



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY GLOBALLY

Key messages

Sweden is advancing global gender equality by mobilising all its foreign policy tools, including the implementation of a feminist foreign policy. Inclusion of all staff, dedicated leadership and ongoing support are essential to the success of the approach. This policy has enhanced the gender equality focus of Sweden's engagement in the Security Council, EU trade negotiations and development co-operation.

Keywords

[Gender equality](#) | [Global goods and challenges](#) | [Policy coherence](#)

Key partner

[Sweden](#)

Challenge

For many years, Sweden has promoted gender equality and human rights. The focus on gender equality in Swedish development co-operation is based on the insight that strengthened gender equality contributes to reduced poverty and more sustainable development, security and peace. The feminist foreign policy is a response to the discrimination and systematic subordination that still characterises everyday life for countless women and girls around the world. The policy builds on Sweden's previous efforts and represents a further increase in ambition.

Approach

In 2014, Sweden became the first country to launch a feminist foreign policy. Focusing on enhancing the rights, representation and resources of women and girls globally, the policy directs Sweden to use all its foreign policy tools to address gender equality. To enable successful implementation of the policy, Sweden has invested in the following elements:

- **Leadership:** at the highest levels of management and across the organisation, by means of frequent and clear political messages, through the focus of activities and expectations vis-à-vis staff to promote gender equality.

- **Ownership:** consultations with staff and other stakeholders inform ways to implement the policy.
- **Guidance:** Sweden has integrated gender equality into its operational planning and budgeting, guidance and political analysis. Every department and mission abroad must explain how the feminist foreign policy is applied in practice.
- **Support:** led by a co-ordination team, this includes advice through gender focal points, e-training, a dedicated website containing good examples, presentations and communications material, and a special gender coach programme.

Results

The new policy has led to an institutional culture shift which has enabled action across Sweden's foreign policy portfolio. In the Security Council, Sweden has advanced women's participation in peace efforts and conflict prevention. In trade, Sweden has promoted the gender focus of EU trade agreements. It has also increased official development assistance (ODA) for reproductive health to counter the declines in other countries' spending. In partnership with Wikimedia, Sweden introduced the #WikiGap campaign to enhance information about women on Wikipedia. This global initiative has led to a substantial growth in the representation of women in Wikipedia articles.

As a result, the Security Council and the European Union have increased their work on issues related to women, peace and security, with a greater number of women participating in dialogues on peace and security in 12 focus countries. In 2015, Sweden initiated a Women's Mediation Network in response to the significant under-representation of women in international mediation and peace processes. Sweden has also worked with the UN's trade body, UNCTAD, to produce a "Trade and Gender Toolbox" containing methods for assessing the effects of trade policy initiatives on women and gender equality.

Lessons learnt

Key factors for the successful implementation of the policy were:

- **Full integration in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs:** the policy benefitted from strong leadership and deep ownership through a bottom-up approach that has involved consultation with all ministry staff.
- **Support and mechanisms for roll-out:** involving a comprehensive set of guidance and support mechanisms for implementation. These include the introduction of gender budgeting and working to ensure that staff diversity in the ministry reflects its commitment to gender equality.

Further information

Government of Sweden, *Feminist Foreign Policy*, <https://www.government.se/government-policy/feminist-foreign-policy>.

Government of Sweden, *Handbook: Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy*, <https://www.government.se/reports/2018/08/handbook-swedens-feminist-foreign-policy>.

Government of Sweden, *Government Communication on Sweden's feminist foreign policy*, <https://www.regeringen.se/4a732d/contentassets/8db3c4560ab0466faf82edaa1c209fe0/swedens-feminist-foreign-policy-skr-20192017.pdf>.

OECD resources

OECD, Gender and Development, <http://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development>.

To learn more about Sweden's development co-operation see:

OECD (2019), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Sweden 2019*, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9f83244b-en>.

OECD (2021), "Sweden", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/7/8a6be3b3-en>.

Last updated: 30-06-2021