

NO TIME TO RETREAT: THE URGENT CASE FOR FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY



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WHAT IS FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) is an approach to international relations **that puts gender justice, human rights, and the wellbeing of marginalized groups** at the center of government's external action. Instead of focusing only on state security or economic interests, FFP prioritizes peace, justice, and sustainability, recognizing how power imbalances based on gender, race, class, sexuality, and other factors shape global politics. It calls for transforming structures of inequality, amplifying the voices of women and marginalized communities, and ensuring that foreign policy contributes to a more equitable and inclusive world. On 22-23 October 2025, world leaders and civil society are converging in Paris, France to attend the 4th Global Feminist Foreign Policy Conference hosted by France. This high-level conference follows previous conferences in Germany, Netherlands, and most recently Mexico. As governments come together, we encourage them to reaffirm their support for gender

justice, and commitment to feminist diplomacy.

Oxfam envisions a world where foreign policy is grounded in decolonial feminist principles, the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. For Oxfam, a Feminist Foreign Policy is not an abstract ideal, but a practical framework for addressing the existing power structures and challenging the root systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, colonialism and neocolonialism, capitalism and neoliberalism, which are structural causes of poverty, inequality, and conflict. It demands that governments put the rights and voices of women, girls, SOGIESC diverse people, marginalized groups and centring the Global South, feminist frameworks and grassroots voices at the centre of decision-making across diplomacy, trade, development cooperation, security, and climate action.

At Oxfam, we demand a Feminist Foreign Policy that is:

- **Transformative and justice-oriented:** A feminist foreign policy promotes equality and dismantles oppressive power structures and rebalances injustices across intersecting identities with equity and justice at its core.
- **Led by the Global South and grassroots realities:** It is shaped by feminist civil society, grassroots movements, and Indigenous communities, resisting top-down approaches from the Global North.
- **Inclusive and democratic:** It ensures meaningful participation, protects democratic processes, and upholds people's right to self-determination free from foreign interference.
- **Transparent, accountable, and coherent:** It matches commitments with resources, uses transparent monitoring, and aligns foreign and domestic policy with feminist, anti-racist, and climate justice goals.
- **Peace, demilitarization, and rights:** It prioritizes peacebuilding, disarmament, reparations, and human rights over militarism and ensures military spending does not undermine aid for gender justice.
- **Economic justice and shared prosperity:** It promotes fair redistribution, debt justice, care centered economies, and shared wellbeing over exploitative growth models.
- **Sovereignty and resource justice:** It defends Indigenous land rights, natural resource sovereignty, and climate justice against exploitative global economic practices.
- **Global in scope:** It applies feminist principles consistently across all areas of foreign policy, from trade and migration to development, environment, and security.

Read more about Feminist Foreign Policy and our recommendation to decision-makers below.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is at a breaking point, and the urgency to adopt a true Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) has never been greater. Across the globe, women, girls, and SOGIESC diverse people are under attack, their rights rolled back by rising authoritarianism, anti-gender movements, and shrinking civic space. They also continue to face challenges realizing their right to healthcare, education, water and food, housing and other basic rights. At the same time, governments that once championed FFP are retreating or watering down their commitments, leaving a dangerous vacuum. Crises of climate, conflict, inequality, and economic injustice are worsening, and without bold, feminist approaches, those already most marginalized will bear the heaviest burdens.

At the core of our shared humanity lies a universal truth: human rights are inherent, inalienable, and indivisible. Since 1945, when the United Nations Charter and later the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were adopted, governments have pledged to uphold these rights without distinction of race, gender, religion, or socio-economic status. Yet in practice, women, girls, and SOGIESC diverse people have too often been excluded from the full realization of these protections. What was framed as universal has, in implementation, been partial, giving men an unfair advantage. The principle of equality is also compromised in the face of extreme concentration of wealth today. The richest 1% now owns nearly 45% of all wealth, while 44% of humanity are living below the World Bank poverty line of \$6.85 per day; 69.3% of global wealth is in the global north.¹ The silent truth, the economy and society has historically favoured white men and the Global North, marginalising women, girls and people of the global majority, is louder than what is penned in Article 2: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction...”²

Today, global crises, conflict, climate change, democratic backsliding, economic inequality, and rising anti-rights movements demand a foreign policy response that is not only principled, but transformative. FFP provides such a framework. It moves beyond rhetoric, ensuring that foreign policy decisions, resources, and partnerships centre on equity, inclusion, and justice.

FFP is a necessary approach to building a safer, more peaceful, and more prosperous world by embedding gender in foreign policy. It requires governments to:

- Advance the Women, Peace and Security agenda by centering women and SOGIESC diverse people in peace and security agendas;
- Uphold democracy, international law, and human rights;
- Invest sustainably in gender justice domestically and through ODA (across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts), inclusive feminist and publicly funded care systems, feminist climate action, and strengthening the delivery of public services, including universal, quality gender-responsive health, education and social protection; and
- Stand firm against anti-gender and anti-rights backlash.

Political leaders have the power to move from words to action. A truly inclusive Feminist Foreign Policy offers a path to reimagine global cooperation anchored in justice, grounded in human rights, and responsive to the lived realities of all people.

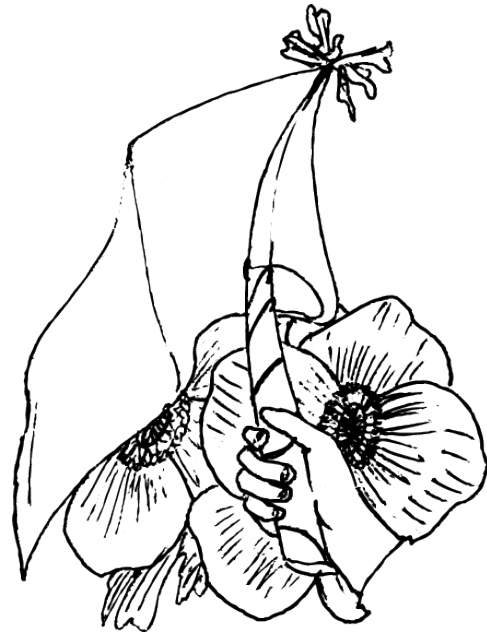


¹ <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/takers-not-makers-621668/>
² Universal Declaration of Human rights

CONTEXT

Foundational multilateral gender frameworks have been adopted by multiple countries over the past few decades. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA); the Security Council Resolutions on Women Peace and Security (WPS); and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are all international instruments promoting gender responsive approaches to foreign policy.³ Certain countries have pushed for even greater inclusion of feminist principles in foreign policy practices, leading to the development of Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP). FFP provides a framework that promotes gender equality as a central foreign-policy priority. It seeks to apply feminism as a powerful and disruptive analytical tool that names entrenched power structures and takes a transformative, intersectional approach to overcoming them.⁴ It is an adaptable strategy that can include a range of policies applicable in different contexts.

Although transformative, FFP has not been immune to criticism. With its emergence stemming from the Global North its framing centres on whiteness, creating scepticism about it reinforcing colonialist practices, power imbalances and euro-centric perspectives in Global South countries.⁵ In 2014, Sweden introduced the world's first FFP during a moment of political transition. While this move positioned Sweden as a global pioneer in embedding gender equality within foreign policy, it also reflected how FFP first emerged in the Global North carrying with it colonial legacies, hierarchical power dynamics, and assumptions about exporting feminist ideals outward. Similarly, Canada's 2015 elections placed gender prominently on the political agenda, leading to the launch of its Feminist International Assistance Policy,



which emphasized gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. These developments were celebrated as milestones, yet they also reinforced a model where Global North states define and lead the feminist agenda in international relations and further positioning them as “saviours” of the Global South, reinforcing the narrative of the Global South as dependents.

Global Majority nations have not been quiet about the systemic inequalities that exist in global politics and foreign policy, and the power imbalances that were set in place through colonization that FFP supports.⁶ Global South Feminist movements have warned that FFP risks fuelling aid dependency, militarism, neoliberalism, and extractive trade systems unless rooted in reparative and decolonial practices. Without this, FFP cannot be considered truly feminist.

The Global South/Global Majority feminist movements (Africa, Asia, Latin America) have long embedded feminist approaches in diplomacy, liberation struggles, and peace processes, even before the FFP label was coined. Example: African Union's Maputo Protocol, Pan-African women's movements, and ECOWAS women mediators. We are seeing a Global Majority leadership trend in creating gender-forward foreign policy practices. Countries like Chile, South Africa, Namibia and Mexico are moving away

³ UN Women. (2023, September). Gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy and the 2030 agenda: Feminist foreign policies. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/gender-responsive-approaches-to-foreign-policy-and-the-2030-agenda-feminist-foreign-policies-en.pdf>

⁴ UN Women. (2023, September). Gender-responsive approaches to foreign policy

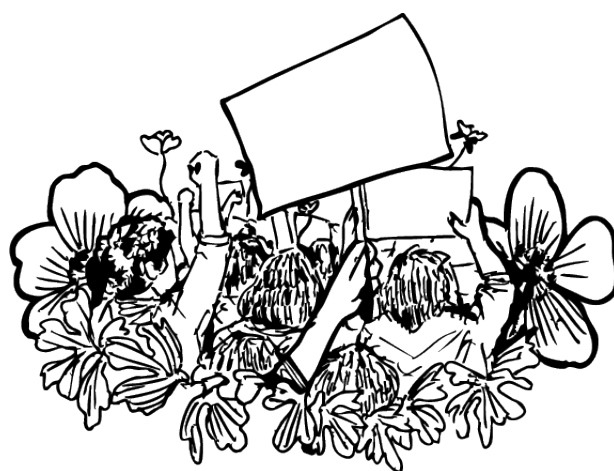
⁵ Philipson Garcia, D., Arceta, D., & Velasco, A. (2023, March). Mexico's feminist foreign policy | A brief evaluation. *Internacional Feminista* <https://www.wo-men.nl/kb-bestanden/1681218249.pdf>

⁶ Mukalazi, M. M., & Habte, F. (2024, March 11). Challenging Eurocentrism in European feminist foreign policies. *Global Public Policy Institute*. <https://gppl.net/2024/03/11/challenging-eurocentrism-in-european-feminist-foreign-policies>

from Western feminist frameworks by incorporating the lived experiences and local realities of women, girls, SOGIESC diverse people, and marginalised groups. Mexico's FFP is a notable example of grassroots feminist movements influencing high-level policies. As the first Global Majority nation to introduce such a policy, this action was the result of deliberate and sustained effort. Mexico has historically promoted women's rights at international forums and enacted federal and local laws prohibiting discrimination against SOGIESC diverse people. The First World Conference on Women in 1975 was held in Mexico City, and played a leading role in the development of the Belém do Pará Convention in 1994.⁷ Its FFP sets it apart from others by prioritizing issues other countries have not, such as reproductive and sexual health and rights, and climate justice.⁸ Although serious issues like gender-based violence and economic inequalities are still pervasive within Mexico, strong feminist movements have achieved political parity and are enabling the push for a state funded national care system.

Another criticism FFP faces is its struggle to address intersectionalities, which has resulted in its limited application. FFP does not explicitly account for intersectionality, making it ineffective in addressing multi-dimensional issues.⁹ The lived experiences and realities of each individual are intersecting and without acknowledging

this, the most marginalized groups are not reached and true impact is not felt because the entire person is not considered. This stems from the popular siloed policy approach of mentioning women and girls and believing that solves all gender issues. This is why we do not see FFP being applied across foreign policy in areas like trade and the economy, climate, security and defence, and so forth. It overlooks domestic policies and fails to align around gender justice, economic justice, climate justice, and indigenous rights. This top-down approach leaves marginalised groups at a further disadvantage. Despite the criticisms, the underlying aim of applying a gender lens across foreign policy and prioritizing policies that address legacies of harm are valuable and lead us to reimagine FFP.



⁷ Philipson García, D., Arceta, D., & Velasco, A. (2023, March). Mexico's feminist foreign policy | A brief evaluation. *Internacional Feminista*. <https://www.wo-men.nl/kb-bestanden/1681218249.pdf>

⁸ Morel, M. (2022, April 2). The feminist diplomacy in Mexico: A policy that brings progress for the country's women? *IGG-GEO*. <https://igg-geo.org/en/2023/11/29/the-feminist-diplomacy-in-mexico-a-policy-that-brings-progress-for-the-countrys-women/>

⁹ Abdul Rahman E. & Bump J. (2022, September). Time for a fair foreign policy. *IP Quarterly*. <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/time-fair-foreign-policy>

OXFAM'S FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY VISION

Oxfam envisions a world where foreign policy is grounded in decolonial feminist principles, the principles of justice, equality, and human dignity. For Oxfam, a Feminist Foreign Policy is not an abstract ideal, but a practical framework for addressing the existing power structures and challenging the root systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, colonialism and neocolonialism, capitalism and neoliberalism – which are structural causes of poverty, inequality, and conflict.

It demands that governments put the rights and voices of women, girls, LGBTQIA+ communities, marginalized groups and centring the Global Majority world, feminist frameworks (like the African Feminist Charter, Maputo Protocol, and African Union Gender Strategy), and grassroots voices at the centre of decision-making across diplomacy, trade, development cooperation, security, and climate action.

Oxfam believes that Feminist Foreign Policy must be:

- **Transformative and justice-oriented:** Dismantle patriarchal, colonial, capitalist, and racialized power structures that drive global inequality. It must rebalance injustices across gender, SOGIESC, age, race, class, caste, disability, geography, and other intersecting identities, with a focus on equity and justice.
- **Led by the Global Majority and grassroots realities:** Shaped and led by feminist civil society, grassroots movements, Indigenous peoples, and communities most affected by inequality and crisis. Policies created in the Global North should not impose top-down approaches that sideline local voices but should instead follow their leadership and realities.
- **Inclusive and democratic:** True feminist policy ensures meaningful participation, protection of democratic processes, and the sovereignty of elections in the Global South. It resists interference by foreign powers and prioritizes people's right to self-determination.
- **Transparent, accountable, and coherent:** Align political commitments with adequate resources and establish transparent mechanisms to track progress. It should be coherent across domestic and foreign policy, ensuring consistency with anti-racist, anti-colonial, feminist, and climate justice agendas.
- **Peace, demilitarization, and rights:** Militarism that weakens civil societies and perpetuates violence are fundamentally anti-feminist. A feminist vision prioritizes peacebuilding, disarmament, reparations, and the protection of human rights over militarization. This includes controlling arms trade and ensuring that increased military spending does not happen at the expense of ODA, including for gender justice in development, peace and humanitarian efforts.
- **Economic justice and shared prosperity:** Prioritize people and the planet over extractive, "trickle-down" models of economic growth driven by neoliberal capitalism, systems where private profit and free markets are placed above the public good. Instead, it should advance fair redistribution and ensure universal, high-quality public services such as education, health care, and social protection for all. It should also promote debt justice, uphold national sovereignty in economic policymaking, and drive policies that support mutual growth, human dignity, and planetary wellbeing. Ultimately, the goal is to build a new human economy which is committed to equality and care-centered, rather than one that facilitates the exploitation of labor, resources, and land in the Global Majority.
- **Sovereignty and resource justice:** Demands recognition of Indigenous land rights, the sovereignty of natural resources, and an end to the plunder of Global South resources under capitalist foreign relations. Resource justice is central to climate justice, women's rights, and collective liberation.
- **Global in scope:** Feminist principles must apply everywhere foreign policy operates, not only within donor states, but across humanitarian, development, trade, environmental, migration and security policies worldwide.

For Oxfam, Feminist Foreign Policy is a pathway to a safer, fairer, and more sustainable world. It is both a moral imperative and a strategic necessity: building stronger democracies, more resilient economies, and lasting peace. We call on governments to embrace this vision, to act with ambition, and to work in partnership with civil society to make it a reality.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Advancing accountability to the Women, Peace and Security agenda to promote feminist peace

Place women, girls, SOGIESC diverse people and marginalized groups at the centre of peace and security policies, shifting from militarized responses toward human-centred feminist approaches that prevent conflict and build peace.

In a world where violence, conflict and backlash against gender equality and women's rights are increasing, the number of women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people dying is steadily rising. Gender equality is not only a social justice matter, but a fundamental human rights imperative that addresses peace and security issues as well. In 2023, the proportion of women killed in armed conflicts doubled.¹⁰ We cannot afford to ignore women, girls, LGBTQIA+ people and marginalized groups in the peace process. Neither can we ignore how conflict-related deaths of men increase the economic and social vulnerability of the families and communities they supported. Despite their critical roles, women continue to be largely excluded from peace processes. Studies show that peace agreements with women signatories have higher rates of implementation and last longer.¹¹ In 2023, only 26 per cent (8) peace and ceasefire agreements mentioned women, girls, or gender.¹² Without equal women's representation in leadership, women's, girls, LGBTQIA+ people and marginalized groups rights are being violated in the face of crisis and conflict.

2. Protect democracy, uphold international law, and defend human rights

Commit to feminist foreign policy that strengthens democratic institutions, defends civic space, and enforces international legal frameworks protecting the rights of all people, including international human rights law.

Women, girls and gender-diverse people from countries with stagnated or declining gender equality between 2019 and 2022 could be worse off in 2030 than when the UN's Sustainable Development Goals were agreed

in 2015.¹³ Today we see an attack on women, girls and gender-diverse people straight from the government. 7 in 10 people today live in countries with closed or repressed civic space.¹⁴ Across the world, civic space is shrinking and activists, journalists, unionists and civil society organizations who speak truth to power are actively silenced. This repression undermines democratic participation and leaves communities without the means to hold leaders accountable. At the same time, Global Majority governments are applying human rights and international law selectively by only championing them in rhetoric, while disregarding violations, abuses and war crimes when their own economic or military interests are at stake. A strong FFP supported by a "full democracy" as defined in the annual Democracy Index, goes beyond women's political participation by supporting human rights activists, civil society, trade unions and gender justice movements.¹⁵ Strengthening government cohesion and embedding gender equality at all levels of government will protect democracy and the application of the law.

3. Provide long-term, flexible, and scalable funding for gender justice

In joint cooperation, move beyond short-term projects by committing sustained, core, and flexible funding that enables Global Majority women's rights organizations and grassroots movements to thrive.

Aid is expected to drop by up to \$35 billion this year, and by billions more in 2026.¹⁶ Women and girls are expected to bear the brunt of impact.¹⁷ However, this comes on top of reductions of global funding for gender equality. Cuts in Official Development Assistance (ODA), put immense pressure on feminist organizations and movements around the world. Any of which are now operating on the brink of having to stop their work. A survey by UN Women found that half of the women's organizations aiding in crisis contexts could shut down within six months due to funding shortfalls.¹⁸ Increasing ODA, as opposed to decreasing it, is more needed than ever. Institutions and governments providing ODA can be more direct and transparent in publishing spending,

10 UN Women. (2024). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security>

11 UN Women. (2024). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation.

12 UN Women. (2024). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation. Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security | UN Women – Headquarters

13 Cleveland, N. (2024, September 19). Committed to feminist foreign policies and gender-responsive multilateralism? It's time to get serious about data. Data2X. <https://data2x.org/committed-to-feminist-foreign-policies-and-gender-responsive-multilateralism-its-time-to-get-serious-about-data/>

14 https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2024/

15 Johnson-Freese, J., & Markham, S. (2023). Feminist foreign policy: Reconciling women, peace, and security (WPS) and feminist foreign policy frameworks. Women In International Security (WIIS). https://wiisglobal.org/resource_issue_area/feminist-foreign-policy/

16 <https://www.devex.com/news/money-matters-evaluating-the-size-of-the-aid-cuts-in-2025-110407>

17

18 UN Women report 2025: At a breaking point: The impact of foreign aid cuts on women's organizations in humanitarian crises worldwide

address systemic discrimination against women, girls and gender-diverse people by giving them access to universal, high-quality education, healthcare, social protection and other public services and economic resources. With global gender equality 300 years or so away, the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimates that an additional \$360 billion per year is needed in funding – equivalent to the size of economies like Colombia and Hong Kong, China.¹⁹ It is important to ensure that as funding increases, investments are co-created with local actors and flow directly to women's rights organizations in the Global Majority. This means providing increased core, flexible funding directly to Global Majority women's rights organisations, without routing it through Northern INGOs as intermediaries, ensuring that investments are relevant, impactful, and driven by those closest to the issues. This practice should not come at the cost of ODA directed at governments.

4. Invest in women and marginalized groups and act on economic inequality to build a resilient global economy

Ensure that economic recovery, trade, and investment policies redistribute resources equitably, dismantle barriers, and recognize the instrumental value of people centered economies.

Countries with stronger gender equality policies experience greater economic prosperity. Women participating in labour and employment closes the gender gap. Increases in women's headcount employment have added 0.37 p.p. to average annual economic growth.²⁰ Women are swimming against the tide, with labour force participation remaining stagnant since 1990 at 53% versus 80% for men. A truly feminist FFP dismantles the GDP metric and supports replacing GDP with more appropriate, comprehensive metrics of societal well-being in particular valuing the invisible care work on which economies are built. FFP can close the gender employment and pay gap by valuing and funding care work within a public regulatory framework. The monetary value of unpaid and domestic care work globally for women and girls aged 15 and over is at least \$10.8 trillion annually.²¹ Moving beyond GDP metrics and building resilient economies entails no longer underestimate unpaid care and domestic work and acknowledging economic contributions other than those that can be monetized.

Sectors where women and marginalized workers are overrepresented, such as labour-intensive, low-wage, or migrant-dependent industries, often face exploitative conditions that threaten workers' health, safety, and rights.²² Without adequate investment in state led care infrastructure and services, trade and labour policies will continue to deepen inequality, particularly in the Global Majority. For a nation's economy to truly progress, workers across the entire value chain must have safe conditions, fair wages, decent work, and policies ensuring their rights. Yet debt burdens, trade injustice, and illicit financial flows continue to drain resources from Global Majority economies, undermining the socio-economic rights of women and marginalized groups. A FFP must push for decent work, fair wages, and accountability from businesses in the Global North to ensure just and equitable global value chains.

Feminist foreign policies should explicitly include objectives to reduce income and wealth inequality by embedding redistributive justice into the core of diplomatic, trade, fiscal, and development tools.²³ All trade, investment, and aid instruments must be assessed for their redistributive impact. Governments should use diplomatic and multilateral influence to champion economic justice, including progressive international taxation, as a feminist priority.

5. Guarantee universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)

Protect and expand SRHR as a foundation for healthy, stable, and resilient societies, ensuring bodily autonomy and freedom of choice for all.

Essential to women's health and well-being in their bodily autonomy and freedom to exercise decisions over their bodies. We currently see SRHR being attacked in every region at all levels, most notably with regard to abortion, LGBTQIA+ rights and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).²⁴ These right-wing, ultra-conservative actors portray CSE and LGBTQIA+ rights as somehow in opposition to aspirations of economic growth and sustainable development.²⁵ Guaranteeing SRHR allows women, girls and gender-diverse people to fully participate in society. FFP advances peace and security, sustainable development and health,

19 UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2024, June 26). Gender-related aid doubled over past decade, but equality remains distant goal [Press release]. <https://unctad.org/news/gender-related-aid-doubled-over-past-decade-equality-remains-distant-goal>

20 Iuchtman, J., W. Adema and M. Keese (eds.) (2024), Gender equality and economic growth: Past progress and future potential, OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 304, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7b0a0a93-en>

21 Oxfam. (2020). Time to care: Unpaid and underpaid care work and the global inequality crisis (Briefing paper). Oxfam International. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620928/bp-time-to-care-inequality-200120-en.pdf?sequence=36>

22 Sedex. (2024). Driving gender equality through data on global supply chains. <https://www.sedex.com/reports-whitepapers/driving-gender-equality-through-data-on-global-supply-chains/>

23 <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care>

24 Thomson, J., & Pierson, C. (2020, March 9). How can feminist foreign policy support sexual and reproductive health and rights? Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. <https://centreforfeministforeignpolicy.org/2020/03/09/2020-9-3-how-can-feminist-foreign-policy-support-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-right/>

25 Oxfam. (2025, March 6). Personal to powerful: Holding the line for gender justice in the face of growing anti-rights movements (Briefing paper). Oxfam International. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621683/bp-personal-to-powerful-060325-en.pdf?sequence=1>

where bodily autonomy and SRHR are essential preconditions.²⁶ We have seen this displayed in Global Majority instruments like the Maputo Protocol guaranteeing SRHR rights.

To realize these commitments, governments must deliver and fund universal, equitable, quality and inclusive public healthcare systems for all, free from stigma, discrimination, or violence. This includes strengthening universal systems of healthcare and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services, gender-affirming care, HIV prevention and treatment, mental health services, and maternal care for all, regardless of SOGIESC or socioeconomic status. Upholding these rights is not only a matter of justice and equality but a cornerstone of resilient, peaceful, and sustainable societies.

6. Center women and marginalized groups in climate action and environmental protection

Ensure climate and environmental policies are gender-responsive, inclusive, and prioritize the leadership and knowledge of frontline communities.

Climate change does not affect everyone equally, with women and girls facing disproportionate impacts. When extreme weather disasters strike, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men, mostly due to limited access to information, limited mobility, decision-making, and resources.²⁷ Highly dependent on local and natural resources, women are uniquely situated as agents of change to mitigate global warming and its impacts. Research has correlated higher net profit margins for firms and lower Carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions with more women in decision-making roles.²⁸ Governments also must acknowledge the historic colonial structures that still allow the Global North to exploit resources today, leading to climate crises and further placing the Global Majority at a disadvantage in providing assistance to marginalized groups. Climate justice in the form of reparations, damage funding, and direct funding for feminist local action on climate must be prioritized.

7. Adopt humane migration and asylum policies

Protect women, girls, LGBTQIA+ people and marginalized groups on the move through rights-based migration policies that guarantee safety, dignity, and access to justice.

Migration policy should safeguard rights and protections for migrant women and LGBTQIA+ people. With women often shouldering the caregiving responsibility, this becomes twice as hard and they become twice as vulnerable in migrant contexts. Safe and regular migration options remain out of reach for many women, with gender-based discrimination determining who, where, and how people migrate. This leads many women to turn to unsafe and irregular migration routes, increasing their risks of trafficking, violence, and exploitation. The lack of gender data on the experiences of migrant women exacerbates these issues, leaving their needs overlooked in policymaking.²⁹ This may force women and gender diverse people to stay in harmful living conditions.

Marginalized groups including people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income migrants, face overlapping barriers that limit safe mobility and access to protection, healthcare, and decent work. Discrimination, lack of documentation, and fear of detention often prevent them from seeking help, leaving many vulnerable to exploitation and exclusion.

Policymakers should implement gender-responsive and inclusive migration frameworks that protect the rights of women and marginalized groups, ensure equal access to services and decent work, expand safe migration pathways, and strengthen labour protections. They must also eliminate discrimination based on gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, or class, and use intersectional data to design evidence-based policies that reflect the realities of all migrants.

8. Ensure equal participation and foster feminist leadership

Guarantee equal representation of women, marginalized groups and grassroots organizations in decision-making at all levels of foreign and domestic policy and actively cultivate feminist leadership in governance.

FFP is a strategic investment in stability, not just a moral and political choice. By integrating gender equality into foreign policy and diplomacy, we are creating a more inclusive society and recognizing human rights for all. It operates as a counterweight to rising authoritarianism and democratic backsliding

26 Thompson, L., & Clement, K. (2020, December). What would a feminist foreign policy mean for sexual and reproductive health and rights? International Center for Research on Women. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/What-Would-a-Feminist-Foreign-Policy-Mean-for-SRHR_Dec2020_ICRW.pdf

27 United Nations. (n.d.). Why women are key to climate action. Retrieved August 28, 2025, from <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/women>

28 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/overview>

29 UN Women. (n.d.). Women on the move: FAQs on migration and gender. Retrieved August 28, 2025, from <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/women-on-the-move-faqs-on-migration-and-gender>

used to erode gender equality and weaken democratic institutions.³⁰ To retain gains made on advancing human rights protection, governments must stand firm against anti-gender and anti-rights backlash.³¹ As of 1 June 2025, there are 27 countries where 31 women serve as Heads of State and/or Government.³² At the current rate, gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.³³ Just 18 countries have a woman Head of State, and 20 countries have a woman Head of Government, further emphasizing the need for political leaders to publicly champion FFP.³⁴

Meaningful participation must go beyond token representation to include marginalized groups and grassroots organizations, whose lived experiences and local knowledge are essential to shaping inclusive and effective policies. These actors are often the first to respond to crises and the most attuned to community needs, yet they remain underfunded and excluded from formal decision-making spaces. Ensuring their leadership and sustained participation strengthens accountability, grounds policy in real-world realities, and advances transformative change from the bottom up.

9. Stand firm against the anti-gender and anti-rights backlash

Actively resist regressive forces undermining gender equality, human rights, and democracy, and safeguard the progress made through feminist foreign policy commitments.

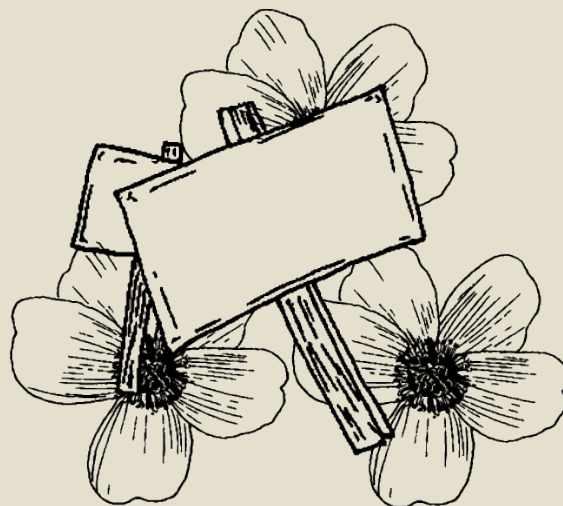
The anti-gender movement is now present in almost all countries around the world, and the number of people supporting it is growing. This poses a significant challenge to not just advancing human rights protection, but also to retaining the gains already made. This anti-gender stance comes hand in hand with political shifts from liberal democracy to right-wing populism, with the Global North pushing anti-SRHR influence in regions around the world.

Human rights are threatened using legal structures, closing all doors to relief. Now is the time for political leaders to rise and push for FFP as a safeguarding framework.

10. Advance inclusive feminist foreign policy to the next level

Move beyond rhetoric to institutionalize feminist foreign policy across all ministries and international engagement, ensuring coherence, accountability, and measurable impact.

FFP benefits entire societies, not just women. It enhances the representation of women in leadership by going beyond established quota and affirmative action policies, and creating room for more and effective participation in politics. Building cross-regional alliances to defend FFP gains provides a platform for reflecting, criticizing and addressing issues. Multilateral interactions offer an opportunity to establish a baseline of shared principles for action and to address states whose governments violate those.³⁵ FFP goes beyond principles; it is a movement and it needs Global Majority governments co-leading to avoid the movement being identified as a Global North agenda.



30 Data2X. (2025, July). Data for democracy: Investments in gender data strengthen democratic resilience [Policy brief]. https://data2x.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/FINAL_Data2X-Data-for-Democracy-Brief_7-2025.pdf

31 Walton, K. (2024). The anti-gender movement explained: What you need to know about the growing backlash to women's and LGBTQ+ rights. CNN. <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/asequals/anti-gender-equality-threat-explained-as-equals-intl-cmd/>

32 UN Women. (2025). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation>

33 UN Women. (2025). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation.

34 UN Women. (2025). Facts and figures: Women's leadership and political participation. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-womens-leadership-and-political-participation>

35 Stamm, L. (2024). What feminist foreign policy alliances should deliver in times of crisis. Internationale Politik Quarterly. <https://ip-quarterly.com/en/what-feminist-foreign-policy-alliances-should-deliver-times-crisis>

CONCLUSION

Feminist Foreign Policy is not merely a matter of principle, but it is a matter of political will. The commitments enshrined in international human rights law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals remain incomplete so long as women, girls, LGBTIQ+ people and marginalized groups are excluded from their full realization.

A truly global Feminist Foreign Policy must be shaped and led by feminist movements of the Global Majority, rooted in decoloniality, reparations, and justice. Without this, FFP risks reinforcing the very inequities it seeks to dismantle.

Civil society organizations have set out ten clear demands to guide governments in shaping a transformative Feminist Foreign Policy. These demands reflect both urgency and opportunity: urgency, because the backlash against women's rights and human rights is intensifying worldwide; opportunity, because governments can lead by example, imbedding equality and justice at the heart of global cooperation.

The task before political leaders is therefore clear. Move beyond symbolic commitments. Translate words into policies, budgets, and institutions that deliver tangible change. Strengthen partnerships with civil society and communities most affected by inequality, poverty and conflict. Stand firm against anti-rights agendas and ensure that foreign policy advances peace, justice, and human dignity for all.

This is the moment to act with courage and keep the momentum going. A Feminist Foreign Policy offers a pathway not only to a fairer world, but to a more stable and prosperous one. Civil society and international organizations are ready to partner with governments that choose to lead with vision, with justice, and with humanity.

THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER WHY FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY, BUT WHEN. THE ANSWER MUST BE NOW.



