terms might have (also see Chapter 5 on evaluation).
- The plans suggest that gender will be better integrated into the different phases of the policy and activity cycle (including, for example, better gender-relevant indicators incorporated into results frameworks and reporting, and the collection of gender-disaggregated information using IATI,³⁸ better M&E and learning from experiences). Nevertheless,

³⁶ The following departments prepared such a plan: Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG, August 2017); Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH); Sustainable Economic Development Department (DDE, July 2017); Office for International Cooperation (BIS); Social Development Department (DSO); and Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights Department (DMM). These action plans are the basis for the highlights presented in Text box 3.

³⁷ This is not very different from what IOB’s gender policy evaluation observed in 2015: ‘Women’s rights and gender equality feature in Dutch aid policies and human rights policies, though gender was often perceived as a synonym for “women” (IOB, 2015a: 52). Nor is this very different from evaluation findings with respect to gender mainstreaming at Sida: ‘Moreover, gender is generally taken as synonymous to women, only... In the few cases in which gender roles or gender structures are mentioned, they almost always concern women without including a larger contextual analysis involving men (or boys), their roles, and the consequences of these roles. In a majority of cases the roles of men are never mentioned’ (Bjarnegård and Uggla, 2017: 15-16).

³⁸ IATI is a global initiative to improve the transparency of development and humanitarian resources and their results to address poverty and crises.

also given the emphasis on gender analysis, many of these improvements are limited to the preparatory stages of the interventions.

- With more attention for gender, the plans foresee more interventions having a positive score on the OECD/DAC gender policy marker.³⁹
- The departmental plans, finally, also underline the importance of staffing (equal representation of women and men), the integration of gender into the strategic personnel plans of departments and divisions and, at times, of including gender as a topic in the annual staff performance appraisals, also of more senior staff. Furthermore, the plans emphasise the importance of regular staff development and training so that gender is effectively integrated into people's work.

Text box 3: *Highlights of departmental gender action plans*

The **DDE plan** calls for better embedding of gender in policies, result areas, programmes and activities, not only inside the ministry but also among DDE's key partners (such as the Rijksdienst voor Ondernemend Nederland (RVO, Netherlands Enterprise Agency)). Private sector development should contribute to the further development, application and enforcement of women's rights and the promotion of equality between women and men. The plan pays attention to topics such as: (i) attention for gender in sector-specific agreements on corporate social responsibility; (ii) the participation of women in the financial sector and in women-owned small and medium enterprises, as well as female entrepreneurship in low and middle-income countries; and (iii) the inclusion of disadvantaged women as they are generally more excluded from inclusive sustainable growth. New private sector development interventions will include (i) a gender-sensitive context analysis; (ii) intervention strategies to promote equal access, control and benefits for women; and (iii) an M&E framework to monitor progress on the gender ambitions.

The **IGG plan** refers to more advanced gender strategies for different water programmes that the Netherlands supports (e.g. that of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council and the water operating partnerships of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN). It also refers to examples of successful gender mainstreaming in areas such as land rights, mining, women's participation in value chains and in agricultural research programmes of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, for example. In relation to climate change, there is a focus on: (i) integrating gender in the ministry's own climate activities; (ii) promoting the gender-responsiveness of international climate funds; and (iii) promoting the integration of gender in the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, for example.

The **DMM plan** states that it will monitor the attention for gender mainstreaming in

³⁹ At the same time, the IGG Plan states 'that gender equity does not become an empty shell or an obligatory exercise without demonstrable results. It's about behaviour and mindset change for gender equity, not percentages'.

the long-term strategies of regional development banks and the World Bank and improvements made in the gender balance of banks' staff and of their governing bodies. Furthermore: (i) gender is a selection criterion for the human rights fund, and (ii) gender is an element in the ministry's multilateral scorecards.

The **DSH plan**, *inter alia*, calls for attention for gender mainstreaming in areas such as mediation, inclusive peace processes and security sector reform and a focus on the relationship between gender and crisis response and preparedness. It also refers to linking conflict and gender sensitivity (and related analyses). It emphasises the importance of staff training on themes such as women, peace and security, gender in humanitarian settings, and gender and migration and the need to develop tools that can help assess the gender sensitivity of project proposals. Gender sensitivity is to be included in new programmes, among others by undertaking gender analyses and by insisting on gender as one of the selection criteria for projects submitted for funding.

Gender mainstreaming in embassy multi-annual plans

The evaluation examined the most recent country-level and regional multi-annual development cooperation plans (2019-2022) prepared by embassies in developing countries. An overall finding is that these plans pay more attention to gender mainstreaming than their predecessors and contain gender context analyses for important country- and region-specific themes (see Table 2 for an overview). A more detailed analysis, furthermore, reveals the following:

- The plans differ with respect to the focus on/level of detail of the analysis of the state of affairs regarding gender and whether they include attention for LGBTQI+ persons, as is the case in Uganda, Lebanon and Ghana, for example.
- Gender equality and women's rights – as a crosscutting theme – appears as one of the priority issues in all multi-annual plans. In the case of Bangladesh, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is also described as a cross-cutting goal.
- The attention for gender equality and women's rights does not always translate into a gender mainstreaming strategy or specific gender equality goals.
- As is clear from Table 2, gender equality and women's rights is taken on board in a large number of sectors in countries such as Benin, Ethiopia, and the Palestinian Territories but less so in countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and South Sudan. Sexual and gender-based violence (under security and rule of law), SRHR, private sector development (including women's access to financial services and other economic inputs, women's employment opportunities and the development of female entrepreneurship) and food security are the main topics for which attention is promised.

Table 2 Thematic gender emphasis in embassy plans (2019-2022)

| | Equal rights | Security and rule of law | Women's rights as human rights | Strengthening civil society | Water management | Food security and nutrition | Sexual and reproductive health and rights | Private sector development | Water and sanitation | Humanitarian assistance |
|-------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Afghanistan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bangladesh | | | | | | | | | | |
| Benin | | | | | | | | | | |
| Burkina Faso | | | | | | | | | | |
| Burundi | | | | | | | | | | |
| Chad | | | | | | | | | | |
| DRC | | | | | | | | | | |
| Egypt | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ethiopia | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ghana | | | | | | | | | | |
| Iraq | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jordan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kenya | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lebanon | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mozambique | | | | | | | | | | |
| Palestinian Territories | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rwanda | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sahel region | | | | | | | | | | |
| Senegal | | | | | | | | | | |
| Somalia | | | | | | | | | | |
| South Sudan | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tanzania | | | | | | | | | | |
| Tunisia | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uganda | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yemen | | | | | | | | | | |

Main conclusions

The aims of Dutch gender policy and the constituent elements of its strategies that encompass gender diplomacy, gender-specific programmes and gender mainstreaming have not changed since 2015. All aspects are still relevant. The thematic priorities of this gender policy, from women's economic empowerment to preventing and combatting gender-based violence, have also remained the same for similar reasons. Instrumental arguments are used less frequently than in the past to justify the need for gender equality.

A key finding for the policy plans on gender mainstreaming in Dutch development cooperation, which echoes observations made in the 2015 policy evaluation, is that the terms 'women' and 'gender' are still used interchangeably and 'gender' primarily refers to the dichotomy of 'women' and/or versus 'men'. Only under the headings of SRHR and human rights is the more fluid notion of gender identity used. In both cases, this primarily serves to emphasise that LGBTIQ+ persons are an important target group that warrants attention in Dutch policy in these domains. The issue of LGBTIQ+ persons feature in the multi-annual plans of some of the Dutch embassies (e.g. Ethiopia, Ghana and Lebanon), primarily in relation to addressing their human rights, not in relation to gender mainstreaming.

Another main finding is that though gender equality and intersectionality are increasingly linked, this is not yet consistently incorporated into existing theories of change and (thematic) results frameworks, which continue to focus on women and girls and men and boys.

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IOB's 2015 gender policy evaluation underscored that it was essential for gender to be addressed in the design and assessment of policies, including the multi-annual plans that embassies and ministry departments were expected to develop and adjust. This has indeed happened. In addition, departmental gender action plans were introduced as an instrument to implement the ministry's gender action plan of February 2016. The analysis of these different plans shows, furthermore, that:

- Women's rights, rather than gender, are mentioned as an important cross-cutting theme in most of the thematic theories of change.
- Attention for gender-sensitive policymaking does not seem to translate into attention for gender in the design and implementation of interventions. Most of the time, better integration of gender into the different phases of the policy and activity cycle is limited to the preparatory stages of these interventions.
- The focus is on increasing the number and percentage of women involved in decision-making or as project beneficiaries – not the transformation of persisting inequality between women and men.
- As suggested, embassy plans also contain gender analyses of themes that are important in these country and regional programmes, but these are necessarily limited in scope. It remains important that this analysis is conducted at the level of specific interventions – context matters a great deal.

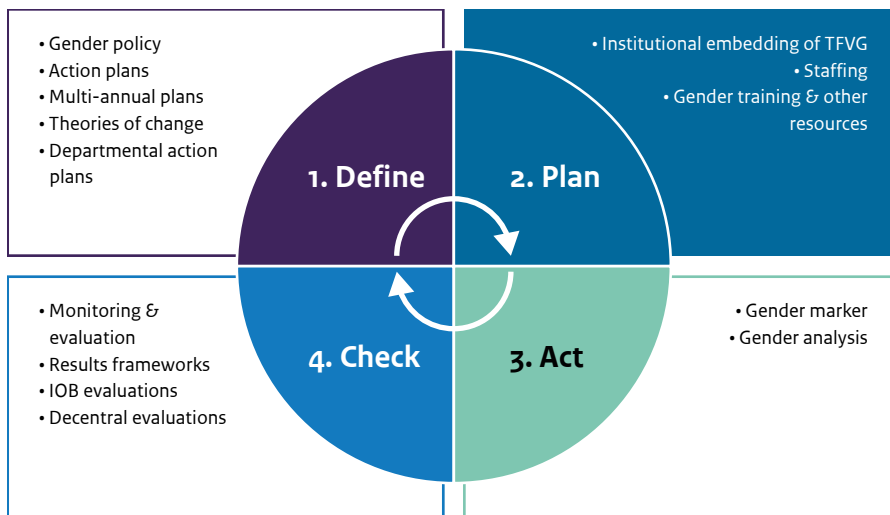
Recommendations

- The TFGV should provide guidance on the optimal use of gender-fluid interpretations of gender, also with respect to the policy areas in which such a conceptualisation could be meaningfully introduced.
- Be cautious when describing women as a 'vulnerable' group. Prevent such phrasing from translating into a perception of women as victims; instead, move towards more empowering phrasing, which also addresses the roles and responsibilities of men in the development towards gender equality.
- Address gender and intersectionality more systematically.
- Consistently use context-specific gender analyses as a starting point for gender mainstreaming throughout the different phases of the policy/project cycle.

3

Developments in institutional aspects of gender mainstreaming

Introduction



While gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all staff, qualified gender expertise is essential, among others to provide technical assistance and for building gender-related capacity within the organisation.⁴⁰ Going back to the 1970s, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has organised and structured its gender expertise in different ways, with the equivalent of a central gender unit finding its place in different departments, and gender experts and later on gender focal points nominated in departments and at embassies.⁴¹ This chapter deals with the current organisational set-up: the Task Force Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG) and the gender focal points. It also addresses issues of accountability and capacity building.

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Organisational set-up and staffing

Bearing in mind that gender mainstreaming remains the responsibility of the entire ministry,⁴² the current set-up of the gender expertise within the ministry dates back to late 2014, and is as follows:

- The Task Force Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, is institutionally part of the Social Development Department (DSO) of the Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGIS). In brief, the TFVG has three main areas of responsibility in relation to Dutch gender policy: undertake gender diplomacy on women’s rights and gender equality, manage gender-specific projects, programmes, and partnerships, and promote gender main-

⁴⁰ The Gender Practitioners Collaborative, 2017: 6.

⁴¹ For more details, see IOB, 2015a: 21, 55-, 57; IOB, 2015b: 104-111; IOB, 1998: 134-135. The literature confirms that there are no blueprint solutions for the organisational set-up.

⁴² See also the ToC of 2015: 6-7). See also Gender Resource Facility, 2016; Netherlands International Gender Policy, Whither the two-track strategy, final, 31 May 2016: 13.

streaming.⁴³ The Task Force consists of 10 FTEs, and 2 part-time staff members from the Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights Department (DMM) and Department for Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid (DSH). Over the years, a number of interns and trainees have been responsible for important activities related to communication, women, peace and security and multilateral gender diplomacy.

- Gender focal points in other DGIS departments – including the ministry’s Sub-Saharan Africa Department (DAF) and the North Africa and Middle East Department (DAM) and the Security Policy Department (DVB). There are also focal points at embassies in countries with which the Netherlands maintains a development cooperation relation and Dutch permanent missions to international organisations. In many cases, though there are exceptions, these gender focal points are junior female staff. They are basically tasked with promoting gender mainstreaming at the level of their unit but do not have the authority to make this happen.⁴⁴ Interviewees differed in opinion as to whether they have the required know-how and skills to effectively perform the gender focal point function.

Like IOB’s gender policy evaluation of 2015,⁴⁵ overall, this evaluation is positive on the ministry’s institutional set-up for promoting gender mainstreaming: a central task force with gender expertise and a network of so-called gender focal points in ministry departments and embassies. Still, based on the interviews that were conducted as part of this evaluation, the following issues were identified.⁴⁶

Institutional embedding

The Task Force for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality is part of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time, it was set up as an entity that crossed various directorates-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by including colleagues from DSH and DMM.

Interviews held within the framework of this evaluation indicate that this insitutional position has not been conducive to advancing gender mainstreaming beyond DGIS (see Text box 4).⁴⁷ In fact, it only enforces the historical emphasis of gender mainstreaming as part of the development cooperation agenda. This state of affairs was reinforced by the TFGV’s action plan of February 2016 that stipulated that action initially focused on development cooperation departments and that other ministry directorates-general would follow at a later stage. Likewise, the TFGV’s internal gender mainstreaming strategy of 2020 focuses on the DGIS

⁴³ See also the ToC of 2018: 4.

⁴⁴ This is in line with what was recommended by the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) in 2001 (AIV, 2001: 17).

⁴⁵ Issues included: (i) communication on the TFGV’s aims and activities; (ii) the division of responsibilities for gender mainstreaming between the TFGV and other departments; (iii) the TFGV as a centre of knowledge and partner for other departments; (iv) the TFGV’s supporting role vis-à-vis embassy staff; and (v) a vision on the TFGV’s future.

⁴⁶ See also the ToC, Geleerde lessen: 6-7; Gender Resource Facility, 2016: 11.

⁴⁷ The ToC of 2015 observed in this respect that ‘(although) a growing number of colleagues are committed to women’s rights and can show gender results, there is still no systematic commitment to and accountability for proper integration of gender in entire foreign policy’.

departments and development cooperation themes even though it highlights that '(women's) rights and gender equality is a cross-cutting goal in Dutch development cooperation policy and Dutch foreign policy', implying that all Dutch foreign policy 'takes into account and contributes to gender equality through gender mainstreaming' (permanent missions Geneva and New York, 2020 and 2021).

Text box 4: *Difficult to trace gender mainstreaming outside development cooperation*

The focus of this evaluation was on gender mainstreaming in development cooperation. Nevertheless, it briefly looked at: (i) a range of plans of departments outside DGIS and Dutch permanent missions; and (ii) what non-development policies had to say about mainstreaming women's rights and gender equality. This analysis shows that policy frameworks of the Dutch permanent missions to the UN do not mention gender, except when reference is made to the interplay between food security, environment, health and gender equality (Rome permanent mission, strategic vision 2019-2023, page 4). This strategic vision also refers to 'protection and empowerment of women and girls as part of the humanitarian agenda and to involving women and youth for small-scale agricultural transformation' (pages 7, 14). References to gender are also made to women's rights as part of the Dutch human rights agenda (UN Human Rights Council, Third Committee of the UN, UN Commission on the Status of Women, UN Commission on Population and Development). Other recent annual plans refer to equal rights for LGBTQI+ persons and women and girls (DMM, page 3), gender equality in relation to the department's own staffing structure (DIE), and, more implicitly, when reference is made to a '(focus) on human security, with attention to the broad SDG agenda and implementation of UN resolution 1325' (DVB, page 4). Recent policies furthermore show that:

- There is a desire to make explicit agreements on gender in future trade agreements (page 2). This includes a focus on female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship and female membership and leadership of Dutch trade missions (*Handelsagenda*, Trade agenda of 2018) and an even more prominent role for gender diversity in the implementation of this trade agenda (2020 annual plan *Directie Internationaal Ondernemen* (DIO)).
- Human security and a people-oriented approach are starting points for the Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022 (Working Worldwide for the Security of the Netherlands, which 'includes a focus on the broad SDG agenda and the special position of women and gender in conflict areas, including implementation of UN Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security' (page 26). Moreover, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security is seen as 'an inextricable part of our integrated foreign and security policy. It forms the normative framework within which the government operates, and it determines how the Netherlands deploys policy instruments and what partnerships it forms' (page 11). However, it does not elaborate on how this can be mainstreamed.

The term task force used for the Task Force for Women's Rights and Gender Equality signals a temporary task. This task would no longer be required once the ministry's directorates, embassies and permanent missions all assumed their responsibilities for mainstreaming gender and gender expertise would be centralised.

Staffing

Over the years, there has been little change in the Task Force's staffing, and in mid-2021 there will be still be an equal number of 10 full-time positions⁴⁸ as was the case in 2014 when it was established. At the same time, the annual budget for the above-mentioned programmes targeting women's rights and gender equality, for which the TFGV is responsible, has increased from EUR 42 million to some EUR 80 million.

The TFGV is thus obliged to perform a balancing act to combine its programme management, gender diplomacy and mainstreaming tasks.⁴⁹ Traditional human resource constraints continue to affect its mainstreaming role: regular turnover of key staff results in the concomitant loss of knowledge and experience as well as the loss of networks with other departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With respect to the gender focal points (GFPs), there is no fixed job description and there are no formal prerequisites to be nominated as GFP. So far it has not been possible to establish firm agreements with management teams at departmental levels about results and time commitment of the GFPs.⁵⁰ Being a GFP remains a voluntary position (based on an individual interest in the topic), is not remunerated and comes as an add-on to other tasks. What GFPs do and achieve in terms of gender mainstreaming is not a standard part of their performance appraisal, although there is some variation between departments, leading to different interpretations across the ministry of what the GFP role is. Moreover, since results are usually not tracked, there is no clear career incentive to engage in gender mainstreaming activities, beyond what may be directly relevant to one's own agenda.

Though there are male focal points, in most cases the GFPs are women. In The Hague, most gender focal points are junior staff, with limited practical gender mainstreaming experience, though most have participated in training sessions organised by the TFGV. The fact that primarily young policymakers are engaged carries the risk of sending the message that gender equality is not being taken seriously.⁵¹ At the embassies, GFPs are national staff, who, generally, are very experienced and well trained, working in the embassy's human rights department, for example, and 'doing gender' in addition to other work.⁵² Even though gender mainstreaming is officially everyone's responsibility, there is a tendency for gender-related work to be assigned to GFPs by default.

⁴⁸ This figure excludes part-time staff at DDE and DSH.

⁴⁹ On this issue, see e.g. Derbyshire, 2012: 414, 415, 417.

⁵⁰ This state of affairs is comparable to what was found in a NORAD evaluation of 2015 (Jones et al., 2015: 42).

⁵¹ OSAGI, 2001.

⁵² Similar to the national gender focal points working with Sida (Bjarnegård and Ugglå, 2018: 45).

On a more positive note, this state of affairs allows a wide range of policy officers to hold this position and to work on both their own development in the area of gender during their term, as well as on their departments' area of expertise.

Networking

A WhatsApp group and messages on gender mainstreaming are presently the main channels to share gender equality and women's rights-related information, resources, advice and best practices between the TFVG and GFPs. However, until very recently,⁵³ there was little interaction among the GFPs at the Dutch embassies in development cooperation partner countries and the GFPs based in The Hague. All sides expressed the desire for more interaction (e.g. by organising annual meetings among GFPs of different thematic departments) as this is expected to further improve the ministry's gender mainstreaming performance.

On the issue of accountability⁵⁴

In many countries, gender mainstreaming in development cooperation depended on the commitment and interests of individual civil servants, with the risk that women's rights and gender equality disappeared when political priorities were translated into programmes and projects.⁵⁵ Several organisational factors explained this phenomenon, such as a lack of accountability systems, the absence of rewards and sanctions to effectively influence behaviour to make gender 'everyone's business' and 'a lack of performance benchmarks to hold management accountable'.⁵⁶ To address this issue in the Netherlands, almost 20 years ago, the Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV) stressed that it was important that political and administrative leadership felt responsible for gender mainstreaming and was accountable.⁵⁷

⁵³ In December 2020, the TFVG organised a gender transformative virtual workshop for the GFPs.

⁵⁴ Accountability mechanisms are concrete steps by which an organisation determines the extent to which it is carrying out its commitment to mainstreaming gender equality in its structure, operations, and programmes. They also include measures or steps an organisation may take to correct imbalances or ensure compliance with policies and guidelines (the Gender Practitioners Collaborative, 2017: 9).

⁵⁵ Along the same lines, a recent evaluation of Sida's gender mainstreaming plan refers to the mismatch between its position in 'documents and interviews' that signal the importance of gender as a Swedish priority and 'actual content': the evaluation did not find 'any clear organisational position regarding the content or direction of gender integration at Sida', and Sida left it 'to individual staff members and their immediate superiors to decide how and to what extent to comply with the priority given to gender priority' (Bjarnegård and Uggla, 2018: 36).

⁵⁶ IOB, 2015a: 67, 68. Other reasons were: (i) too many competing leadership and development priorities; (ii) no coherent management strategies for sustained implementation of gender mainstreaming; and (iii) existing gender mainstreaming tools were not supported by management with adequate staffing or the required organisational changes, resources, or budgets.

⁵⁷ AIV, 2001: 17, 23. According to OECD/DAC Gendernet, to do away with the non-binding and informal character of gender equality, senior management should commit to gender mainstreaming and should be held accountable (2014: 37). Moreover, accountability could be enhanced by making performance on gender equality a standard topic for professional assessments for all staff, including management (Jones et al., 2015: 43) and by introducing (non-material) rewards for staff that make a bigger effort to promote gender mainstreaming (Byron and Örnemark, 2010: 80-81). See also DBE, 2013: 13, 99; the Gender Practitioners Collaborative, 2017: 5; and Jones et al., 2015: 38-39.

In line with the accountability issue referred to in IOB's 2015 gender policy evaluation and recommendations of the OECD/DAC Gendernet,⁵⁸ the above-mentioned action plan of February 2016 refers to gender-related results becoming an element in the appraisal cycle of the ministry's management (and the need to include this in job descriptions and requirements). However, despite initiatives from the TFGV, little has happened as the ministry's personnel department could not be convinced in 2016. The argument was that if gender was to be incorporated, this would also have to be mandatory for other cross-cutting priorities, such as the climate. It is currently up to the individual directors and line managers to decide which result areas to include in job descriptions and staff appraisal forms.⁵⁹

While the international literature on gender mainstreaming in development cooperation emphasises that staff is to be held accountable, it is not really evident for *what*: for taking all the necessary steps to make gender mainstreaming happen? Or for results at the outcome and impact level, for example in terms of changes in gender equality? The discussions held as part of this evaluation show that the answers to this question vary. An issue in this respect is that in recipient countries, including the ones supported by the Netherlands, there is not necessarily sufficient political will to implement gender-mainstreaming initiatives. While this may discourage a donor from putting gender mainstreaming on the agenda unless prompted to do so by its own organisation,⁶⁰ it may make achieving gender equality outcomes and impact difficult and time-consuming.

Gender awareness and training

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According to the international literature on gender mainstreaming, achieving the aims of gender equality requires an organisation's staff to have the relevant knowledge and skills. If these are not sufficiently present, training may be considered.⁶¹ Such training should complement gender awareness raising and the development of an organisational setting and culture that are conducive to mainstreaming, including a shared commitment to and understanding of gender mainstreaming. Frequent changes in staff, the thinly spread knowledge of gender equality and the subsequent loss of expertise underline the need for continuous training. However, as observed by IOB in 2015, the assessment of these initiatives was not positive: it was unclear what training had really worked and for whom. Unless it had been made mandatory, it was difficult to get senior management and non-gender specialist

⁵⁸ OECD/DAC Gendernet recommended to '(create) incentives for good staff performance on gender equality – for example, through the incorporation of gender equality objectives in personal performance frameworks, especially at the management level' (OECD/DAC Gendernet, 2014: 37).

⁵⁹ The state of affairs in this respect differs little from what IOB concluded in 2015: 'Neither positive nor negative incentives exist to make sure that 'gender' is addressed and that staff and organisations are indeed accountable for implementing what has been agreed upon at the political level' (IOB, 2015a: 69).

⁶⁰ DBE, 2013: 92-93.

⁶¹ According to IOB's gender policy evaluation of 2015, the expertise that existed in the ministry and the embassies should continue to be used and should be strengthened for making gender mainstreaming a reality (IOB, 2015a: 22).

operational staff to participate.⁶² The following paragraphs concern the efforts that were made in recent years to strengthen the ministry's capacity on gender: (i) training courses; (ii) internal website; and (iii) contracting of external expertise.

Training courses

There are currently three online training courses that were developed in cooperation with thematic departments and the Academy for International Relations:

- The introductory 'Gender (of)course' training course, which provides background information and primarily serves to raise awareness on gender. The training is not mandatory but is used regularly by new staff.⁶³ The training lasts about 6 hours.
- A follow-up training of 2-2.5 hours on 'Conflict and crisis: putting gender equality up front'. The training deals with the relation between gender, conflict and crisis, the priority themes within these domains and current trends. It also gives a historical background on the policies that have resulted in establishing the [Addressing Root Causes Fund](#) (2016-2021).
- A follow-up training of 2-2.5 hours on 'Gender in sustainable business and development'. This training course explains the relevance of a gender perspective for sustainable business and development, describes how a gender perspective was integrated into the TradeMark East Africa and zSCALE programmes and the results that were obtained by doing so. Furthermore, it explains why promoting female entrepreneurship and creating more and better jobs for women contributes to the results areas for private sector development.

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The interviews conducted within the framework of this evaluation show the following:

- Most gender focal points have participated in one or more of these training sessions and rate them positively. As gender focal points, they had an intrinsic interest in the topic of gender equality.
- The courses provide interested policymakers with more background information, help to raise awareness and increase their knowledge. They were also satisfied with the courses.⁶⁴ At the same time, interviewees expressed a need for more practical hands-on information and examples, for example on how to conduct an in-depth gender analysis or how to make sure that evaluations use high-quality gender indicators or apply gender-sensitive methodology. The current courses, moreover, do not cater to more senior staff members. This group is instead seeking guidance on more advanced topics such as the development of clear gender policy objectives and advanced methods of evaluation.
- Furthermore, since the courses are not mandatory, it is questionable whether they really contribute to mainstreaming gender awareness to policy officers who are not familiar with the effect of gender dynamics in their policy domain or changing the attitudes of those that are indifferent.

⁶² IOB, 2015a: 55, 57.

⁶³ Some departments (an example is DDE) have included the courses in the standard orientation materials and introductory programme for new staff.

⁶⁴ This is an improvement in comparison with the findings of IOB's gender policy evaluation of 2015 (IOB, 2015a: 55).

Gender@Work – internal website

The primary means of knowledge sharing that is provided for the advancement of gender mainstreaming is an internal internet-based work page where resources are shared: 'Gender@Work'. This site provides information on topics such as the correct use of the OECD gender marker, a description of what a gender analysis is and how to carry out a gender assessment of a programme. The site also refers to factsheets on gender equality in different thematic domains (such as climate change, women entrepreneurship, food security, and water management).

Gender resource facility and pool

In late 2014, the ministry introduced the gender resource facility. Its mandate was to advise and support embassies and ministry departments in translating overall gender policies into concrete programmes and interventions, and to make gender knowledge available to the ministry.⁶⁵ This facility came to an end in 2018 and was succeeded by a DSO/IGG expertise pool that includes gender expertise as one of the specialisations; as before, the pool allows departments to commission tasks that require gender expertise.

The total amount paid for all further agreements for the gender resource facility is to EUR 2,843,335. Contracts were signed with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT, 2018-2021) and Femconsult (2014-2018), MDF Training & Consultancy and Ecorys to provide gender experts and share best practices and lessons learnt.

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According to [KIT's website](#), between 2014 and 2018, the facility provided 32 advisory services, 65 quick advisory services to ministry departments, embassies and partners, 50 advisory reports, 10 publications and 5 factsheets. Clients have included, among others, the TFVG, RVO, DDE and the Dutch embassies in Benin and Ethiopia.

Although some departments have used the pool in the past, the gender focal points did not know much about it. Those that were aware of its existence, had not used it or had not used it recently.

Finally, together with 13 other countries and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the ministry has contributed to the World Bank's Umbrella Fund for Gender Equality. This Fund leverages expertise across the Bank and the International Finance Corporation to generate diagnostics, research, pilot programmes, innovative interventions and impact evaluations on the priority topics of Dutch gender policy. The performance of this Fund was not assessed within the framework of this evaluation.

⁶⁵ According to IOB's gender policy evaluation, '(it) was too early to assess the effectiveness of this arrangement, though in itself such outside technical assistance could not compensate for the limited gender capacity at the ministry itself' (IOB, 2015a: 57).

Main conclusions

The organisational structure that was set up to achieve the gender equality ambitions, including gender mainstreaming in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has not changed fundamentally since 2015. The Task Force at the ministry in The Hague has a pivotal role, complemented by a network of gender focal points, who are mainly junior (female) policy officers and staff in the Dutch missions abroad. While overall this set-up has been functional, the evaluation has identified issues concerning among others:

The level of institutional embedding of the Task Force within the ministry has not been conducive for ministry-wide gender mainstreaming. As a result, gender mainstreaming has remained a theme that is primarily relevant for Dutch development cooperation.

There has been little change in the staffing of the TFGV while its project portfolio has more than doubled in value since it was established. Staffing for gender mainstreaming has remained an issue for many years and requires the TFGV to perform a balancing act when combining its programme management, gender diplomacy and gender mainstreaming tasks.

In ministry departments and the Dutch missions, the position of gender focal points remains voluntary and informal to a large extent. The challenges they face have not changed drastically since 2015: there are various interpretations of the GFP role, and gender mainstreaming is not a standard part of staff performance appraisal. Interaction among the GFPs has remained limited. Accountability of (senior) staff for women's rights and gender equality has remained an issue to be resolved as well.

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To address caveats in knowledge and skills, several training options exist for ministry staff, including a general introductory training on gender, and short training sessions on women in conflict and private sector development respectively. Participation in these training sessions, which were positively assessed, is largely voluntary, although encouraged. The findings from the review call for a more hands-on training that could tailor to different audiences within the ministry. The use and awareness of the gender resource facility and pool that was designed to address shortages in gender expertise are limited.

Ministry-wide recommendations

- Maintain a central entity with gender expertise but consider changing the name of the Task Force to emphasise that gender mainstreaming is an integral part of the Dutch development policy and foreign policy, which requires a continuous effort, also in the future.
- Consider changing the institutional positioning of the TFGV to extend its reach more systematically beyond DGIS to other directorates-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As already suggested by the AIV in 2001, this requires a relatively high position in the ministry's hierarchy. Several options, including a link with the ministry's Strategic Advice Unit (ESA) could be explored.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ See AIV, 2001: 17. See also 'On track with gender. Taking stock phase', 2010, policy brief: 3.

- In an organisation with frequent rotation of staff, make sure that sufficient human resources are available at the Task Force to effectively and continuously perform its gender-mainstreaming task.
- Building on previous experiences, when senior TFVG staff members were seconded to thematic departments, senior gender expertise should be made available for all of the ministry's individual directorates-general. People in such positions can support gender mainstreaming in all phases of the policy cycle (from gender analysis to the development of gender-sensitive evaluation methods).⁶⁷
- Draft terms of reference for the gender focal points. Without turning this into a strait jacket, a set of standard tasks may help in creating more uniformity in how the incumbents interpret and put their gender-related tasks into practice. The terms of reference ought to spell out their technical functions, roles and responsibilities and clarify that their main focus is to *advise* and assist colleagues and management. This can then also be a subject in their annual performance appraisal.
- The terms of reference ought to ensure that adequate time, conditions and financial resources are allocated so that the GFP can perform the required tasks. Where relevant, a distinction could be made between senior gender advisors and technical gender focal points. Senior management should monitor the focal points' gender mainstreaming activities in performance evaluations. This may increase the responsibility and accountability for gender focal points, and will further institutionalise gender mainstreaming.
- Provide opportunities for the GFPs for acquiring gender-related expertise (in particular in relation to the sector in which they work) and advocacy skills.
- Designate more men as gender focal points to enhance diversity in terms of both representation and perspectives.
- Agree on what senior management's commitment and accountability for gender mainstreaming could mean and how this can be incorporated into their annual performance appraisal.
- Consider making basic gender training obligatory for all newly appointed staff, as was the case for the thematic training sessions that the ministry organised in the 1980s.⁶⁸ Basic gender training could also be incorporated into the training programme for new civil servants of the ministry's [Academy for International Relations](#).

TFVG recommendations

- Maximise the potential of the gender focal points network by clarifying the objectives of the network.
- Facilitate the exchange between GFPs from different departments or within regions, and between these focal points and the TFVG. This could be done, for example, through webinars and lessons learnt workshops, annual meetings among the GFPs to enhance the sharing of knowledge, skills and experience (equivalent to the so-called alumni or refresher days or 'terugkomdagen'). Gender focal points at embassies could also benefit from

⁶⁷ E.g. in SIDA, special policy advisers for themes such as women and SRHR and economic empowerment were nominated to serve the needs of specific departments. In addition, there are gender equality advisers in regional departments (Bjarnegård and Uggla, 2018: 43-44).

⁶⁸ See IOB, 1998: 28; 158.

exchanges with other GFPs in their region. Moreover, GFPs should be systematically involved in meetings and decision-making processes related to the programming of the Task Force's activities, as they are critical entry points for gender mainstreaming.

- Increase awareness and knowledge of gender equality issues among other ministry staff through, for example, internal awareness-raising, learning events and informal exchange. Examine whether awareness raising on gender mainstreaming can be linked to similar efforts related to the ministry's diversity and inclusion agendas.
- To stay on the ball, the TFGV could undertake regular participatory organisational gender audits to unravel institutional development and to come up with specific measures that are needed to redress organisational shortcomings and further improve the ministry's organisational capacity for gender mainstreaming.
- These audits could also be a key basis for developing (and subsequent adjusting) a ministry-wide gender-related training strategy that takes into account the different training needs of junior staff, gender focal points, and senior management, both in The Hague and at the embassies, and uses different training modalities.⁶⁹
- Provide access to thematic information resources and best practices that are tailored to the diverse needs of the gender focal points (and others). Use local expertise, including the gender focal points in the embassies and experts from local partners in the South, to develop these tools and best practices, keeping that in mind also for gender 'context matters'.
- Undertake capacity building with other countries as much as possible, especially because like-minded countries such as Sweden and Canada have developed tools on the same topics (e.g. gender analysis, gender planning, and monitoring; see Text box 5 below).
- Maintain the gender resource facility or a similar set-up that provides easy access to expertise and make this more accessible to different entities within the ministry. Part of the resources available could be used for analytical work and innovative and catalytic gender mainstreaming activities outside of development cooperation.

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Text box 5: *Examples of relevant gender toolkits*

- The Council of Europe, [Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit for Co-operation Projects](#);
- Government of Canada, [Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects](#) and [Gender Equality – Tools and resources](#);
- Sweden (SIDA), [Gender Toolbox](#) and its briefs on [gender analysis, gender equality in humanitarian assistance, women, water, sanitation and hygiene, women and land rights, women and food security, women's organisations and the engagement of men and gender equality and gender equity](#), and the [Handbook of Sweden's feminist foreign policy](#);
- United Nations and UNDP, including: [Gender mainstreaming made easy: Handbook for programme staff \(UNDP\)](#), the [Resource Book for Mainstreaming Gender in UN Common Programming at the Country Level](#);
- European Institute for Gender Equality, the [EIGE Gender impact assessment guide](#)

⁶⁹ For example, staff that is new to gender equality can benefit from awareness training and practical tools and guidelines, while more experienced staff and those with experience in the field of gender would benefit from guidance on the application of advanced gender-transformative evaluation methods.

and the [EIGE Toolkit on institutional transformation](#);

- OECD, the [OECD toolkit for mainstreaming and implementing gender equality](#);
- USAID on [delivering gender equality](#); a [Gender-sensitive conflict analysis facilitators guide](#);
- UKAID on [gender equality](#);
- KIT, the [Gender and Rights Resource kit](#) and its issue briefs; or [What Works to Prevent Violence](#).

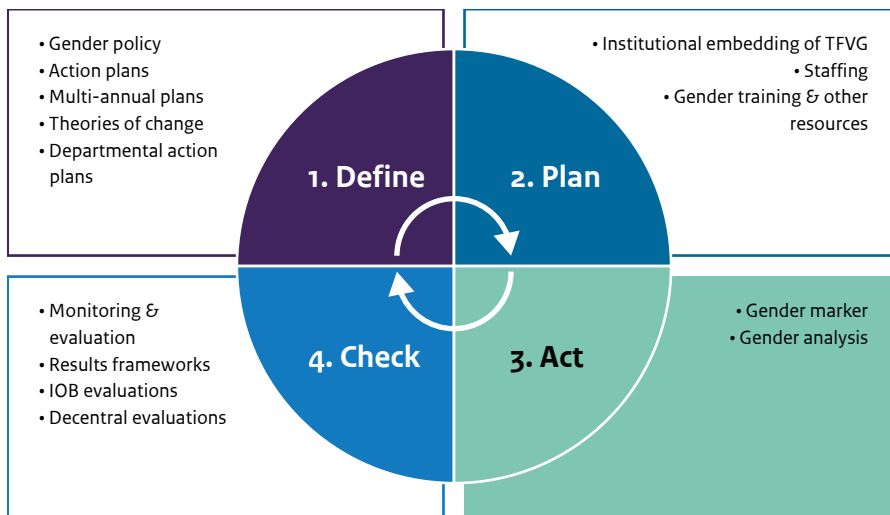
Recommendations for other departments within the ministry of Foreign Affairs

- Support from management for gender mainstreaming can be made more explicit as well, for example by appointing gender ambassadors at a managerial level in each of the ministry's directorates general.
- Appoint gender experts at the level of the directorate-general or department to make specialised gender-related expertise more available.

4

Gender analysis and gender marker

Introduction



The international literature on gender mainstreaming underscores that it is important to address gender issues from the initial stage of the design of policies, projects and programmes onwards to the stage of evaluation. If this is not done, it is unlikely that gender issues will be consistently integrated once the design stage is over. Gender analyses, the first topic of this chapter, are a key instrument to make this happen. The second part of this chapter will address the use of the gender policy marker at the MFA. The gender marker is an instrument to quantitatively track the planned financial flows that target gender equality.⁷⁰

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Gender analysis

Gender analysis (see Text box 6) is one of the techniques that can be used to assess which programmes/projects to engage in and to fund in the first place (i.e. the identification of problems and societal issues that need to be addressed) and to provide data and information that is necessary to integrate a gender perspective into the design of an intervention.⁷¹ IOB's 2015 gender policy evaluation reported that there was considerable variation in the way in which the ministry's assessment memorandums that were prepared for new projects and

⁷⁰ According to OECD, while it is expected that the marker 'can contribute to identifying gaps between policy and financial commitments, and incentivise efforts to close them', the marker: (i) only provides an estimate of DAC members' aid in support of gender equality rather than an exact quantification; (ii) is a qualitative instrument and a monitoring and accountability tool and, most importantly, (iii) only concerns spending commitments – not actual expenditures. The marker cannot and does not intend to measure the outcomes and impact of supported interventions. On the gender marker see: Gendernet, 2016, 'Definition and minimum recommended criteria for the DAC gender equality policy marker' and the 'Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker' of 2016.

⁷¹ Other tools can be used as well, such as guidelines, checklists, manuals and handbooks, though the evaluation department of the African Development Bank observed in 2012 that 'experiences are mixed and when not obligatory, they were easily qualified as administrative rituals' (AFDB, 2012: 13, 35-39, 74-75).

programmes (the Bemo) had dealt with the cross-cutting theme of gender and women's rights.⁷² Though the ministry had underscored the importance of such gender analyses, the 2015 evaluation also found that their use for making concrete proposals to address the issues that women faced varied. Moreover, at the time, no gender analyses were found for centrally funded aid programmes.⁷³

Text box 6: *What is a gender analysis?*

A gender analysis identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a particular social context. Such a contextualised analysis – '(context) matters a great deal; what works in one setting for one particular target group can be counterproductive in another' (IOB, 2015a: 22) – makes it possible to assess the influence of gender inequalities on project objectives and activities and to explain how the different needs of women and men will be addressed and how this will be monitored. A gender analysis should be able to specify what is gained or rendered visible by mainstreaming gender into a specific project, and, counterfactually, what the consequences would be when not doing so (Bjarnegård and Uggla, 2017: 14). In the Netherlands, an instrument similar to gender analysis already existed in the 1990s: the Gender Assessment Study (GAS), which, supported by *the Gender Assessment Study: A guide for policy staff* (1994), included information on the division of labour between women and men, context factors that determined the relative position of the two sexes and the capacity of local implementing organisations to work for both groups (IOB, 1998: 144-145).

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An analysis of the state of affairs five years later shows the following:

- Preparing a gender analysis is an obligatory step in the online format for the ministry's assessment memorandum (Bemo), which is used to assess whether programmes and projects are eligible for funding.
- The TFVG provides a guidance document on its *Gender@Work* site, but does not systematically follow up or monitor the quality of the analyses that are conducted.
- An assessment of a selection of Bemos shows that gender analyses are included. No notable differences in the frequency with which these analyses are included were observed between departments. In terms of quality, however, some variance was observed. Depending on the expertise of the employee in question, the analysis may provide a more in-depth overview or discussion of gender components.
- A key finding, however, is that a systematic translation from gender analysis into a concrete gender strategy that includes gender results and indicators is not available in most

⁷² This variation was only partly explained by the relevance of the theme for the project or programme that was assessed; other factors that came into play were the format of the assessment memorandum and the lack of consultation of the TFVG in the design of programmes and projects. See IOB, 2015a: 59, 61. A review done by the Gender Resource Facility in 2014 had similar findings (Gender Resource Facility, 2014: 3-4, 7). Other cross-cutting issues are climate, private sector development, policy coherence and strengthening civil society, as well as digitalisation

⁷³ IOB, 2015a: 19, 58, 60, 61, 69.

evaluations.⁷⁴ In fact, a common observation in the evaluations reviewed for this study is that gender is placed outside of the intervention logic and that interventions lack specific activities to address the ‘cross-cutting objective’ of contributing to gender equality. The lack of gender expertise and a dedicated budget for such activities and their evaluation are reasons mentioned in evaluations for this approach towards gender mainstreaming. As a result, evaluations rarely reflect explicitly on the outcomes of the initial gender analyses or address the question of how these outcomes have shaped project and programme implementation.

Gender marker and gender-related expenditures

Achieving strong gender equality outcomes requires adequate, sustained financing in support of gender equality and women’s rights in key areas such as economic empowerment; women’s participation and leadership; women, peace and security; and SRHR. To track aid in support of gender equality and women’s rights, the OECD uses the gender equality policy marker.

Like other OECD member states, the Netherlands uses this policy marker for its annual reporting to OECD’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and to indicate what share of the development cooperation budget is intended to contribute to gender equality. The gender marker is an obligatory feature of project/programme assessment; rating is done by the policy officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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IOB’s 2015 gender policy evaluation made clear that the marker had been used inconsistently and, as a result, that it had ‘not been possible to get a coherent picture of the budget for gender mainstreaming over the years’.⁷⁵ On the basis of OECD/DAC financial data, the current evaluation shows that since 2015, development cooperation-related expenditures (ODA) for which gender was a significant or principal objective have increased (see Figure 3). By 2019, the most recent year for which these data are available:

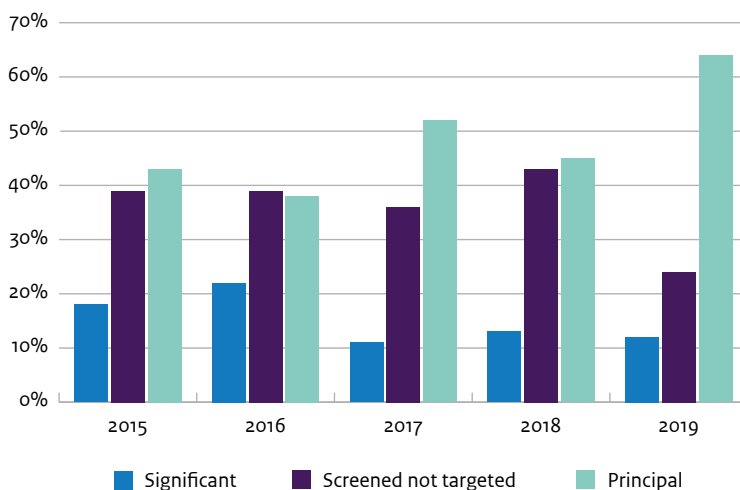
- Close to 65% of ODA projects/programmes were rated as having a significant gender component. This means that gender equality was an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/programme.
- Some 11% of ODA projects/programmes were rated as principal, implying that gender equality was the main objective of the project/programme, fundamental in its design and expected results and that it would not have been undertaken without this objective.
- The 76% with either a significant or a principal gender equality aim is a better score than

⁷⁴ This is in line with the promise that was made in the [Government’s response to IOB’s gender policy evaluation of 2015 and the gender ToC of 2018](#) (page 4). A letter to Parliament on Dutch aid in the field of food security of 6 June 2019 referred to the use of gender analyses for assessing food security programmes (pages 5-6).

⁷⁵ IOB, 2015a: 65, 20, 70. Similar findings were reported in an [evaluation of the European Commission on support to gender equality and women’s empowerment of 2015](#) and the evaluation of Norway’s support to women’s rights and gender equality in development cooperation of 2015 (Jones et al., 2015: 8 and 78).

what was reported by IOB in 2015. It is also above the OECD/DAC average of 38%.⁷⁶ However, it falls short of the target that was agreed upon in the EU Gender Action Plan *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020*: at least 85% of all new ODA proposals should have gender equality as either a principal or significant objective by 2020.

Figure 3: *The Netherlands and the use of the gender marker in evaluations (2015-2019)*



Source: OECD/DAC financial data.

In 2019, the Netherlands was among nine OECD/DAC member states that focused 50% or more of their assistance on gender equality as a principal or significant objective.⁷⁷ It was among the top-five EU donor countries when it came to the use of the marker, although it is not evident whether the score reflects better use of the marker or whether a higher score really reflects more attention for gender – or more attention on paper only. Moreover, interviews revealed that there are differences among staff members and in particular between departments in how the labels ‘significant’ and ‘principal’ are used.

Furthermore, data from the above-mentioned OECD/DAC database shows that certain development cooperation sectors score (well) above the averages mentioned above. This is particularly true for an area such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) with a score of almost 100% (principal and significant combined) throughout the 2015-2019 period. An analysis of the use of the gender marker across priority areas in Dutch development cooperation shows other interesting patterns as well.

⁷⁶ For the comparison: see OECD/DAC Gendernet, 2019 and OECD, 2020: 12-13. The remaining 24% that was screened using the gender policy marker was found not to target gender equality.

⁷⁷ OECD, 2019, ‘Finance for gender equality and empowerment: A snapshot’, OECD Development Co-operation Directorate as part of the work programme of the DAC Network on Gender Equality (Gendernet). The others were: Sweden, Ireland, Iceland, Canada, Australia, Finland, Belgium and Italy. The Netherlands ranked 13th in 2016, behind countries such as Sweden, Italy and Spain (OECD, 2016, ‘Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Donor Charts’, Paris, March 2016).

Over the 2015-2019 period, areas such as social infrastructure and services, water supply and sanitation, business and other services (on the Dutch Good Growth Fund) and gender (see Text box 7) and agriculture, forestry and fisheries have generally scored better than average.⁷⁸ With the exception of water supply and sanitation, their performance in this respect also improved during these years (see Table 3).

⁷⁸ This is not very different from what was observed by Brouwers, 2013: 16, for example, and more recently in OECD/DAC Gendernet, 2016 and OECD, 2020: 13-14.

Table 3 Gender marker in key areas of intervention (development cooperation) percentages

| | 2015 | | 2016 | | 2017 | | 2018 | | 2019 | |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | Gender total | Not targeted | Gender total | Not targeted | Gender total | Not targeted | Gender total | Not targeted | Gender total | Not targeted |
| Total | 61.3% | 38.7% | 60.6% | 39.4% | 63.5% | 36.5% | 57.4% | 42.6% | 76.3% | 23.7% |
| Social infrastructure and services | 82.0% | 18.0% | 71.4% | 28.6% | 60.3% | 39.7% | 69.8% | 30.2% | 77.4% | 22.6% |
| Population policies, SRHR | 98.0% | 2.0% | 99.0% | 1.0% | 91.2% | 8.8% | 97.0% | 3.0% | 99.3% | 0.7% |
| Water supply and sanitation | 78.1% | 21.9% | 71.1% | 28.9% | 82.5% | 17.5% | 82.2% | 17.8% | 72.1% | 27.9% |
| Government and civil service | 82.5% | 17.5% | 56.7% | 43.3% | 37.9% | 62.1% | 48.6% | 51.4% | 72.4% | 27.6% |
| Energy | 9.8% | 90.2% | 91.2% | 8.8% | 7.7% | 92.3% | 4.8% | 95.2% | 94.0% | 6.0% |
| Banking and financial services | 14.2% | 85.5% | 0.0% | 100.0% | 0.0% | 100.0% | 8.0% | 92.0% | 82.8% | 17.2% |
| Business and other services | 72.7% | 27.3% | 75.1% | 24.9% | 77.3% | 22.7% | 67.7% | 32.3% | 95.9% | 4.1% |
| Employment creation | 0.0% | 100.0% | 72.0% | 28.0% | 68.4% | 31.6% | 95.8% | 4.2% | 99.7% | 0.3% |
| Agriculture, forestry, fisheries | 68.6% | 31.4% | 60.9% | 39.1% | 75.2% | 24.8% | 66.4% | 33.6% | 86.6% | 13.4% |
| Humanitarian aid | 5.1% | 94.9% | 23.7% | 76.3% | 84.9% | 15.1% | 64.3% | 35.7% | 75.9% | 24.1% |
| Emergency response | 4.0% | 96.0% | 29.1% | 70.9% | 89.8% | 10.2% | 55.7% | 44.3% | 76.1% | 23.9% |
| Conflict, peace and security | 54.0% | 46.0% | 46.5% | 53.5% | 37.3% | 62.7% | 51.0% | 49.0% | 44.5% | 55.5% |
| Human rights | 26.7% | 73.3% | 47.3% | 52.7% | 39.4% | 60.6% | 48.3% | 51.7% | 53.0% | 47.0% |

The key area of conflict, peace and security appears to consistently perform below the Dutch average; its performance does not appear to have improved in the period 2015-2019. However, there were improvements in the areas of banking and financial services and employment creation, and especially in the areas of humanitarian aid and emergency response.⁷⁹

In the area of human rights, which falls under the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the scores on gender 'principal' and 'significant' have improved since 2015. They reached 53% in 2019. Given the priority attached to gender in this field, it is hard to understand that this share was just over 50%.⁸⁰

Text box 7: Gender in the Dutch Good Growth Fund (DGGF)

In 2014, the ministry introduced the Dutch Good Growth Fund with a budget of EUR 770 million. At the time of IOB's gender policy evaluation, one year later, it was not possible to assess what its results were and whether women were able to benefit from the resources set aside. Since the DGGF had a 100% gender marker '1' in the period 2015-2018, the current evaluation looked at what a recent external evaluation had to say on gender mainstreaming under the DGGF umbrella. According to this evaluation, the idea was that 'DGGF investments would create jobs, add production capacity and enhance knowledge transfer – also in low-income countries and fragile states. The Fund would target women- and youth-owned companies in DGGF countries, and investments would have environmental and social benefits' (ITAD, 2020: 7). These results were linked to more fundamental and longer-term results, but according to the evaluation of 2020, the DGGF was not 'fully set up' to do so and the Fund was 'not designed to systematically seek out investment opportunities that foster inclusive growth and poverty reduction, or that empower vulnerable groups' (ITAD, 2020: 7). According to the evaluation, the DGGF, apart from insisting on equal pay for equal work, facilitated 'the creation of jobs that generally follow local conventions on the gender-based division of labour' which was found not to be aligned 'with the Dutch government's overall commitments on breaking through gender patterns where such patterns put women at a disadvantage' (ITAD, 2020: 37).

In other words, a tension was observed between the prominence of gender equality in Dutch development politics and the limited manner in which the DGGF operationalises gender equality. On the other hand, efforts were made to increase the women-owned companies' engagement (e.g. through technical assistance and training (PwC and Triple Jump, 2019: 17)) and by the end of 2019, over a third (34%) of the investments of the 2018-contracted investment funds reached women-owned

⁷⁹ It is worth noting that the 'principal' label is rarely applied in the field of humanitarian assistance, because gender equality is unlikely to be the 'main' objective of humanitarian assistance interventions.

⁸⁰ According to the subsidy framework for the Dutch Human Rights Fund 2019-2021, the theme of equal opportunities for women and girls is incorporated into the targets of other themes, such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech, especially for vulnerable groups such as women and girls and LGBTI (10). For example, reference is made to the protection of female human rights defenders and support for these human rights defenders to reduce gender-specific risks (10) and to protect and promote the safety of especially female journalists (4, 9).

SMEs (ITAD, 2018: 46; on the DGGF reaching female entrepreneurs, see also DGGF, 2019, 'Serving the financial needs of women-owned businesses in emerging markets: Perspectives from the Dutch Good Growth Fund portfolio'). In its reaction to the evaluation findings of 9 December 2020, the cabinet stated that more attention has been paid in recent years to breaking through existing gender patterns and that an increasing number of funds in the DGGF portfolio have a so-called gender-lens investment strategy and actively aim to support female entrepreneurs, improving their working conditions and rights (Cabinet reaction to external evaluation Dutch Good Growth Fund of 9 December 2020). Furthermore, the DGGF, in 2018, initiated a special study 'Serving the financial needs of women-owned businesses in emerging markets: Perspectives from the DGGF Portfolio' resulting in The [Case for Gender Lens Investing](#).

An examination of countries that have been a priority for Dutch development cooperation in recent years reveals the following:

- In many countries, the scores on the gender marker improved during the 2015-2019 period. This is the case for Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Lebanon, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, for example.
- However, scores may vary considerably from year to year. Burundi and Ethiopia are a case in point. The OECD/DAC data do not explain this variation.
- There are countries where the gender scores appear to have decreased, including Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Mozambique, i.e. countries where Dutch development cooperation is gradually being phased out, as well as the Palestinian Territories. It should also be noted that in the case of Rwanda, the share of positive scores on the gender marker has decreased, for example from 72% in 2015 to 32% in 2019. Likewise in the case of Egypt, the share of positive scores on the gender marker declined, from 90% in 2015 to less than 20% in 2019.

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Main conclusions

The evaluation shows that an increasing share of Dutch development cooperation projects and programmes scores positively on the OECD/DAC gender policy marker. This makes the Netherlands one of the better performing OECD/DAC members. At the same time, it should be noted that the marker represents the intentions and commitments at the time of project approval. It is also designed as a tool for international comparison. This limits the extent to which conclusions can be drawn about the question of whether gender is indeed increasingly and more effectively mainstreamed in practice on the ground, as illustrated by the Dutch Good Growth Fund.

Recommendations for the TFVG

- Offer training and tools, best practices of high-quality analyses and hands-on advice on how to conduct gender analysis in prioritised policy themes (such as politics, economic development, peace and security). Opportunities exist to connect with current initiatives in the domain of monitoring, evaluation and learning. Such training should also address the question of how the results of a gender analysis influence the subsequent stages of the policy cycle. Without such additional guidance, there is a risk that the gender analysis becomes a (quantitative) tick box exercise at the stage of project approval, while it is neglected during intervention design, implementation and M&E. Further guidance to improve the quality of gender analyses should also address the influence of men and masculinity in creating gender equality.
- Organise a process of quality control of the standard gender analyses that are performed in the project approval phase. The responsibility for this does not have to lie with the Task Force itself, but the TFVG can play a key role in initiating the development of such a process within and across departments.
- Provide clear instructions with examples across policy departments of projects that illustrate the correct application of the gender marker labels. This will help standardising its application.
- Consider introducing the gender marker as an obligatory element in project and programme proposals submitted to the ministry, making the submitter of these proposals responsible for giving a rating and explaining this rating.

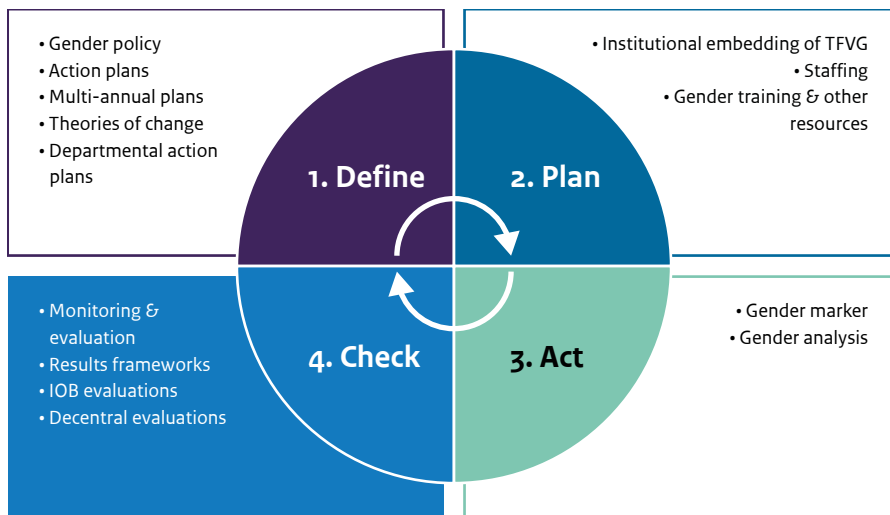
Recommendations for departments

- Make gender impact assessments a required element of all evaluations, in particular if the programme is intended to achieve transformation.

5

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

Introduction



To be able to measure progress, projects and programmes should have clear gender equality goals and gender equality indicators, as well as mechanisms to collect and report relevant gender-disaggregated data.⁸¹ The literature and the interviews held for this evaluation show that all of this is easier said than done and, in the end, M&E of gender mainstreaming results often remained weak. In 2015, IOB's gender policy evaluation⁸² already found that gender equality was rarely systematically integrated into monitoring and evaluation, including IOB's own evaluations.⁸³ Only a handful of evaluations of Dutch aid programmes reported on gender or women's rights. When they did, it was mostly in terms of activities that had been undertaken, and processes and immediate outputs that had been achieved (such as the numbers of women reached by training, awareness campaigns, medical care and shelter). The main causes for these observations identified at the time were: (i) gender was overlooked in programme design; (ii) gender was not included in the evaluation's terms of reference; (iii) gender-disaggregated monitoring data were not available. Moreover, M&E on gender equality suffered from vague core concepts and weak evaluation frameworks and the absence of proper indicators beyond activity or output level.⁸⁴ M&E and reporting systems need to be improved, preferably on the basis of the gender analyses. In following up on these analyses,

⁸¹ See e.g. the Gender Practitioners Collaborative, 2017: 7, 8 and Byron and Örnemark, 2010: 88. It was also felt that being able to demonstrate the effects of gender mainstreaming on wider development results could be an important incentive to promote gender mainstreaming (Byron and Örnemark, 2010: 8). Obviously, mechanisms are also needed to make sure that remedial action is taken when progress on gender equality fails.

⁸² IOB, 2015a: 19, 21, 22, 62, 64, 69, 70.

⁸³ The exceptions were IOB's evaluations on water and sanitation, SRHR and education. For a critique on practices at Sida in recent years, see Bjarnegård and Uggla, 2018: 101-102).

⁸⁴ IOB, 2015a: 19, 21, 22, 62, 64, 69, 70. Other sources confirm that in the past gender equality has frequently escaped the attention of evaluations. For example, see IOB, 1998: 147-148, 159; Byron and Örnemark, 2010: 87; Derbyshire 2012: 417; Brouwers, 2013: 6 and Milward, et al., 2015: 77.

longer-term outcomes and impact need to be captured. At the same time, a healthy dose of realism is called for, since changes at these levels often require a considerable period of time, exceeding the boundaries of even final project evaluations.

To see whether this state of affairs has changed, IOB examined the different results frameworks and indicators that were introduced in recent years as key elements in the ministry's monitoring of gender mainstreaming. It then assessed current evaluation practices related to gender mainstreaming and women's rights on the basis of its own evaluations and the evaluations done on behalf of other departments and embassies in the period 2015-2020.

Results framework women's rights and gender equality

The Revised Theory of Change Diagram and Results Framework – Women's Rights and Gender Equality was released in July 2020 (see page 26). This new framework includes a range of output and outcome indicators that are linked to the SDGs and the EU Gender Action Plan. IOB's analysis of the M&E elements of this ToC found the following:

- The indicators for women's rights and gender equality are linked to the indicators of the broader Strengthening Civil Society (SCS) results framework. This framework uses rather complex 'basket indicators'. While this may be relevant for the gender-specific programmes, this is not the case for the ministry's gender mainstreaming efforts as they are now linked to SCS basket indicators such as the number of times that CSOs succeed in creating space for CSO demands and positions through agenda setting, influencing the debate and/or creating space to engage.
- The focus on 'changes in the enabling environment' says little about whether women and girls have actually been able to grasp the benefits of these changes or about changes in 'gender equality'. Moreover, key notions used in the ToC, such as a 'strengthened enabling environment', women's 'voice' and women's 'meaningful participation', are subjective and therefore open to multiple interpretations. A more precise formulation would be desirable.
- While the impact areas only talk about women and girls,⁸⁵ the concepts of 'gender' and 'women' are used almost interchangeably, nor is it evident whether these terms mean the same thing or whether gender should be interpreted more broadly (i.e. also referring to men and boys). There is also little attention for intersectionality, linking gender with other key characteristics, such as income, age and disability.
- The framework refers to 'improved knowledge, attitudes and practises' among its outcome indicators, showing little consideration for the fact that this chain of expected changes requires considerably more time than the average length of current development cooperation projects and programmes, which is around 4-5 years.

⁸⁵ I.e. increasing female leadership and women's participation in (political) decision-making; economic ownership and improved economic environment for women; prevent and stop violence against women and girls; strengthening the role of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. See <https://www.osresultaten.nl/thema/vrouwenrechten-en-gendergelijkheid>.

Gender in other results frameworks

For its priority areas for development cooperation, the ministry also prepared results frameworks. These are the bases for its [reports to parliament](#) on the results of Dutch development cooperation. An analysis of the 2020 version of these internal documents (see Table 4)⁸⁶ shows that:

- The term gender is not always used (e.g. in the field of private sector development only when reference is made to gender-disaggregated data), while the notion of gender equality does not appear at all.
- Information in the frameworks pertains primarily to the numbers of men/male beneficiaries and women/female beneficiaries reached and/or benefiting from Dutch (co-)financed interventions. In the areas of migration and development, climate change and education, for example, this distinction between men/women and male/female beneficiaries is not consistently used; at times reference is simply made to (young) people or beneficiaries. There are few examples of indicators with a gender-transformative character, which tap into shifting power dynamics between men and women or changes in cultural and social norms or structures.⁸⁷
- The results frameworks do not reflect whether gender analyses were undertaken and whether these resulted in a differentiated approach, including, for example, activities specifically targeting women.⁸⁸ Moreover, the terms ‘benefiting from’ and ‘reached’ are subject to multiple interpretations if not further specified.

| Themes | Indicators – disaggregated female – male at outcome + impact level | Indicators – disaggregated female – male at output level |
|--|--|---|
| Water (management + water, sanitation and hygiene) | # of people benefiting from improved* river basin management and safe deltas # of people living in open defecation-free communities | # of people supported in projects to improve water efficiency |
| SRHR | # of young people reached with comprehensive, correct information on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, STIs, pregnancy and contraception (but not gender disaggregated) | # of women and girls using modern contraceptives # of additional women and girls using modern contraceptives. Regarding safe pregnancy and delivery, modern family planning, post-abortion care and safe abortion, it is about <i>disaggregation for sex</i> . |

⁸⁶ The table summarises the information as it can be found in the ministry’s results frameworks for climate, water, SRHR, education, private sector development, migration and development and humanitarian assistance.

⁸⁷ One example that was identified referred to survey responses from grantees on the question ‘To what extent do you feel that the grant has contributed to changes in cultural and social norms?’ (Mid-term evaluation report FIMI, 2020). The [Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) provides another, more comprehensive account of shifting dynamics in women’s engagement in the agriculture sector.

⁸⁸ On this issue, see the assessment of evaluations further below.

Table 4: Overview of indicators in results frameworks

| Themes | Indicators – disaggregated female – male at outcome + impact level | Indicators – disaggregated female – male at output level |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Private sector development | | Gender-disaggregated data for e.g. # of jobs supported # of workers with improved labour conditions # of trained small farmers in sustainable agricultural production |
| Migration and development | # of people using/ benefitting from partner-provided services (disaggregated by age, sex, status) | # of potential migrants (male/female) reached through awareness raising campaigns |
| Humanitarian assistance | # of people reached with humanitarian assistance (disaggregated by gender) | |
| Food and nutrition security | # of female small scale food producers that progressively empower women | |
| Education | Improved primary and lower secondary completion rates and reduced out-of-school rates on primary and secondary level, total and by gender; % of young women and men that found a job after the training | Improved gender equality and gender awareness in the knowledge institution |
| Climate | # of beneficiaries reached with measures to increase their resilience or reduce their exposure to climate change (disaggregated by direct and indirect beneficiaries and gender) | Output indicators (+ outcome indicators) refer to people although reference is made to ‘Increased resilience and strengthened livelihoods of forest-dependent communities and small producers (m/f)’ |

* # = number of people

Annual reporting on higher policy goals (including gender transformative ones such as changes in norms and values and changes in behaviour, women’s empowerment or increased resilience) should be done with great caution, since developments at this level take much longer than the typical lifetime of projects, programmes or partnerships of 4-5 years at most. They could, however, be integrated into ex-post or meta-evaluations. The same caution is warranted for mid-term and end-of-project evaluations, though mid-term evaluations are an opportunity to find out – at the very least – whether interventions are effectively reaching the target groups and, if not, to recommend adjustments to the approach in these interventions. It could be assessed if the conditions are in place at the time of the project that would enable change to occur in the long term.

Furthermore, using quantitative indicators also has its limitations. First, the benchmarks for these indicators tend to be donor-driven and frequently aim for gender equality with a 50/50 participation of men and women. This may be realistic in some local contexts, but in other situations, a participation of 20% of women could already be labelled as progress if women were previously never included. Second, these indicators do not consider larger questions of

gender equity, such as information on the role that women take on or the obstacles that they need to overcome to participate in a short-term project, which may have longer-term negative effects (e.g. additional costs for childcare).

Evaluations

General

IOB's review of evaluations conducted in the period 2015-2019 shows, first of all, that different types of gender approaches were used. These range from the commonly used 'gender-sensitive approach' to approaches that are labelled 'gender blind', 'gender positive', 'gender responsive' or, more rarely, 'gender transformative'. Each of these concepts refers to a different classification of the degree to which they critically engage with gender-related issues in the design and implementation of the project and in the evaluation (see Table 5 for the classification that the WHO uses for these approaches and their associated characteristics). Moreover, the evaluations use concepts that are often not clearly defined and are used interchangeably. This is problematic, because the goals for gender equality differ for each concept.⁸⁹

Table 5: WHO gender responsive assessment scale

| Characteristics | Gender blind | Gender sensitive | Gender specific | Gender transformative |
|--|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Ignores gender norms, roles and relations as well as differences in opportunities and resource allocation for women and men | ■ | | | |
| Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination | ■ | | | |
| Often constructed based on the principle of being 'fair' by treating everyone the same | ■ | | | |
| Considers gender norms, roles and relations | | ■ | | |
| Does not address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations | | ■ | | |
| Considers gender norms, roles and relations for women and men and how they affect access to and control over resources | | | ■ | ■ |
| Considers women's and men's specific needs | | | ■ | ■ |
| Intentionally targets and benefits a specific group of women or men to achieve certain policy or programme goals or meet certain needs | | | ■ | |

⁸⁹ Whereas a gender-sensitive approach, for example, indicates gender awareness, it does not offer remedial action; a gender-specific approach intentionally targets the achievement of certain policy or programme goals for men and/or women. Moreover, each approach has its own type of project activities as well as measurement and indicators.

Table 5: WHO gender responsive assessment scale

| Characteristics | Gender blind | Gender sensitive | Gender specific | Gender transformative |
|--|--------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties that they have based on their gender roles | | | | |
| Addresses the causes of gender-based health inequities | | | | |
| Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations | | | | |
| The objective is often to promote gender equality | | | | |
| Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men | | | | |

Review of IOB evaluations (2015-2019)

An analysis of 30 IOB reports that were published between 2015 and early 2021⁹⁰ shows the following.⁹¹ Gender equality or women and girls were absent from 13 reports, in most cases because they addressed topics with only a very remote link to gender equality (such as institutions, the functioning of bilateral or multilateral diplomacy, or diplomatic relations).⁹² Evaluations that did address gender mainstreaming made it clear that gender did not receive high priority, that a strategy or formal mandate to work on gender equality was lacking in project design, that working on gender equality went beyond the goals of the project, and/or that gender-disaggregated data was not available (see Text box 8 for a selection of key findings).

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Text box 8: Gender findings from IOB evaluations

- The 2015 **policy evaluation on humanitarian assistance** found that insufficient attention had been paid to specific gender-related needs and criticised the ‘women only’ approach of activities in the field of sexual violence.
- While the 2017 **evaluation of Dutch support to Southern civil society development** found that 18 out of the 53 reviewed projects referred to women or girls in their objectives, it was inconclusive about the exact influence of gender-respon-

⁹⁰ Four [other reports](#) concerned gender-specific programmes or funds. Given the evaluation’s focus on gender mainstreaming, these were excluded from the review.

⁹¹ As stated also on page .. it should be kept in mind in this respect that though published between 2015 and early 2020, many evaluations look back at periods that precede this period by 5 to 10 years and do not reflect the results of the initiatives taken by the ministry since the publication of IOB’s gender policy evaluation in 2015.

⁹² Examples include: *Smalle marges van economische diplomatie; Effectevaluatie economische diplomatie 2010-2018* (2019). *Evaluatie van Nederland als gastland voor internationale organisaties* (2018), and the ‘Review of the monitoring systems of three projects in Syria – AJACS, White Helmets and NLA’ (2018).

sive policies because partners ‘were at different stages of implementing these policies’.

- The **2017 policy evaluation of the Dutch food security policy (2012-2016)** concluded that a greater contribution could have been made if food systems had been perceived holistically and more attention had been paid to gender in intra-household dynamics.
- The **2017 policy evaluation of Dutch development cooperation policy for improved water management** found that gender was rarely a priority in Dutch-funded water management activities. Nevertheless, it stated that ‘honest efforts were made to empower women in agricultural management’ even though ‘the genuine empowerment of women is a much deeper process of social change than a water management project can accomplish’ and there are limits as to what any three-year water management project could be expected to achieve in terms of gender equality. The evaluation observed that ‘as with the promotion of any social or institutional change, there was a temptation to tick boxes and to focus on outputs (such as the number of women trained or female members of (water user associations)) rather than effective mainstreaming leading to meaningful outcomes’. The efforts mostly had the effect of increasing numbers rather than achieving genuine empowerment, while in practice the gender approaches tended to be superficial rather than transformative. In fact, the lack of a formal mandate for projects to work on gender equality was identified to be a significant limitation to the results.

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Overall, the evaluations illustrate the challenge of mainstreaming meaningful gender equality objectives into projects focused on outcomes in very different domains. Furthermore, they were unable to conclude whether gender mainstreaming efforts had actually contributed to meaningful changes in gender equality. They confirm the call for realism made above: it is unlikely that such changes can be expected within the average project time frame of 4-5 years. On the other hand, the evaluations find that thorough gender analyses conducted at the start, making dedicated resources available to undertake activities to address the gender dynamics that are expected to affect the project, are likely to lead to better results. To achieve this, gender expertise that is available in all stages of the project/policy cycle is a minimum condition for success.

Review of evaluations commissioned by embassies and thematic departments (2015-2019)

IOB collected 107 reports of evaluations that were conducted on behalf of embassies or ministry departments in the period 2015-2019. Eighteen of these were excluded from further analysis.⁹³ These evaluations concerned interventions in sectors and themes that have been a

⁹³ The main reasons for doing so were: the evaluation did not (seem to) have any relevance to gender equality topics (e.g. such as evaluations on the Dutch national contact point for the OECD guidelines, or wild life crime prevention (9)) or because the evaluation did not mention gender or women’s issues (6, e.g. Infrastructure Development Fund).

priority in Dutch development cooperation and the focus of the ministry's mainstreaming efforts for many years.⁹⁴

This analysis resulted in the following key findings:

- 65 evaluations (68%) reported on the **engagement of women and/or girls** in project activities⁹⁵ with seven evaluations explicitly reporting that the targets for women's participation had not been reached. It is evident that with no activities specifically targeting gender equality, no results can be reported and no outcomes can be evaluated. At the same time, even when women were allowed to participate, this was not always mentioned in the reports.
- Although women were included in project activities in the majority of the evaluations, only 48 reports (51%) reported **gender-disaggregated data**.⁹⁶ Surprisingly, less than half of the evaluations on energy and food security referred to the use of gender-disaggregated data.⁹⁷
- 56 evaluations used a **Theory of Change (ToC)** and 37 of them (66%) included gender equality as an outcome or output. A key finding in this respect is that gender tends to be defined as a cross-cutting theme which is outside the ToC and that, as a result, no specific project activities were incorporated to contribute to this goal and no specific indicators were developed for the evaluations to track. This trend was observed, for example, in projects in the domain of food security and private sector development, where projects usually contain a ToC, but gender is not always explicitly included as an output or outcome. The fact that gender, as a cross-cutting theme, is put outside of the ToC, may contribute to the finding that where a gender strategy was absent, so were activities and the resources to implement them. The reports give the following explanations for the lack of reporting on gender outcomes: (i) it was not specifically requested in the evaluation terms of reference; (ii) there was no specific evaluation budget allocated to this purpose; (iii) no gender expertise was involved in the evaluation; and (iv) the demand-driven nature of the project did not allow a topic as sensitive such as gender equality to be addressed in the local context.⁹⁸
- The question of whether the project managed to transform gender norms was only discussed in water-related projects (in 5 out of 8 reports) and evaluations in the domain of women's rights (in 9 out of 11 reports). Where changes were found, for example by survey respondents, this referred to an observation of a strong engagement of traditional, religious and community leaders throughout the project, or of boys and men more generally. Evaluations that discuss social norms call for stronger engagement by men and

⁹⁴ Themes were: water (14), energy (6), food security (10), private sector development (26), human rights (3), women's rights (12), humanitarian/emergency aid (6), conflict/security (7) (and 11 various others).

⁹⁵ Or men in the case of some women's rights projects.

⁹⁶ Lam et al., 2019.

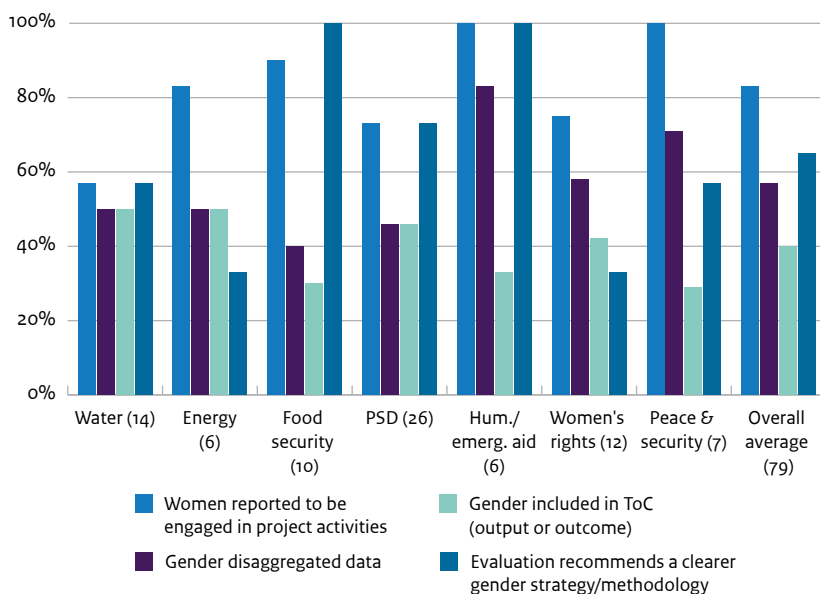
⁹⁷ It is worth noting that at times, evaluations give little if any information on whether intended final beneficiaries were actually reached, irrespective of their gender (see e.g. Windt and De Jong, 2020 and ADE, 2018). Other evaluations did not assess the potential socio-economic impacts on the population (see Bork et al., 2020: 44). In this particular case, the potential socio-economic impact of interventions and relevance to local people were not assessed either during project intake and assessment and selection.

⁹⁸ Another possibility is that for programmes that have been running for many years, gender-disaggregated data were not required from the start. It appeared difficult to turn the trend around midway during their implementation.

- boys and for attention for the influence of masculinity on gender equality outcomes.
- The review of evaluations illustrates, furthermore, that even when **gender analyses** are conducted at the time of project approval and ticked off in the Bemo, this does *not* automatically translate into an explicit gender *strategy* with gender-specific activities that are designed to address the findings from the gender analysis. Therefore, it is not surprising that 58 evaluations (62%) identified the need for a clearer gender strategy and associated evaluation methodology. Positive examples and progress in specific domains were found as well, for example in terms of the existence of an explicit gender strategy. This was primarily the case in evaluations in the domains of water, sanitation and hygiene, women’s rights and private sector development.
 - Evaluations from 2019 and 2020 pay more attention to the topic of gender equality and provide a more in-depth analysis of the way in which the project influenced gender relations (and where progress is yet to be made). The reasons for this positive trend at this time. It is possible that the more explicit attention being paid to gender equality aspects in the phase of programme design in recent years could have led to this observation at the stage of evaluation. Empirically however, it is too early to draw conclusions about this.

Figure 4 provides an overview of the extent to which four categories of gender-sensitive evaluation characteristics apply to the evaluations that were reviewed for each policy area. The total number of evaluations that were coded for each policy area is mentioned in the label. We will briefly describe the main differences observed between areas.

Figure 4: Observed gender characteristics in evaluations by policy theme



Gender-specific results reported in selected evaluation reports, by policy theme

Project evaluations in **water**⁹⁹ that comment on gender show that gender mainstreaming is often about getting women on board as key beneficiaries or as customers of water supply services (1,2). Also, the evaluation of Simavi's SEHATI programme refers to success in terms of getting women to participate in decision-making on sanitation investments (3). When the issue of paying for water services comes up, the needs of poor and vulnerable (groups of) women get special attention; on the other hand, according to the evaluation of a project with the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education, demanding every project to deliver on gender and inclusivity was not always realistic (4). Often, little is said about the 'real effects on women' (3) and attention for transforming power relations between women and men, for example in decision-making in water user committees where women are often under-represented is rare, also because of male and village elder resistance, limited gender awareness and expertise, and technical skills in gender mainstreaming. The synthesis report of the July 2020 FDW Evaluation (5) found no statistically significant effect on women empowerment in a water project in Colombia and that overall, no significant effects were found on women empowerment by looking at: (i) female decision power, (ii) equality of the relationship, and (iii) perceptions about female stereotypes. The only significant effect concerned women deciding over medical treatment of household members.

While seven PSD evaluations¹⁰⁰ did not report on women or gender, others showed that private sector development programmes and projects lacked a strategy to involve women, to address their specific needs or to promote gender mainstreaming that went beyond collecting gender-disaggregated data (1, 2). The evaluation of the Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme mentioned that it had never been the programme's ambition to directly affect the participation of women, one reason being that it was found necessary to first build a strong and trusted partnership before introducing a more sensitive topic such as gender equality (4). The evaluation of an SNV-Hivos biogas programme showed that women were not specifically targeted even when gender was known to affect decision-making and uptake, that gender mainstreaming had not been budgeted for, that technical assistance to strengthen gender capacities had not been provided and that country teams were not asked to report on gender interventions or outcomes. On the other hand, a trade union evaluation concluded that the partnership had managed to put gender-based violence on the agenda and also had

⁹⁹ Sources: (1) 2019. Evaluation of the Sustainable Water Fund (FDW). Intelligent Water Management Colombia. Final Evaluation Report; (2) 2018. Drylands Development External Programme Review: DryDev; (3) 2019. Evaluation Report Sustainable Sanitation for Eastern Indonesia (SEHATI) Programme 2016-2019; (4) 2018. Mid-Term Evaluation of DGIS – IHE Delft Programmatic Cooperation 2016-2020 (DUPC2) in the field of international cooperation on water; (5) 2020 FDW Evaluation - Synthesis Report - Final Version July 2020.

¹⁰⁰ (1) 2018 Youth employment Appendix 3.1 ORIA Track Record - OYE Final evaluation report 2018o6; (2) 2017. Mid-term review of the Kenya Market-led Horticulture Programme (HortIMPACT). Managed by a consortium of SNV, Solidaridad, Hivos and Delphy; (3) 2016 Private sector Draft report evaluation PSOMPSSI with Annexes; (4) 2017. Evaluation of the Dutch Employers' Cooperation Programme DECP. Assessment of the outcomes of DECP activities over the period 2013-2016; (5) 2016. Synthesis report online 2016 FNV Mondiaal: External evaluation of Trade Union Cooperation Programme (TUCP) 2013-2016; (6) 2015. MASSIF Evaluation, Financial inclusion in developing countries, 2006-2014; (7) 2019. The Next Economy MTR – Final report; (8) 2019. Effect Evaluation: Africa Biogas Partnership Programme (ABPP) Phase 2.

enabled local trade unions and labour NGOs to undertake successful activities addressing gender-based violence at factory level (5). The PSOM/PSI (private sector investment programme) evaluation showed that, from the start, the programme had paid little attention to gender and that it had been better in identifying the obstacles that women faced in finding employment than in addressing them. Also the SPARK Lead evaluation show that addressing women's employment proved to be difficult, one reason being that the gender gap that existed had not been sufficiently analysed as a basis for remedial action. As a result, it was hard for them to get a job or internship; in some cases, measures such as providing female hygiene products helped to get women on board and retain them. It was found, in this respect, that addressing context-specific and gender-specific (social) challenges and taking into account that women have multiple roles may lead to higher retention and success rates (7). The MASSIF evaluation of 2016 refers to women group loans as one of the special products that were developed and states that 50% of the 60,000 jobs that were created were for women (6). A key finding, furthermore, is that we know too little about the needs of female entrepreneurs and the factors that inhibit female entrepreneurship, and that we need to conduct more research for interventions to be evidence-based and increase their likelihood of success (7).

In the area of **peace and security**,¹⁰¹ evaluation findings were mixed but confirm that the emphasis was on increasing the number of female participants. One evaluation acknowledged that this did not necessarily mean that women's voices were better heard or that women had a bigger role in peacebuilding or security management (1). Another evaluation stressed that the lack of strategic approach and gender equality had implied that little attention was paid to policy influencing and communication to promote gender equality (2). On the other hand, the evaluation of the mine action and cluster munitions programme found that implementing partners had understood the requirement to be gender-sensitive in their project design and human resource management, and had also acknowledged that they had to make sure that the voices of women and girls were heard in the context of community liaison activities. Including women in implementing teams improved the chances of reaching women and girls and that their voices were heard while the role model of female deminers supported a wider 'gender transformation' agenda (3). In addition, some NGOs actively worked on creating a woman- and mother-friendly work environment or used the gender-profile of the community as a basis for an inventive and beneficiary-driven approach.

¹⁰¹ (1) 2019. End of Project Evaluation Consortium for the Integrated Stabilization and Peace of Eastern DR Congo (CISPE); Executive Summary, Annexes; (2) 2019. End of Phase Evaluation Report SUSTAIN-Africa: Sustainability and Inclusion Strategy for Growth Corridors in Africa; (3) 2019. Mine action and, cluster munitions programme NL 2016-2020.

Main conclusions

This chapter looked into gender equality and women's rights-related monitoring and evaluation. In brief, its main findings are as follows:

- The different results frameworks that have been drawn up face problems in terms of inter alia: (a) complexity and validity of the indicators that are proposed and insufficient elaboration of key monitoring terms (e.g. women's voice, meaningful participation, people being 'reached'); (b) an almost exclusive focus on women/men with little attention for indicators with a more (qualitative) gender-transformative character and insufficient distinction between indicators at the outcome and output levels; and (c) little consideration for how long it may take for fundamental changes in gender equality to occur.
- The evaluation reports that were assessed for this evaluation show in particular: (a) different types of gender approaches were used but related concepts were not defined and used interchangeably; (b) putting gender mainstreaming into practice remains a complex undertaking, but a proper gender analysis done at the outset of an intervention and the availability of gender expertise throughout the implementation phase are crucial; (c) in about one-third of the evaluations, gender still does not feature, even in policy areas in which the importance of attention for gender has been argued and proven for decades; (d) evaluations' lack of focus on gender can be attributed to factors such as evaluation design, budget and expertise; and (e) while gender analyses are important, they do not automatically translate into adequate attention for gender mainstreaming in intervention design, implementation and M&E.

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Ministry-wide recommendations

- Make sure that the results of gender analyses translate into activities and resources that are needed to address women's rights and gender equality. Gender expertise needs to be available in order to do so.
- Ensure that gender- and age-disaggregated indicators are systematically introduced in all relevant policy areas – and that data for these indicators are collected and analysed systematically. This ought to be done with a more consistent distinction between outcome/ impact and output indicators.
- Ensure that, apart from gender-related questions, a budget is set aside for involving gender expertise in the evaluation. Or explain why this is not necessary.
- Strive for consistency in the use of conceptual approaches toward gender in both the design and evaluation phase. Make sure that the label of the approach (e.g. gender-sensitive or transformative) consistently matches the approach taken towards gender equality in projects and their evaluation.
- Gender mainstreaming should move beyond the 'add women and stir' approach where women are invited to participate in interventions, the design of which has not changed. If gender mainstreaming aims to be transformative, a more comprehensive approach is needed. Such an approach would include the integration of gender equality targets throughout all phases of the policy cycle and take male perspectives on board.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Wiesner-Hanks and Willoughby (2018). 'Integrating Gender More Fully as a Category of Analysis'. Duke University Press.

Recommendations for the TFGV and thematic departments

- Critically examine whether quantitative and qualitative outcome and impact indicators can be used in annual reports.
- Limit expectations for transformative change in short-term projects. Instead, the ministry could benefit from a more continuous cycle of learning and evaluation.
- Provide policy officers with training and best practices to enhance the way in which gender-issues are addressed in evaluation design and reporting.

Annex I

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