

# Recommendations Dutch Gender (Women), Peace and Security Funding

The Hague, 29<sup>th</sup> of January 2024

## Introduction

In the run up to a new policy framework for strengthening civil society, the Gender, Peace and Security working group of WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform would like to share a set of recommendations to support a resilient civil society that contributes to sustainable peace and stability in fragile contexts. These are rooted in international and national agreements and commitments of the Netherlands and informed by years of work on inclusive peace and security by our members and partners in the Global South. The recommendations are both directed to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Fund and to the other funds that are part of the framework. As we believe that substantial and effective WPS funding is key to addressing the current challenges that communities in fragile- and conflict affected contexts face.

1. Finance and track both WPS mainstreaming and WPS standalone programming
2. Meet the UN's and EU's minimum standards on WPS financing: allocate 0.7% of the total national income to official development assistance ((ODA) and allocate 15% of the Dutch ODA to conflict affected contexts for gender equality and women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention
3. Enable access to long-term, flexible core funding
4. Enable a real power shift and make leading from the South a reality for local women-led peace and crisis response organizations too
5. Foster holistic WPS programming
6. Build on the Dutch strategic partnership model and enhance trust
7. Support equal and inclusive consortia
8. Measure implementation with qualitative impact indicators, rather than with numbers and activities

In the following pages we will zoom in on the different recommendations.

## Background of the WPS Fund

As we all know, sustainable and inclusive peace and security can only be achieved with the full implementation of the Women, Peace & Security (WPS) agenda<sup>1</sup>. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (and Youth Peace and Security Resolution 2250) sums up four pillars that are crucial to support:

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to the WPS agenda, we refer to the UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019) and 2493 (2019), including international obligations adopted earlier and later have also strengthened the world's commitment to the WPS agenda. These include International Humanitarian Law, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), the Arms Trade Treaty (2013) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed for the period 2015-2030. The Dutch Constitution, the European Charter on Human Rights and European and international law, together with national legislation and policies on gender equality and equal opportunities, on development cooperation, and on peace and security, are also part of the normative framework within which the WPS agenda is implemented.

1. Women's, men's, girls', boys' and other gender identities' equal and meaningful participation in conflict and violence prevention
2. Their equal and meaningful participation in peacebuilding, conflict resolution and peace negotiations
3. The protection of their rights and security during and after conflict
4. Their specific needs during repatriation, resettlement and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

Implementing inclusive peace and security exceeds the policy areas for women's rights and development funding, as underscored by the fact that the WPS agenda is overseen by the UN Security Council and requires political prioritization across the full range of Feminist Foreign Policy procedures and approaches. Peace and security can only be resolved in a sustainable manner if voices of major parts of the population are heard and included. To prevent and end conflict it is fundamentally important to address gender inequality, work on ensuring women's rights and transform harmful gender norms, roles and institutions in fragile contexts. And context matters: gender relations and power dynamics work out differently according to context. Knowledge of and adaptation to context are essential in the design of policies and programs to contribute to WPS work being gender responsive and where possible transformative.

The Netherlands has been a frontrunner in the implementation of the global WPS agenda for the past 15 years, accelerated by the adoption of Feminist Foreign Policy. A key element of that success is its National Action Plan 1325 (NAP 1325). This defines the Dutch commitments to the global WPS agenda and is co-designed and implemented by government and civil society actors, with an accompanying funding mechanism, previously called the NAP 1325 Fund, now the WPS Fund. Having a WPS Fund linked to the National Action Plan 1325, has provided the Netherlands with major advantages, among which:

1. **With the WPS Fund, the Netherlands has an effective instrument to track and steer a substantial part of the Dutch contributions to the WPS agenda and operationalize its Feminist Foreign Policy.** 107 UN member states have currently adopted a national strategy for advancing sustainable and inclusive peace and security. Those countries that have not allocated external nor internal funding to their NAP 1325 show major implementation and monitoring difficulties.
2. **Partnerships with a range of WPS implementers allow for better informed WPS policy making and implementation,** specifically in the interlinked areas of peacebuilding, security, humanitarian aid, crisis response, trade, climate action and development cooperation, due to tapping into the lessons learned in the programs, as well as in the wide and diverse network of local strategic partners, including often marginalized communities.
3. **The strategic partnerships with an inherent aim to shift powers between Northern and Southern partners enable global WPS community building, cross-learning, capacity sharing and increased civil society access to international peace, security, human rights and humanitarian donor and decision-making fora.** Capacity sharing between organizations and people and cross-learning is a sustainable investment that is crucial in the volatile contexts in which we work together. However, capacity sharing needs to be combined with meaningful access to policy fora in order to work on systemic change. The strategic partnerships enable (privileged) Dutch actors to facilitate access for NGOs, women led- and community-based organizations, networks and peace activists that are often excluded from decision-making fora, or who deal with travel and visa restrictions and/or individual and organizational safety risks.

To have meaningful impact on the WPS agenda through funding, the Netherlands must align its Feminist Foreign and internal policy priorities with its global responsibilities and national commitments and increase its investments in WPS programming.

## 1. Finance and track both WPS mainstreaming and WPS standalone programming

As recognized in NAP 1325-IV, serious WPS implementation requires both sustainable WPS standalone programming and WPS mainstreaming in humanitarian, development, climate action, peace and security work at home and abroad<sup>2</sup>. Standalone WPS programming is needed to accelerate the WPS agenda: data shows that nearly a quarter of a century after the adoption by the Security Council of its resolution 1325 (2000), women's full, equal and meaningful participation in building peace is still not the norm<sup>3</sup>. But to make a meaningful, sustainable and lasting difference in humanitarian, development, climate action, peace and security work, WPS must also be mainstreamed in all these fields, in line with Dutch Feminist Foreign Policy. For WPS standalone programming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has allocated a budget of approx. 35 million euros for the period 2021-2025<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the ministry funds programs which have WPS mainstreamed in their approach. However, it remains difficult to track WPS work in relevant humanitarian, development, climate action, peace and security policies, programs or funds.

**We urge the ministry of Foreign Affairs to substantially finance the two-track approach of WPS standalone programming and WPS mainstreaming.** This requires both a standalone WPS Fund and earmarking WPS work in mainstream funds related to peace and security, such as in the follow up of Power of Voices, the Human Rights Fund, the Accountability Fund, funding of the Dutch Relief Alliance, Climate Fund and throughout any other relevant department and ministry. **To better track WPS contributions we recommend to make use of existing gender markers and the indicators included in Annex I to NAP 1325-IV.** The Dutch government with the NAP 1325-IV has a comprehensive set of WPS impact indicators to measure progress on WPS implementation. These indicators do account for every part of Dutch government that is affiliated with the implementation of the WPS agenda.

## 2. Meet the UN's and EU's minimum standards on WPS financing: allocate 0.7% of the total national income to official development assistance ((ODA) and allocate 15% of the Dutch ODA to conflict affected contexts for gender equality and women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict prevention

The Global Study on the implementation of UNSC Res 1325 in 2015, urged Member States to earmark 15% of their aid budget to WPS work<sup>5</sup>. This budget will allow states to sufficiently invest in and track progress on women's meaningful participation in conflict prevention and peace processes and better protection of women and girls in conflict. In 2020, the European Union committed to contribute 85% of

<sup>2</sup> [Women-Peace-and-Security NAP-1325-IV 2020 Eng versie-1.pdf \(nap1325.nl\); S\\_2023\\_725-EN.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> [S\\_2023\\_725-EN \(2\).pdf; Voortgangsrapportage-Nationaal-Actieplan-1325-Vrouwen-Vrede-en-Veiligheid.doc \(live.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Gelijke rechten en mogelijkheden voor meisjes en vrouwen | Ontwikkelingssamenwerking | Rijksoverheid.nl](#)

<sup>5</sup> <http://wps.unwomen.org/financing/>

its external actions to gender equality by 2025 and that all external EU funded programs will include a gender analysis<sup>6</sup>.

The Netherlands is no way near meeting these standards. In 2023 the Dutch government earmarked 0.2% of the total Dutch aid budget (approx. 7 million euros<sup>7</sup> of approx. 3.5 billion euros<sup>8</sup>) to WPS standalone funding. In 2023 the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs allocated only 2.8% of its total development aid budget on women's rights and gender equality (100 million euros<sup>9</sup> of approx. 3.5 billion euros).<sup>10</sup> Both budgets are far below the UN and EU standards. No public information is available on WPS mainstreaming in other relevant policy fields of other Ministries.

**The Dutch government urgently needs to meet the UN and EU standards and upscale the WPS funding.** In 2023 alone that would have meant allocating a WPS budget of 525 million euros through WPS standalone funding and WPS mainstreaming in other programs.

For the Netherlands to follow its Feminist Foreign Policy and meet the UN and EU GAP-III standards, along with upscaling WPS-standalone allocated funds, gender-responsive budgeting needs to be structurally applied. Also ensure that in thematic and country strategic planning frameworks in conflict-affected countries WPS budget is allocated. Additionally, a gender analysis must be mandatory in all humanitarian, development, climate action, peace and security work. CSOs that apply for funding for activities in these fields should be requested to show that at least 85% of their activities contribute to gender equality (are gender responsive at the least).

### 3. Enable access to long-term, flexible core funding

There is a wealth of evidence highlighting the benefits of providing longer term unearmarked, organizational support for women led and women's rights organizations and social movements that work on WPS, linked to strategic aims and collaboration<sup>11</sup>. This is even recognized and emphasized by the UN Security Council by adopting Resolution 2122<sup>12</sup>. Despite diplomatic efforts to this effect by the Netherlands and others they remain hugely underfunded, receive primarily short-term project support and spend a disproportionate amount of their time on donor-related activities such as preparing funding proposals and reporting. **We urge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enable access to long-term (i.e. 5-8 years) and flexible core funding for NAP 1325 civil society signatories and their local partners, including community-based women-led feminist peacebuilding and crisis response organizations.**

As was already confirmed by the NAP 1325 Oversight Board and the IOB: transformative change needs time and impact can seldom be made visible over a couple of years. Local CSO's need to be enabled to meaningfully engage in peace and security processes, and to address structural inequalities they encounter. Dutch based CSOs need to be enabled to – in cooperation with local networks and CSOs abroad - monitor Dutch WPS policies and practices and to hold relevant state and non-state actors (f.e. the Dutch national government, EU, NATO and various UN institutions) accountable. That requires long-term investments, including organizational investments such as team building and psychosocial

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_20\\_2184](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184)

<sup>7</sup> Assuming the 35 million euros WPS funding is equally divided over 5 years funding

<sup>8</sup> <https://open.overheid.nl/documenten/ronl-66061aa201cc906a75251effd72ec8af3e37bed7/pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Assuming the 500 million euros on women's rights (70 million PoW, 35 million WPS, 315 million SRGR, 80 million Leading from the South) is equally divided over 5 years funding

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/ontwikkelingssamenwerking/nederlands-beleid-ontwikkelingssamenwerking/gelijkheid-voor-vrouwen-wereldwijd>

<sup>11</sup> [S\\_2023\\_725-EN\(2\).pdf](#)

<sup>12</sup> <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2122>

support of team members<sup>13</sup>. This requires at least 5-8 year programs, comparable to the grant to Contribute to Peaceful and Safe Societies. In addition, we recommend that part of a new WPS fund is allocated for the continuation and scaling up of existing and successful WPS programs that are currently funded via the WPS Fund.

WPS programming is context related and these contexts tend to change easily and frequently in fragile settings. History has taught us that a focus on certain countries or themes limits civil society to adapt in a volatile and unpredictable context. Look at the impact on women's rights after the fall of Kabul, the institutionalized anti-gender backlash in Iraq, the war in Ukraine, the rise of violence and shrinking civic space in Gaza and the Westbank against Palestinian human rights organizations, and the targeting of women activists while violence worsens in Sudan's armed conflict, following peaceful women- and youth led protests. Women peacebuilders become first responders or need to change course and narrative to continue their WPS work. We recommend flexible funding so that CSOs have the room to re-allocate budgets, change objectives, engage other strategic partners, or suspend activities based on actual needs. In addition, we recommend that WPS implementers may incorporate a discretionary contingency budget line in their grants - for rapid action response in case of emergencies.

#### **4. Enable a real powershift and make leading from the South a reality for local women-led peace and crisis response organizations too**

The UN General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution A/RES/76/305<sup>14</sup> on Financing for Peacebuilding in September 2022. It encourages Member States to consider innovative solutions for "adequate, predictable and sustainable" financing of peacebuilding efforts. More importantly, it urges efforts to fund initiatives that integrate women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in the planning, implementation, and reporting of peacebuilding programming.

Women-led feminist peacebuilding and crisis response organizations, especially community-based organizations, globally report difficulties accessing funding mechanisms due to the high funding thresholds and complex application structures. Globally only 0.1% of aid funds goes to women peacebuilders and women first responders. The Netherlands are no exemption. No women-led diaspora organizations were granted funding through Power of Voices or the SDG5 Fund. No community-based women's organization providing first humanitarian response are directly funded by the Netherlands<sup>15</sup>. The Dutch funded Leading from the South is a great initiative of women led funds, but barely funds women first responders in crisis, women peacebuilders, or women engaging in the security sector<sup>16</sup>. In sum: Dutch funding is hard to access for those local women led organizations and women's activists on the frontlines in peace and security processes.

To enable access, **we urge the Netherlands to invest in participatory grantmaking and include women-led feminist peacebuilding and crisis response organizations in the design of the fund and in the decision-making structure.** It is important to acknowledge that additional resources for this type of fund administration and grant making is a prerequisite for genuine transformative change. Additionally, we recommend building in time and resources to adequately undertake these consultations with local actors and investing in their institutional and technical capacities to meaningfully engage in these consultations.

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<sup>13</sup> Find more info in o.a. 'Guiding Framework for Training and Capacity Development in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Development Cooperation. As exemplified in the Context of the Crises in Syria and Iraq'. Eschborn: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. (2019)

<sup>14</sup> [N2258740.pdf \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2022/2209/22091476305.html)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/detail?id=2022Z20244&did=2022D43463>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.leadingfromthesouth.org/what-we-fund>

**We recommend a diversity of grant categories and re-granting mechanisms that are informed by and consider the needs and financial capacities of the diverse organizations and movements in WPS, in line with the localization of international cooperation.** The future WPS Fund could cater for different capacities by creating different funding modalities with different minimum and maximum grant sizes, optional including short-term programming if more feasible for local CSOs, and matching levels of contract compliance. These modalities can tap from lessons identified of the Women's Funds, the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund and the Stability Fund. Restrain from a de-risking management approach and remove strict program and bureaucratic financial reporting practices wherever possible. Invest in understanding and unraveling the complexities of what works in transforming deeply violent and destructive conflicts while pursuing gender equality.

## **5. Foster holistic WPS programming**

**We recommend a holistic approach to WPS funding, in line with the multi-faceted WPS agenda, in which context- and gendered conflict analyses prevail over thematical or country focus, and that allows for programming on psycho-social support, masculinities and women's economic justice.**

An important element of WPS work is conflict prevention and social transformation. There is a need for funding programs in post-conflict or transitional contexts, such as Colombia. There are also contexts such as in Syria and Iraq, where reconciliation work is much needed next to transitional justice and conflict prevention. And there are contexts such as in Syria, Mali, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo where relief and recovery programming needs elements of psycho-social support and economic justice to support women, men and youth survivors of conflict. All these elements are crucial to WPS work and need adequate funding. A holistic approach would also allow programming on the nexus of overlapping agendas such as Climate Action, the Youth, Peace and Security agenda (UNSCR 2250) and Men Engagement. We need to structurally engage these agendas in funding frameworks to face the current global challenges that substantially impact the WPS work of people globally.

Holistic programming requires regional programming to reflect the impact of geopolitical interests on dynamics of armed conflicts. Think of the war in Ukraine coming from Russia's aim to newly establish spheres of influence, the vibrant arms trade between Libya and its neighbor countries, the proxy war in Yemen, the Yezidi women coming from Syria and now living in Kurdistan, and the youth from Darfur (Sudan) being sent to fight in the war in Yemen, and involvement of Wagner troops across African conflict contexts. WPS programs must be rooted in reality and be able to address regional root causes and solutions of WPS related problems.

## **6. Build on the Dutch strategic partnership model and enhance trust**

The Dutch government has a unique track record in that it allows CSOs to continue their role as independent watchdog alongside strategic collaboration. A strategic partnership between the Dutch government and civil society (in the Netherlands and in fragile contexts) is of mutual benefit. It strengthens policy and advocacy and enables agenda setting on WPS related issues, such as disarmament missions in Libya, or the support of women's meaningful participation in future peace negotiation processes in Yemen or Syria. It enables the exchange of knowledge and expertise while preventing and mitigating erupting conflict. It increases the understanding of Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff of conflict dynamics and security needs, while considering the actual limitations of operational space and security issues that women's groups and other civil society actors face. On the other hand, a partnership with the Dutch government provides leverage and a level of protection for WPS implementers on the ground. The notion of partnership, such as under the umbrella of the NAP 1325, includes engagement with diaspora (women) organizations. Diaspora women-led organizations can



bridge WPS needs in their communities and in countries of origin, and decisions made in the Netherlands.

In this respect, the notions of partnership and mutual trust are inseparable and have proven to be of added value. **Trust should however be better translated into restraining from a de-risking management style, require realistic and straightforward financing and reporting demands, and avoiding due diligence clausula's that disproportionately limit CSOs' field of operations.** It also includes joint (risk) assessments of the impact of Dutch policies and their implementation on the ground, and the active (diplomatic and financial) support and protection of WHRDs and women-led feminist peacebuilding and crisis response organizations. Additionally, we recommend including partnership standards in contracts to help establish clear expectations.

## 7. Support equal and inclusive consortia

Collaborations between women led (diaspora) organizations, women's rights organizations, peace and development organizations and working in alliances have added value and deserve to be encouraged and strengthened. Consortia between organizations from the Global South and North foster synergies and complementary bring knowledge, experiences, and skills to a program. It provides women-led feminist peacebuilding and crisis response organizations, especially community-based organizations, with avenues for cooperation with (I)NGOs and governments which would not otherwise be available to them. It often provides additional opportunities for women led and women's rights organizations to engage with international policy and decision makers, and to speak at international fora. Past experience has shown however the importance for consortia to jointly undertake an internal power analysis and develop an MOU to clarify roles and responsibilities between the various actors which is integrated in the governance structure aimed at power sharing and key documents. **To ensure all partner organizations within a consortium take part in this assessment, we recommend requiring a power analysis and how to balance inequalities in the inception phase.** Finally, invest in transparent communication with key stakeholders, and avoid consortia lead applicants to become the sole gatekeepers vis-a-vis the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## 8. Measure implementation with qualitative impact indicators, rather than with numbers and activities

Few of the currently used monitoring and evaluation methodologies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can understand or track transformational change. The current emphasis is on quantitative, rather than qualitative indicators. **We acknowledge the need for quantitative indicators but recommend much more emphasis on qualitative methodologies.** Methodologies using outcome harvesting, stories of change, research vignettes and qualitative impact indicators better understand, track and visualize (unilinear) transformational change. This is especially relevant in WPS contexts like conflict settings or contexts with decreasing space for women rights organizations to maneuver. Examples are patterns of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, women's and youth's perception of physical security, and women's and youth's ability to participate in public life<sup>17</sup>. Such qualitative impact mechanisms allow for more insight on progress and challenges in the implementation of long term WPS strategies that contribute to social transformation and normative change.

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<sup>17</sup> Find more examples via: <http://www.peacewomen.org/security-council/WPS-indicators-and-monitoring>.

## About WO=MEN

WO=MEN is the Dutch Platform of women's rights, diaspora-, development, humanitarian and peacebuilding organizations, entrepreneurs, military, academia and activists that strive for worldwide gender equality and women's rights. WO=MEN is the largest network in Europe in this field. More info: [www.wo-men.nl](http://www.wo-men.nl)