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Building Peace, the Feminist Foreign Policy Way: Good Practices

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How can a feminist foreign policy translate into a more feminist way of funding and supporting conflict prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding? As Germany joins the club of governments committed to a feminist foreign policy, Berlin sets itself the challenge of mainstreaming "feminist peacebuilding" as the world's largest investor in peacebuilding. To do so, it can build on a wealth of experience from other governments – and even more so from feminist civil society actors and activists around the world. This report provides an initial overview of good practices and their underlying logic: real-world examples that implement at least some of the principles of an ambitious feminist foreign policy in practice.

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Executive Summary

How can a feminist foreign policy translate into more feminist ways of funding and supporting conflict prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding? As Germany – the largest peacebuilding donor globally – joins the club of governments explicitly committed to implementing a feminist foreign policy, its ambition and success in mainstreaming a "feminist way of peacebuilding" will have important consequences for the field as a whole. In so doing, Berlin can build on plenty of experience from other governments, but even more so from feminist civil society actors and activists around the world. This report provides an initial overview of good practices and their underlying logic: real-world examples in which at least some principles of an inclusive feminist foreign policy have been put into action.

The examples of good practices collected in this report demonstrate that a feminist approach to peacebuilding is not only possible, but already followed by a variety of implementers across the globe. These good practices also indicate ways in which a feminist foreign policy can achieve positive impact: by empowering and resourcing local actors that demand political, transformative and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding. For such a cooperation to succeed, a proper understanding of the local context is key to identifying and investing in promising partnerships.

It is worth noting that the good practice examples presented in this report are not representative of the vast universe of peacebuilding projects and funding mechanisms. Instead, we used a snowballing methodology to identify local practitioners to nominate candidate cases, which we then filtered for substantive fit within the report's scope of an inclusive feminist foreign policy and a political approach to peacebuilding. The examples cover a range of thematic goals: the prevention of re-radicalization, the resourcing of women's rights organizations, women peacebuilders and young feminist activist in crisis settings, the transformation of violent masculinities, and gender-sensitive reconciliation and reintegration.

Drawing from the identified examples and the interviews we conducted to select them, we find several criteria that "make" a good practice. We argue that adopting a feminist foreign policy requires external peacebuilders to change both *what* they fund and *how* they fund, as well as *on which terms* they collaborate with local implementers. If successful, these adjustments lead peacebuilding actors to not only re-distribute their resources, but also yield greater agenda-setting and decision-making power over to marginalized groups and their representatives. While feminist foreign policy by itself does not pretend to solve all tensions and contradictions associated with foreign-funded peacebuilding, it holds the promise of finding more – and better – context-sensitive solutions that give space for feminist progress and more effective peacebuilding.

Regarding *what* and *who* to fund, government donors can make greater efforts to work with local and locally-based actors, which may require indirect support mechanisms via implementers and feminist networks. Donors can build dedicated analytical efforts into projects that properly assess exclusionary structures and their interactions with conflict dynamics, and implement necessary measures to mitigate them.

When it comes to *how* to fund such efforts, a key to more sustainable and stable partnerships with implementers is core or institutional funding. Additionally, actively promoting implementing partners to exchange and learn from one another is beneficial for all sides, as it allows partners to grow and donors to expand their networks. Since local conditions may rapidly change in volatile environments, flexibility is paramount. Where a degree of flexibility already exists, donors need to better communicate this to implementing partners and provide procedural support to leverage available flexibility as necessary.

Finally, the *terms* of working together are crucial for a more feminist approach to peacebuilding. Extending trust to local partners is key, even if this can be difficult for large organizations and government actors. However, our good practice examples show that there are low-risk ways of building up this trust that can lead to impactful results. Finally, promoting organizational capacity building is particularly important when working with more local grassroots initiatives, as is striking a balance between establishing trusted partners and enabling access for new actors.

Introduction

1   German Federal Foreign Office, "Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy. Federal Foreign Office Guidelines," March 2023, accessed March 28, 2023, https://bit.ly/3FSZqPy.

2   German Federal Foreign Office, "Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy. Federal Foreign Office Guidelines."

3   At the time this report is released in summer 2023, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Spain explicitly espouse a feminist foreign policy, with pioneer Sweden having recently abandoned its earlier championship of the concept.

4   Columba Achilleos-Sarll, Jennifer Thomson, Toni Haastrup, Karoline Färber, Carol Cohn, and Paul Kirby, "The Past, Present, and Future(s) of Feminist Foreign Policy," International Studies Review 25, no. 1 (2023), accessed March 28, 2023, https://bit.ly/42snCRC.

5   Data from the OECD Creditor Reporting System for 2019-2021, using the three most recent yeAars covered and based on the analytical approach explained in Philipp Rotmann, Melissa Li, and Sofie Lilli Stoffel, "Follow The Money: Investing in Crisis Prevention," October 2021, Global Public Policy Institute, accessed March 28, 2023, https://bit.ly/3KjgArH.

"Feminist foreign policy elevates our global commitment to the equality of women and marginalized groups to a new level and places it at the center of our foreign policy activities."

Shaping Feminist Foreign Policy, German Federal Foreign Office, 2023[1]

"Feminist foreign policy means that we do not just see particular vulnerabilities but strategically tackle them, including in our project funding or humanitarian assistance. Feminist foreign policy thus seeks to achieve equality for women and girls worldwide. It attends to the particular concerns of marginalized groups. Feminist foreign policy seeks to achieve a world in which all human beings enjoy the same rights. It seeks to ensure their equal representation in all areas of life. It seeks to pave the way for them to have equal access to resources. It seeks to harness the fact that women as agents of change and in senior positions propel societies forward and strengthen democracy. It seeks to achieve this for all people in equal measure."

Annalena Baerbock, German Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2023[2]

How can a feminist foreign policy translate into a feminist way of funding and supporting crisis and conflict prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding? As Germany joins the club of governments explicitly committed to a feminist foreign policy,[3] it can build on the years of experience gained by those partners that started earlier along the same road. It can also utilize decades of its own and many others' experience in promoting gender equality in relation to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Most importantly, Germany can learn from decades of expertise gained by the feminist civil society actors and activists who pioneered emancipatory action long before governments adopted the concept of feminist foreign policy.[4] At a most recent three-year average of close to $700 million, Berlin is the largest government actor to fund peacebuilding.[5] Thus, how and to what extent Germany will reshape this investment in a feminist way will have massive ripple effects for the field as a whole.

Peacebuilding

In recent years, the German Federal Foreign Office has framed its approach to managing crises and building peace as "crisis prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding." Many other actors, donors and implementers prefer using the ultimate goal of all these efforts as a shorthand: building peace. For this reason, we decided to use the term "peacebuilding" throughout the report.

This report provides an initial overview of good practices in this regard: real-world examples in which at least some principles of an ambitious feminist foreign policy – one that "places ... the equality of women and marginalized groups ... at the center of our foreign policy activities," as the German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock put it - have been put in action. Written as Germany's feminist foreign policy commitment is taking shape, this research is motivated by German practitioners' desire for guidance – but we hope it can be equally useful for other actors as well. For those this report addresses – namely Western government donors or the institutions associated with them – "peacebuilding" translates to financially supporting international and local implementers in a given crisis context. Therefore, collecting good practices of how to apply a feminist foreign policy for peacebuilding means, on the one hand, inquiring about which feminist actors to fund and, on the other, exploring feminist ways of funding and working together.

Defining a Feminist Foreign Policy

There is no authoritative definition of "feminist foreign policy", as every government and advocacy group chooses their own specific emphasis. When we did the research for this report, we used a working definition that understands feminist foreign policy as a foreign policy that questions power relations in every context, puts the experiences of marginalized groups at the center of its considerations, and seeks to change power relations in such a way as to ensure equal access to rights, representation and resources for these groups.

After this research had been completed, the German Federal Foreign Office launched its first guidelines on feminist foreign policy with the definition cited at the beginning of this section.

The examples in this report highlight the state of the peacebuilding field and demonstrate that practitioners can build on a wealth of feminist practices without having to re-invent the wheel: we found a variety of approaches that donors can emulate, adapt to different contexts and develop with increasing ambition. As repeatedly emphasized by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres, among many others, there is a massive funding gap in support for innovative, locally-rooted feminist and gender-transformative efforts to build peace. Supporting these local initiatives in

6   UN Secretary-General, Annual Report to the Security Council on Women, Peace and Security, S/2022/740, August 5, 2022, accessed April 25, 2023, https://bit.ly/44vZglo; GNWP, GPPAC, ICAN, Kinna till Kvinna, and WILPF, "Fund Us Like You Want Us to Win: Feminist Solutions for More Impactful Financing for Peacebuilding. Background Paper for the High-Level Meeting on Financing for Peacebuilding," November 25, 2021, accessed April 25, 2023, https://bit.ly/3IGyPhL; AWID, Mama Cash, "Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements," 2020, accessed April 25, 2023, https://bit.ly/3TSOfOo.

addition to (or instead of) existing implementing partners based in the Global North – even when doing so requires donors to overcome their internal barriers to working with new, often smaller partners with less of an institutional track record – provides ample opportunities for more feminist practices in peacebuilding. Certainly, this route is far more effective than defining a German or other donor-driven "code" of "proper feminism" and trying to "teach" it to local partners. The good practice examples in this report show both sides of this coin: on the one hand, a lot of innovative projects and funding mechanisms already exist in the field of feminist peacebuilding; on the other, the often limited scope of these programs reflects the structural barriers to finding funding for this work.[6] This conundrum highlights the inherent tension on which a feminist foreign policy is built: a revolutionary feminist agenda calls for the overhaul of existing power structures and pursues feminist peace, while a foreign policy implemented by a state will promote change in incremental and slow steps, if at all. This equally applies to a feminist approach to peacebuilding, as efforts funded by mostly Global North governments remain deeply embedded in and dependent on the existing system – including its ingrained sources of exclusion and marginalization. The interventionist logic underlying most peacebuilding efforts is criticized as upholding and recreating neo-colonial hierarchies. Most donors only cede limited control to local partners and often end up further marginalizing those living in conflict contexts, even if not necessarily on purpose.

Thus, to pursue peacebuilding as part of a feminist foreign policy is to square this circle in a pragmatic fashion. During this research, we have found that (more) feminist approaches to peacebuilding exist and are already practiced by a range of donors and organizations around the globe. The broad range of good practice examples from a variety of conflict contexts show that the choices that government donors make matter – from the design of funding instruments to project implementation. Every decision falls on a spectrum between maintaining or transforming those social relations that give women, girls and other marginalized genders (as well as men and boys of particular ethnic or social backgrounds) fewer opportunities and excludes many from taking part in public life, from high-paying jobs to positions of political power.

From the 48 interviews conducted for this report with practitioners ranging from government donors to grassroots implementers, we were able to identify nine criteria of what makes a good practice in terms of *who* to fund, *how* to fund and *on which terms* to work together. The following section (2) explores the tension between feminist foreign policy and peacebuilding, and lays out the opportunities for pragmatic synergies in greater detail. The main section (3) outlines our approach to collecting and selecting what we present as "good practices" along with conceptual markers of good practice and the resulting recommendations for policymakers. This is followed by brief descriptions of the projects and funding mechanisms that we identified as good practices.

Feminist Foreign Policy Meets Peacebuilding

Tension and Promise

7 Columba Achilleos-Sarll, Jennifer Thomson, Toni Haastrup, Karoline Färber, Carol Cohn, and Paul Kirby. "The Past, Present, and Future(s) of Feminist Foreign Policy."

8 Cynthia Enloe, Bananas, Beaches and Bases – Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 9.

9 Kimberley Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," University of Chicago Legal Forum, vol. 1989, no. 1 (1989): Article 8, accessed April 25, 2023, https://bit.ly/3LzyGFC.

10 Karin Aggestam, Annika Bergman Rosamond, and Annica Kronsell, "Theorising feminist foreign policy," International Relations 33, no. 1 (2019): 24-39, accessed April 25, 2023, https://bit.ly/425RZgF.

The Swedish government is credited with inventing the concept of feminist foreign policy in 2014. However, its ideational roots can be traced to a long tradition of various strands of feminist activism and research – none of which claim to be an authoritative version of "the one feminism".[7]

Scholars like J. Ann Tickner and Cynthia Enloe pioneered feminist thinking in international security. The notable absence of women in international politics led Enloe to ask: "Where are the women?" and to further question why they are excluded from making decisions about, essentially, war and peace. Simply put, feminist scholars criticize that international relations and their study are dominated by men and predominantly serve male interests.

Asking about gender means questioning power dynamics: Who makes authoritative decisions on and which issues form part of "international politics"? As Enloe puts it, the study of gendered dynamics in international politics means asking: "Who wields power and to what ends?".[8] The answer to this question is that international relations are both shaped by *and* themselves shape patriarchal social hierarchies. Importantly, an inquiry into power dynamics opens up space to not only ask about women, but also to question the absence of other marginalized groups.

In this way, a feminist perspective on international relations also calls into question other forms of marginalization, including due to race, class or disability. Born out of the Black feminist movement and popularized by Kimberley Crenshaw,[9] the concept of intersectionality describes how different forms of marginalization intersect and reinforce one another. This means that liberation from intersectional forms of discrimination requires action that addresses these linkages. Therefore, fundamentally, a feminist foreign policy is not just about women.

From Feminist Thought to Feminist Practice

Ultimately, a feminist approach to international politics is a fundamental critique of current foreign policy concepts, practices and structures. In theory, it is most consistent when calling for revolutionary change toward a new paradigm of international relations and politics more broadly. In practice, however, the feminist foreign policies of governments differ greatly, with some expressing more ambition for transformation than others, but none advocating for revolutionary overhaul.[10]

11 Birgit Sauer, "Feminismus und Staat," Handbuch Staat, ed. Rüdiger Voigt, Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018.

12 Victoria Scheyer and Marina Kumskova, "Feminist Foreign Policy: A Fine Line Between "Adding Women" and Pursing a Feminist Agenda," Journal of International Affairs 72, no 2 (2019): 57-76, accessed April 26, 2023 ; Kristina Lunz "Die Zukunft der Außenpolitik ist feministisch," Berlin: Ullstein, 2022.

13 See, for instance: Cynthia Cockburn, "Gender Relations as Causal in Militarization and War," International Feminist Journal of Politics 12, no. 2 (2010): 139-57, accessed April 25, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/14616741003665169; David Miller, "Poverty as a cause of wars?," International Studies Review 15, no. 4 (2013): 273-297, accessed April 25, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1179/030801800679314.

14 Helen Kezie-Nwoha, "What Feminist Peace Means in Changing Contexts of Conflicts," African Feminism, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3JUk2b8.

15 Claire Duncanson, Gender and Peacebuilding, Hoboken: Wiley, 2016; Laura McLeod, "Gender and Post-conflict Reconstruction,"in Routledge Handbook of Gender and Security, ed. Gentry, Shepherd and Sjoberg. New York: Routledge, 2018.

16 Sean Byrne, Chuck Thiessen, "Foreign peacebuilding intervention and emancipatory local agency for social justice," in Routledge Companion to Peace and Conflict Studies, eds. Sean Byrne, Thomas Matyók, Imani Michelle Scott, Jessica Senehi, London: Routledge,2019; Nicolas Lemay-Hébert, "State building, neocolonialism and neotrusteeships," in Handbook of International Security and Development, ed. Paul Jackson, Cheltenham: Elgar, 2015.t

This fundamental tension between revolutionary ideals and real-life implementation remains unresolved, and translates into all areas of feminist policymaking. The slow and contested adaption of feminist thought by foreign policy practitioners, starting with the adoption of UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, is a case in point. While feminists have praised Resolution 1325 as an important first step to put the topic on the international agenda, it was and remains subject to widespread criticism for not reaching far enough. In particular, its narrow focus on the inclusion of women (leaving out other forms of marginalization and oppression) has been heavily scrutinized.

Nevertheless, inspired by Resolution 1325, several national governments have since adopted feminist foreign policies. This development is not trivial, given that criticisms of the state as a stronghold of patriarchy have a long tradition in feminist movements:[11] Simply put, many feminists do not trust the state to be an agent for change for the feminist cause. Meanwhile, advocates of feminist foreign policy argue that by challenging the state's approach to foreign policy and the apparatus designed to implement it, policymakers can contribute to gender equality and intersectional justice domestically and abroad – even if gradually and slowly.[12]

In the context of peacebuilding, the feminist critique entails that actors not only create space for women and other marginalized groups, but also challenge their approaches to peace and security, in particular regarding the way marginalization can contribute to, reinforce or result from conflict dynamics – and how overcoming it can, in turn, be crucial to their resolution.[13] Feminist peacebuilding acknowledges the intersections of marginalization and political violence, thus calling for a resolution of both.[14]

Feminist Foreign Policy and Peacebuilding

The tension between employing feminism to overhaul oppressive structures and using feminist elements to drive gradual improvements within said structures applies to peacebuilding interventions as well. The practice of international – meaning external – political and project support for crisis prevention, peacebuilding and stabilization efforts in conflict-affected countries has attracted feminist criticism on two levels. At the first level, critiques center external actors' neglect to consider the gendered character of conflict. They take issue with the "gender-insensitive" traditional approaches to peacebuilding that systematically (even if not always deliberately) exclude women and other marginalized groups. As shown by a variety of scholars, ignoring gender dynamics in peacebuilding exacerbates inequality and discrimination and hampers sustainable peace.[15]

A second level of feminist critique argues that most – if not all – peacebuilding is fundamentally based on an interventionist logic that recreates neo-colonial hierarchies, which further marginalize the people who live in conflict contexts. Even to the extent that external actors try to promote universal values such as peace, their actions only partially respond to the interests of conflict-affected people and communities, and often privilege the interests of intervenors as well as local power-brokers.[16]

17   For discussions of the gendered coloniality of peacebuilding, see Heidi Hudson, "Decolonising gender and peacebuilding: feminist frontiers and border thinking in Africa," Peacebuilding 4, no. 2 (2016): 194-209, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1192242; Úrsula Oswald-Spring, "Decolonizing peace with a gender perspective," Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research 12, no. 1 (2022): 17-28, accessed April 25, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-01-2022-0678; Alan Graig, "Men, Masculinities and Armed Conflict - Findings from a four-country study by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom," WILPF, February 2023, accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/41b5sCN.

18   Among many others, the massive UN-World Bank study Pathways for Peace laid out how empowering women and other marginalized groups contributes to peace, and how the international community has so far failed to pursue much of this synergy; World Bank, "Pathways for Peace," 2018, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3LBpiBx.

19   Jonas Wolf, "The local turn and the Global South in critical peacebuilding studies," HSFK, 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3AVAkfS.

20   Hanna Leonardsson and Gustav Rudd, "The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding," Third World Quarterly 36, no. 5 (2015): 926-941, accessed April 25, 2023, https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2016.1192242.

The extreme version of this critique[17] leads to the conclusion that external peacebuilding interventions are irreconcilable with decolonial feminism. Empirically, most external actors do retain ultimate decision-making power over the majority of their funding and political support to local actors working in and on conflict. The former's decision-making processes and funding schemes impose constraints on what can and cannot be financed. That makes it difficult to engage with local partners in an open conversation about shared priorities, goals and the best strategies to get there. Beyond recreating global hierarchies, this dynamic contributes to the very moderate success record of past and present peacebuilding enterprises in terms of the ambitious goals that feminism demands: peacebuilding interventions tend to reflect the realities of power rather than turning them on their head – even when the pursuit of a stable peace would require the latter.

There are two ways to process this critique: one option is to conclude that no intervention bound by the ways in which governments operate can be consistent with feminist principles, and that all peacebuilding should therefore be left to local actors – including those who are not interested in a feminist policy of any kind. The other option is to ask whether the analytical toolkit and emancipative power of feminist foreign policy can be leveraged to minimize the hierarchical implications of peacebuilding while maximizing the empowerment of actors who promote political change toward an inclusive peace.

This report assumes the latter: that a feminist approach to peacebuilding by external actors, albeit imperfect, can have a positive impact. Empirically, we find that there are peacebuilding initiatives that seriously strive to address the issues raised above, even if the majority of endeavors remains insensitive to them. These good-practice cases demonstrate that a feminist approach to peacebuilding is possible and indeed already followed by a variety of actors across the globe. They also indicate how a feminist foreign policy can achieve a positive impact: by empowering and equipping local actors that demand political, transformative and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding. This way, a feminist foreign policy can not only sensitize external peacebuilders so they distribute their resources differently, but it can also yield more agenda-setting and decision-making power to marginalized groups and their representatives. Doing so holds the promise of finding more and better context-sensitive solutions that give space for feminist progress and more effective peacebuilding.[18]

This does not mean that "all good things will always go together". The extensive discussion of the "local turn"[19] in peacebuilding in both academia and practice in recent years has acknowledged that "the local" is not a monolithic entity that is inherently authentic and legitimate – and marginalization does not automatically make people peaceful or constructive.[20] To promote locally-based and led groups, donors need a critical and sufficiently contextualized strategy – one that takes note of key tensions between redistributing resources, empowerment and reducing violence, and between the short and long term. Feminist foreign policy cannot resolve these tensions in the abstract, and does not present a catch-all solution – but it can help navigate them by building awareness around the complex relationships of all the parts.

The good practice examples we found illustrate (without pretense of having found an ideal solution to solve every dilemma) that ways of doing more inclusive peacebuilding already exist and a feminist approach holds great potential for empowering marginalized actors and building peace in a given context. Our findings

indicate that a good practice requires external peacebuilders to change *what* they fund, *how* they fund and *on which terms* they collaborate with local implementers. The common lessons and recommendations derived from our good practice examples are elaborated in the next chapter, followed by the case examples.

What Makes a Good Practice "Good"?

The feminist approach and focus on marginalization has important practical implications when translated into practice. We will first examine some of the main tensions and previously-mentioned structural barriers that come to light when feminist principles meet bureaucratic practice, after which we will outline our methodology and present overarching good practice themes as well as the recommendations funding we derived from them.

The most important implication of the feminist approach is the necessity to empower local actors in peacebuilding. In practice, this implies ceding some decision-making powers and, most importantly, extending trust to these actors. Based on the assumption that these actors know their local context better than any donor, applying feminist principles requires donors to trust local actors until proven otherwise, not the other way around. Extending trust also means being open to working in a way that looks different than external donors are used to – e.g., by funding networks as opposed to individual organizations, or making necessary administrative capacity building essential parts of project proposals.

None of this is fundamentally new – certainly not calls for core funding or flexible funding. Institutional obstacles to implementing them are well known, and range from governments' responsibility toward taxpayers in spending their money to the limited capacity of individual desk officers to sufficiently analyze conflict dynamics (including dynamics of exclusion and marginalization) so as to design conflict-sensitive or ideally feminist projects. Therefore, we have endeavored to find existing – and feasible – good practice examples. However, if donors' approaches to peacebuilding are to be made more feminist, a mentality change (and, in some cases, a legal reform to funding principles) is needed. This requires political and institutional change beyond what our concrete lessons can offer.

Aside from this first caveat, two other important observations should be kept in mind when translating a feminist approach into concrete funding instruments. While searching for good practices and consulting practitioners, we found it difficult to find transformational feminist work that also followed an ambition to influence the occurrence of political violence in a given context. At least in part, this is likely a result of the prevailing funding patterns over the last several decades. Ambitious work on gender equality was more welcomed by and thus more easily funded through instruments dedicated to women's rights, gender equality and the 1325 agenda – usually part of a donor's human rights funding toolkit – than crisis prevention, peacebuilding or stabilization work. Any linkages – and, ideally, any synergies – between human rights and crisis-management funding instruments are usually treated as a secondary mainstreaming concern at best. If more equal societies are more peaceful, as the assumption goes, how could a project that promotes gender equality not be a conflict-sensitive one? The flip side of this coin is that the (much larger) funding vehicles for

peacebuilding work also tend to treat gender equality as a mainstreaming requirement rather than a priority. Most often, it is sufficient for planners to include a reasonable share of women or girls somewhere in the process to tick the box and classify their project as "gender-sensitive" – even if it, in fact, largely disregards gender as a factor. At worst, this only serves to reproduce the prevailing discriminations and inequalities of the respective context.

Another structural barrier is the general tension between the kinds of work considered feminist – i.e., highly localized, grassroots projects – which are not able to absorb an infinite amount of project money, and donor capacities to identify and fund them. It is usually more feasible for government donors to pour large sums into an international organization than to take the time to identify a large number of small NGOs. A strong argument can be made that it is in fact better for government donors to fund intermediaries, which will usually have more capacity to identify local actors. Our research shows that, in some cases, these intermediaries are also willing to take funding risks usually avoided by government donors, and can provide greater degrees of financial flexibility. For this to work, though, it is imperative that governments have at least a rudimentary understanding of the projects funded through intermediaries and that they can be sure that money actually trickles down to local actors, rather than into the administration of the intermediary.

Bearing in mind that these structural barriers will not disappear overnight, the good practice examples we found show how in some cases, a feminist way of funding is possible even within these bureaucratic constraints, while in others, they demonstrate the potential of feminist approaches to peacebuilding if such barriers are reduced.

Methodology

To identify the good practices presented in this report, we followed a qualitative, interview-focused research strategy. We conducted 48 interviews with peacebuilding experts and practitioners, a label that was deliberately applied in the broadest possible sense to include government officials, staff of international organizations, intermediaries, (I)NGOs, and local peacebuilding organizations at all levels. Interviewees were identified using three channels: online research, personal and institutional networks, and snowball sampling.

We also held several workshops in Berlin with German civil society experts on feminist foreign policy as well as representatives from the German government and implementing organizations. Locally-based practitioners from Cameroon, Kosovo, South Sudan, Uganda, and Zimbabwe took part in one of the workshops. This presented us with an opportunity to test and amend our findings from individual interviews with insights gleaned from group discussions and interactions between members of organizations at different levels of the peacebuilding system. This exchange provided our Berlin-based research team with the means to validate and, where necessary, adjust our benchmarks for a good practice in feminist peacebuilding, as those standards were seen differently by some locally-based practitioners.

Our two basic conditions for considering a project, funding mechanism or other relevant peacebuilding instrument to be eligible as a good practice were that (1) it puts into action key principles of a feminist foreign policy, and (2) that it contributed or contributes to a political approach to peacebuilding.

21 Cedric de Coning, "Adaptive Peacebuilding: Leveraging the Context-specific and Participatory Dimensions of Self-sustainable Peace", in Adaptive Peacebuilding: A New Approach to Sustaining Peace in the 21st Century, eds. de Coning, Rui Saraiva, Ako Muto, London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 25–47, 2023.

22 German Federal Foreign Office, "Shaping Stabilization: Foreign and Security Policy Strategy for an Integrated Action for Peace."

Using our working definition of a feminist foreign policy, we did not filter projects solely by their use of the label "feminist foreign policy" (or, for that matter, "women's rights" or "gender equality"), but rather assessed the substance of the work undertaken. This was a useful measure considering that many projects that focus, for instance, on marginalized local populations do not necessarily fall under donor organizations' "gender" labels, even if they contribute to an intersectional understanding of a feminist foreign policy. This allowed us to broaden the spectrum of considered projects.

For the "political peacebuilding" filter, we built on recent conceptual advances[21] and borrowed from a concept paper by the German Federal Foreign Office,[22] whose questions as a major funder of peacebuilding played a large role in defining the direction we took with this study. In line with this perspective, we understand peacebuilding as an approach that leverages project investments "to shape the political environment, aimed at influencing key actors, curbing violence and promoting political and societal negotiation processes" toward greater peace. Again, we assessed potential cases by the substance of their work, independent of labels such as "stabilization" or "peacebuilding", or whether an actor presented themselves rather as a women's rights advocate operating in a conflict setting, for example.

Using both our "feminist" and "political peacebuilding" filters, we identified the below examples. The individual projects we investigated and the way they dealt with the above-mentioned tensions allowed us to draw key lessons for what should be considered a good practice – just as much as our exchanges with the people who designed and operate(d) the listed projects, funds or activities themselves. Finally, discussions with practitioners from the German Federal Foreign Office and other government donors that took into account their realities and constraints allowed us to tailor these lessons not against an ideal standard of what a feminist approach to peacebuilding should be, but according to "what works" under current circumstances and constraints.

While we gained valuable empirical insights through our research approach, a few limitations should be noted. Firstly, we are researchers from Germany. Whenever we approached interviewees who are based in the Global South – many in conflict contexts – for conversations in English, French or German, the implied power difference may have led to biases on either side, which were potentially amplified by our transparency about the funder of this project, the German Federal Foreign Office. While we aimed to mitigate the negative effect of this by striving to build trust with interviewees, there is no guarantee that these efforts were successful. Contributing to this imbalance is the fact that we did not conduct any field research, a limitation that was somewhat mitigated by the in-person exchange with local peacebuilders during one of the workshops.

Secondly, we did not set out to generate a representative sample of either interviewees or potential good practice cases, as this would have been beyond the scope of this report. Instead, we used the snowball technique to identify interview partners as well as possible good practices. While we approached as many and as diverse a set of entry points as possible, we cannot rule out a selection bias that reflects the networks to which we had access. At the same time, snowballing proved to be an essential technique for identifying interviewees and cases that are not well known or do not have an online presence and thus cannot be found through desk research alone.

With these considerations and limitations in mind, we identified the following lessons for what makes a good practice. We grouped these cases into three sets, each emphasizing a different part of the peacebuilding process.

Good Practice Lessons for Feminist Peacebuilding

What to Do (and With Whom)

1. **Emphasize (and fund) efforts that empower marginalized groups by working with local partners, where possible led by members of the groups these efforts seek to empower.** Locally-based and "self-led" groups tend to be smaller, younger and less equipped to meet external government donors' administrative requirements. Therefore, this may require scaling up indirect support mechanisms that can provide the human and administrative resources necessary – or building these capacities – to identify and support such local grantees (❷ see point 3 below). Donors should be mindful that there will likely be tensions between the priorities and agenda they pursue, as well as the way in which they work. They should be ready to find individual, context-sensitive solutions with every actor, which requires a higher degree of trust than they are presumably accustomed (❷ see point 7 below and our case study on the New Social Initiative, p.34).

2. **Devise (and fund) dedicated efforts to analyze exclusionary structures and build countermeasures into project designs.** While this step is theoretically expected by donors, time pressure and a lack of resources on the side of implementers often make it impossible for them to properly assess exclusionary structures and draw the necessary conclusions for designing projects that comply with the "do no harm" principle and are conflict-sensitive or, ideally, feminist. Often, implementers must either pay for this step out of their own pocket before they can apply for funding, or neglect it entirely for lack of resources. This can be addressed by funding multi-stage projects that can be adjusted based on the results of an initial assessment stage. Alternatively, projects can be designed to include continuous feedback loops between research and project implementation.

How to Fund

3. **Leverage feminist networks as intermediaries to enable Grant-Making to small partner organizations.** International donors often lack the contextual knowledge and the capacity to administer small and medium-sized grants. Locally - based or grassroots feminist movements, however, often cannot absorb large grants. Feminist networks and consortia (many of which already exist) can fill

this gap and facilitate collaboration with a reservoir of small and medium-sized peacebuilding organizations (❯ see e.g., our case study on the Equality Fund, p. 18). This, in turn, requires direct funding for such feminist networks as well as grants that can be redistributed by them.

4. **Provide core or institutional funding to implementing partners.** Funders need partners with sustainable institutional structures that allow for good working conditions as well as efficient knowledge and project management (❯ see e.g., our case study on the Innovative Peace Fund, p. 22). If local and locally-based actors are to have a chance to prove themselves as trustworthy (❯ see point 7 below), they need to operate in conditions that enable them to find more effective or better peacebuilding solutions (❯ see e.g., our case study on Resourcing Change, p. 26). Under the difficult conditions of an ongoing crisis or political volatility, such sustainability requires more stable and less micro-managed funding than most project grants allow. This logic applies to long-running relationships with locally-based NGOs just as much as it does to bilateral development agencies or UN organizations that are based in donor countries.

5. **Allow and encourage partners to use project funds to build and foster learning and exchange.** Because these actors are often fighting for change in change-resisting environments with very limited funds, it is especially important for local and grassroots implementers to learn from, solidarize and collaborate with one another (❯ see e.g., our case studies on SIHA, p. 28 and the MenEngage Network, p. 30). Government donors can provide opportunities and incentives for this by encouraging their partners to use project funds for network building. Donors, in turn, also benefit from identifying and learning about other actors beyond their direct project partners.

6. **Ensure flexible funding mechanisms that can quickly adapt to changing local conditions.** Where this is already the case, improve communication and procedural support to use this flexibility. The volatility of conflict contexts means that inflexibly funded projects risk losing relevance quickly. Where funding mechanisms are already flexible enough to allow implementers to make autonomous adjustments to changing contexts (❯ see e.g., our case study on Resourcing Change, p. 26), implementers are sometimes not aware of that flexibility or face critical difficulties in making use of it. This requires more transparent communication on the side of donors about the possibilities and limits of flexible funding, as well as procedural support in grant administration. Where, by law, flexibility is limited or difficult to achieve, donors should ensure that their grant administrators' capacities can be quickly increased during a crisis and decreased afterward. More difficult to achieve but equally crucial is building up a degree of understanding and/or empathy among administrators concerning conflict realities and project work in rapidly changing contexts.

How to Work Together

7. **Leverage local knowledge and priorities for more impactful action by co-determining strategic objectives with local actors, including marginalized communities and beneficiaries.** Including local actors and marginalized communities in agenda-setting and decision-making early on creates initiatives that better fit the demands of the specific context and better enable these local actors to build local legitimacy, thus making them more effective (❯ see e.g. our case studies on FRIDA, p. 20 and the MenEngage Network, p. 30). This requires a form of trust that is difficult for government donors to extend, but is crucial for success. One way of building up this trust is to extend small, limited-term grants to new partners for projects of their own design and to allow the relationship to grow over time. To mitigate risks and to facilitate the administration of small grants, such allocations could be parceled out via intermediaries. Political backing and tolerance for failure are crucial preconditions to create space for donors to extend this trust.

8. **Support the institutional development of feminist organizations through capacity building and knowledge transfer.** To become sustainable agents of peace, local partners do not only need resources – they also need knowledge about building sustainable organizations and navigating the international peacebuilding system. Such knowledge is best shared on a peer-to-peer basis. Funders can support this through training opportunities and knowledge transfer between partners (❯ see e.g., our case studies on SIHA, p. 28 and the MenEngage Network, p. 30).

9. **Navigate the tension between building trustful, cooperative and long-term relations and maintaining or expanding access for new actors.** As the funding of small and medium-sized grant-makers is limited, there remains a tension between providing long-term support to local partners and remaining accessible to new grassroots actors. Funders can mitigate this by helping partners build the capacity they need to apply for funding from large international donors that exclusively finance established organizations (❯ see e.g., our case study on the Innovative Peace Fund, p. 22). This creates space for new actors and mitigates the risk that all international donors will want to support the same well-known, local, English-speaking organization, while remaining oblivious to others.

The following case examples demonstrate what the above-mentioned good practices look like when put into action. However, it is worth noting that not all case studies reflect all good practices and that each example has its own strengths and weaknesses. Unless otherwise stated, the case studies are based on qualitative interviews, as detailed in the methodology section above.

Equality Fund

23 Equality Fund. "Who we are," accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/425eQsK.

24 Equality Fund. "What we do," accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/44temyk.

The Equality Fund is a feminist fund based in and funded by Canada. It was established in 2019 by the organization MATCH International together with other feminist actors in response to a proposal by Global Affairs Canada, which offered to invest $300 million CAD over 15 years to create a sustainable funding environment for feminist movements.[23] In addition, the Equality Fund receives funding from the UK government. The fund operates in three key areas and the grant-making program represents the core of its work. Apart from providing grants, the fund also engages in advocacy and coalition-building work in philanthropy and operates a gender equality-driven investment program that aims to finance the fund's grant-making activities and influence financial ecosystems more generally.[24] The fund provides flexible funding to 120 women-, girls- and trans*-led organizations, coalitions and networks in ODA-eligible countries in Asia, Central and South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. As of March 2023, the Equality Fund has distributed approximately $50 million CAD.

Who They Fund

There are four grant-making streams through which the Equality Fund provides funding. "Catalyze" is aimed at equipping local feminist organizations to work on self-identified needs. It provides core funding, which can be used flexibly and spent on operational costs as well as programming. The second stream – "Activate" – supports 25 women's and feminist funds who distribute the money to their respective grantees. The Activate stream plays an important role in reaching organizations and grassroots movements through established networks of women's funds. The third and fourth grant-making streams – "Connect" and "Prepare, Care and Respond" – are still under development or in the launch phase. Connect will fund work done by coalitions and consortiums with a focus on collaboration, thus bringing together movements and organizations to receive collective funding and implement initiatives together. Prepare, Care and Respond is a grant-making stream aimed at supporting groups in times of emergencies and crisis.

The Equality Fund emphasizes the importance of "being there" before a crisis hits by allowing its grantees to invest in prevention and preparedness and by providing resources to groups that are on the frontlines of crisis response. By enabling local activists to respond quickly to self-identified needs in a crisis, the fund helps build trust in these organizations among their target communities.

How It Works

The Equality Fund understands itself as an intermediary between its grantee partners and government funders. By shouldering the burden of the work that comes with re-

25 Equality Fund, "Step Up, Step Back: Reimagining Non-Competitive Grantmaking in Community," 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3VF2LIv.

26 Equality Fund. "Who we are," Equality Fund, "Financial Statements for Equality Fund," March 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3LxVOo6.

granting larger sums and reporting on these smaller grants, the organization effectively acts as a mechanism for government funders to reach down to the grassroots level without creating excessive and burdensome reporting requirements for grantees or an extensive workload for government agencies.

While groups funded by the Equality Fund through its Catalyze stream are usually expected to report twice a year, the mode of reporting can be adjusted to the circumstances in which grantees operate. For instance, oral reporting via audio messages is possible in contexts with restricted or limited internet access.

For the Activate grant stream, the Equality Fund developed a "Step Up/Step Back" model for non-competitive grant-making. Collectively, feminist funds and the Equality Fund decided on the allocation criteria for the first round of Activate funding. Priority was given to feminist funds "working in contexts of civil unrest, state-sponsored violence, emergencies, and crisis"[25] as well as funds with the ability to develop new partnerships and resource avenues for the larger feminist funding community. Based on these criteria, interested funds then decided whether they would "step up" to apply for funding or "step back" this round and wait for the next time they could be eligible. This process centered collective decision-making and resource allocation in an effort to mitigate the competitive dynamics of grant-making processes.

Why It Works

The Equality Fund practices accountability to feminist movements by way of its collaborations with other feminist funds, partners and grantees. This is exemplified by the series of consultations with feminist activists that took place during the design phase of the fund or consultations and digital town halls with activists that took place in later stages of the fund's existence as well as by the development of the Step Up/Step Back funding model. Additionally, the Equality Fund's approach of emphasizing and relying on feminist ecosystems to expand its coverage is helpful when it comes to responding quickly to emerging crises. By building on existing contextual knowledge and connections to those working on the forefront of crisis response – through its ecosystem of feminist partner funds and their respective grantee pools – the fund can reach groups that are active in immediate and emerging crises and support them faster.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

Global Affairs Canada's 15-year-long $300-million CAD contribution to the Equality Fund is to date the largest single investment made by a government donor to feminist movements.[26] This funding mechanism modeled what a long-term investment of large funds into feminist movements can look like. While administrative constraints and possibilities differ from government to government, this can be an important reference point and example for how to credibly commit to a feminist foreign policy and translate this commitment into tangible financial action.

FRIDA: The Young Feminist Fund

27 FRIDA, "Annual Report 2021: Traversing Diverse Bodies of Water Together; Connected by Turbulent and Calm Currents," 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/425ev9s.

28 FRIDA, "Resourcing Connections: Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice," 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/42IkZRu.

29 FRIDA, "Resourcing Connections: Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice."

30 FRIDA, "Resourcing Connections: Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice."

31 FRIDA, "Annual Report 2021: Traversing Diverse Bodies of Water Together; Connected by Turbulent and Calm Currents."

FRIDA is a youth-led feminist fund that aims to support young feminist movements in the Global South and East. Both FRIDA's staff as well as its regional advisors and board consist of young feminists. The fund provides small, flexible, multi-year funding and capacity building as well as convening and collaboration spaces for its grantees. Through its participatory grant-making model, FRIDA enables peer-led decision-making on how funding is allocated. The fund's grantee partners are working on topics that vary from creating access to gender-affirming medical treatments and providing shelter for displaced LGBTQ+ youths to advocacy on issues related to gender-based violence and climate justice.[27] In its selection of grantee partners, FRIDA prioritizes applications by young feminist activists who organize and implement initiatives in crisis and conflict settings.

Who They Fund

FRIDA mainly funds feminist groups and organizations with two to five years of experience, with an additional focus on newly funded groups. Applicants do not need to be formally registered to receive FRIDA funds. FRIDA's grants are aimed at groups led by people under the age of 35. This age limit is less strict for trans*-led groups, because for many trans* individuals, the peak of their activism comes at a later time in their lives. The same also applies for indigenous groups that often emphasize intergenerational connections and are thus often made up of a mix of younger and older community members.

How It Works

FRIDA operates with a participatory approach to grant-making. This means that regional advisors, current and former grantees, staff, and applicants all take part in decisions on resource allocation through a peer review of applications as well as regular feedback on the overall grant-making process.[28] The decision on which groups receive a grant is taken by a peer review panel that consists of regional advisors and current grantees of the respective regions but does not include staff.[29] Prior to the screening and voting process, peer review panelists are asked to disclose any memberships in or close connections with any of the applying groups. Applications are then assigned accordingly to different reviewers in order to mitigate potential biases.[30] FRIDA itself is funded by private donors, foundations and government funding.[31] FRIDA launches

32 FRIDA,"Resourcing Connections: Reflections on Feminist Participatory Grantmaking Practice."

33 FRIDA, "Annual Report 2021: Traversing Diverse Bodies of Water Together; Connected by Turbulent and Calm Currents."

open calls for applications every two years[32] and in seven languages. Groups awarded a grant are eligible for renewed support for up to five years after submitting their first report. Each year, the grant size increases: from $6,000 USD in the first year to $15,000 USD in the fifth year (exit grant). Additionally, groups can receive special grants such as travel and collaboration grants as well as emergency grants for crises related to safety and security.[33] In the fifth grant year, groups receive transitional support in the form of intensive capacity building and networking within the donor landscape to facilitate a sustainable graduation from FRIDA funding.

Why It Works

For each funding cycle, FRIDA defines regional priorities that are reflected in the call for applications and the subsequent selection process. The process is led and guided by advisors on the ground, who are themselves young feminist activist and have expertise on the region and its feminist landscape. Regional priorities include groups or issues that are currently underrepresented and groups working in conflict-affected or politically repressive settings. This approach is based on the understanding that young feminist activism is particularly threatened and rendered even more difficult-yet-necessary in times of crisis and conflict.

This goes hand in hand with FRIDA's aim to provide core and flexible funding to those with the most difficulty in accessing traditional modes of funding, be it due to the age of the organization or its members, a lack of institutionalization, or because the group is operating in a context where feminist activism is under scrutiny. This contributes to FRIDA's holistic approach to building and maintaining relationships with its grantee partners. The resulting trust-based partnerships built on shared responsibility and an emphasis on peer learning contribute to diversified and connected feminist ecosystems that support young feminist organizing through funding and collaboration.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

FRIDA is an organization by young feminists for young feminists and proves its accountability to feminist movements through a participatory approach to grant-making that redirects the decisions-making power on grant allocation into the hands of feminist groups and their peers in the funded region. By doing this, it is advancing a model of resource allocation that is based on reciprocity, peer support of mutual goals, and transparency. FRIDA's focus on young organizations, both in terms of organizational and member age, is rare but important to support emerging activism and sustain a diverse ecosystem of feminist actors. A commitment like this is time- and resource-consuming, but the case of FRIDA shows that it is possible.

Innovative Peace Fund

34 ICAN. "Women's Alliance for Security Leadership," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/426gkDb.

35 ICAN. "Innovative Peace Fund," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3p8fXtc.

The Innovative Peace Fund (IPF) is a global funding mechanism for women-led, small and medium-sized peacebuilding initiatives. The IPF was designed by the US-based International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN) to bridge the gap between local peacebuilding initiatives that do not (yet) meet international donors' funding criteria and donor organizations that lack the capacity and local, contextual knowledge needed to administer small and medium-sized grants. By providing indigenous, women-led peacebuilding initiatives with otherwise unattainable financial resources and ideational support, the IPF counterbalances the often top-down character of traditional peacebuilding funding structures.

Who They Fund

The IPF funds women-led peacebuilding initiatives worldwide that are members of ICAN's "Women's Alliance for Security Leadership" (WASL), a global network of practitioners, organizations and networks working in the peace and security field.[34] While the IPF focuses on women-led initiatives, funding recipients are not required to do substantive work on gender-related issues. Instead, the IPF recognizes the feminist value of promoting women as peacebuilders, regardless of their area of focus. Between 2013 and 2020, the IPF has administered a total of 124 grants, benefitting 55 organizations in 24 countries. The average grant size during this period was between $30.000 and $35.000 USD.[35] The IPF itself receives funding from multiple government donors.

To become a member of WASL, organizations must either be recommended by another member or be approached by ICAN directly. The IPF does not conduct open calls for proposals, as small initiatives often lack the capacity and knowledge to participate in competitive bidding processes. Instead, WASL members can approach the IPF with their project ideas or funding needs. Once contacted, the IPF supports organizations with the administrative process of grant applications. This collaborative approach is meant to reduce the negative effects of the unavoidable power hierarchies between donors and implementers in peacebuilding collaboration, including for the IPF.

Why It Works

As an intermediary between international donors and local initiatives, the IPF conducts its own due diligence tests on its local partners, thus allowing organizations that would not pass the high standards of international donors to receive funding. While this approach creates financial risks for the IPF, it is a deliberate policy choice based on the assumption that wide-spread risk aversion marginalizes local peacebuilders by encouraging international donors to distribute money to large,

36 France Bognon and Sanam Anderlini, "Funding Women Peacebuilders: Reimagining Gender and Security Financing," International Civil Society Action Network, October 2020, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3I2aJGf.

37 ICAN. "Innovative Peace Fund."

established institutions.[36] To both help its partners and mitigate its own risks, the IPF actively supports prospective grant recipients in the application, due diligence and financial administration processes. Without this support, many local initiatives would not be able to overcome the administrative hurdles that are inherent to donor-implementer relations.

The IPF also provides forms of funding that are rare in the peacebuilding sphere. Beyond financing projects, the IPF puts an emphasis on providing institutional funding that IPF partners can use to create sustainable organizational structures. Additionally, the IPF provides bridge funding, i.e., funding for organizations whose project funding is temporarily interrupted.[37] Without this financial backing, these organizations would be at risk of having to lay off staff or terminate their operations.

Although the IPF aims to create trusting, lasting relations with its partners, its funding is not designed to be permanent. Instead, the IPF's goal is to equip initiatives with the knowledge and organizational structures to professionalize to an extent that allows them to apply for funding elsewhere. Accordingly, the IPF supports its member far beyond their financial contributions. This form of partnership is also relevant to addressing power hierarchies between donors and implementers. Even though power hierarchies are arguably inevitable, the IPF follows strategies to mitigate the more harmful effects of these power relations. One of these approaches is the aforementioned professionalization support, which is meant to create a partnership that is more than transactional. Additionally, the IPF works to build a trusting relationship with its partners in which they can voice concerns about the IPF's approach without having to fear a loss of funding. To receive regular feedback, the IPF conducts focus group interviews to further develop its practices based on input from its partners.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

The IPF demonstrates that a feminist approach to funding can help to not only cover blank spots within traditional peacebuilding funding but to also create better relationships between donors and implementers. By focusing on women peacebuilders, the IPF supports a group that is often marginalized in peacebuilding processes. Additionally, by providing institutional and bridge funding, the IPF gives its partners the tools to develop sustainable organizational structures. In combination with the ideational support and knowledge provided by the IPF, this helps local peacebuilding organizations to transition through a critical juncture in their professional development.

Leading From the South

38 Leading From the South. "About Us," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/44xqoaa.

39 Prospera. "Member Funds," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/419rHsG.

40 Transition International, "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)," October 2021, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/423FCC5.

41 Transition International, "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)."

Leading From the South (LFS) is a multi-year feminist grant-making program that is administered by four women's funds based in the Global South. It is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The administering funds are the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), the International Indigenous Women's Forum (FIMI), the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), and the Women's Fund Asia (WFA). These funds are active in various crisis and conflict settings, building on years of experience on how to best support their constituencies.

LFS was established in 2016 to resource and support grassroots activism, feminist movements and organizations led by women, girls, and trans* and intersex people as directly as possible. In its first phase, it received €42 million from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the course of four years. In its second phase, LFS scaled up to a budget of €80 million over five years with additional funding from Fondation Chanel.[38] This enabled LFS to practice grant-making in countries that are not on the OECD Development Assistance Committee list. LFS provides funds for advocacy efforts concerning the advancements of human rights and gender equality as well as against discrimination and violence. Additionally, it provides core funding, capacity building and collective learning events to help foster feminist movement building.

Who They Fund

All four LFS funds are part of Prospera, the international network of women's funds.[39] LFS selected the four women's funds through a number of consultations with Prospera and other key stakeholders within the feminist funding landscape.[40] Eligible funds were chosen based on several criteria: the fund had to be based in the Global South and possess the absorptive capacity for large grants as well as a demonstrated legitimacy in the geographic area in which it serves. LFS grantee partners work on often-contested topics, which include sexual and gender-based violence, environmental and economic justice, access to justice, and strengthening feminist leadership and participation.[41]

How They Fund

The LFS program channels funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the four women's funds, who then distribute these multi-year grants to feminist groups in the regions under their purview. These groups can be funded for up to three years: roughly 30 to 40 percent of the grant can go to core funding for grantees, with the rest designated to project-based activities. Of the total grant, up to 15 percent may also be used to provide direct services to communities that contribute to promoting gender equality. Many of LFS's grantees are working under repressive systems and must navigate a closing or closed civil society space. Programming priorities are therefore

42 Kasia Staszewska and Kellea Miller, "Moving More Money to the Drivers of Change: How Bilateral and Multilateral Funders Can Resource Feminist Movements," AWID and Mama Cash, November 2023, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/41Wajcd.

43 Transition International, "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)."

44 Transition International, "End evaluation of the policy framework Leading from the South (2017-2020)."

led by grantee partners, in acknowledgment that they are best placed to determine the most effective way to address issues in their communities.

In the case of grantees funded through LFS's Women's Fund Asia, grants range from €30,000 to €50,000 for smaller groups, €75,000 to €180,000 within their mid-range program, and up to €400,000 for larger organizations over a three-year period. The funding provided through LFS allowed the Women's Fund Asia to increase its grant sizes. During the second phase of LFS, women's funds in Latin America have also begun to re-allocate grants to smaller, regional feminist funds, thus increasing LFS's coverage area. Beyond providing flexible financial support, LFS focuses on organizational capacity and inter-organizational movement building through "Linking and Learning" events.

Why It Works

LFS is an example of how more equitable cooperation between a donor and feminist movements can work: through the sharing of power, resources and capacities.[42] This creates a cooperation that – through an intermediary – gains legitimacy and local context knowledge and supports grassroots work without creating an unmanageable demand on government donors to directly administer small grants. It achieves this without (necessarily) stifling small organizations with burdensome reporting requirements. Its flexible nature allows grantees some adaptability in responding to emerging or existent crisis settings. However, the current nature of LFS funding does not allow for rapid response or emergency support funding. Considering that many grantees work in highly volatile, sometimes conflict-affected contexts, there would be a benefit in enabling grantees to respond faster to crises by using LFS funds.[43]

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

LFS shifts the decision-making power on how to best and most sustainably support the advancement of rights for women, girls, and intersex and trans* people to regional women's funds that have years of trust-building experience and a knowledge of the regional context and networks. This transfer of power directly translates principles of feminist foreign policy into action. LFS and the Equality Fund (see the respective case study) have paved the way and modeled how to invest large resources directly into feminist movements. This has led donors to create new feminist funding streams and signaled to other donors how modes of direct partnership, collaboration and co-creation with partners in the Global South can look.[44]

Resourcing Change

45 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States," October 2022, accessed May 3, 2023, https://bit.ly/3VzMzrO.

46 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

47 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

48 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

Resourcing Change was a three-year funding project implemented by the organizations Saferworld, Women for Women International (WfWI) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The project was funded through the United Kingdom's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) and aimed to increase independent and self-governed programming by women's rights organizations as well as to promote capacity strengthening and feminist movement building in fragile and conflict-affected states. Resourcing Change provided an average of £35,000 in flexible and core funding to 21 women's rights organizations in Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria that worked on topics like peacebuilding, women's empowerment and political participation as well as the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.[45] In addition, Resourcing Change provided their grantees with tailored capacity training and collective learning events.

Who They Fund

Based on an initial mapping, Resourcing Change identified women-led women's rights organizations for each country under their purview. The funded organizations worked on various issues, including advocacy against gender-based violence and providing legal aid to survivors, conducting community peace dialogues, and training women in leadership skills.[46] In the case of South Sudan, the decision to include newer organizations without an established track record of donor relationships allowed such organizations to receive funding and build a track record for future funders. For example, support from Resourcing Change afforded their grantee Women for Change South Sudan – an organization working on advocacy and empowerment toward women's rights – increased donor visibility and greater financial capabilities, which enabled them to seek other sources of funding.

How It Works

Beyond core and flexible grants that allowed grantees to adapt their programming to emerging or changing needs in their communities, the Resourcing Change program provided capacity assessments and technical assistance to expand grantees' operations and organizational processes. Flexible funding meant that the organizations themselves could decide on their expenditures based on their strategic goals and emerging community requests. To this end, funds were used both for operational support and programmatic work.[47] Additionally, learning events were integrated into the project design – both among organizations operating in the same country as well as between all partner organizations in Yemen, Nigeria and South Sudan, including the donor and consortium partners.[48] Partners in South Sudan also began to conduct

49 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

50 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

51 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

52 Saferworld, "Resourcing Change: Supporting Women's Rights Organisations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States."

joint programming and connected with other women's rights organizations that were not receiving CSSF funding to share lessons and link up feminist movements. By doing so, the partners in South Sudan expanded the ecosystem of those profiting from the Resourcing Change project, even if only indirectly.

Why It Works

At the start of the project, the consortium partners (Saferworld, WILPF and WfWI) defined a set of feminist principles to guide Resourcing Change's grant-making and learning events. These included commitments to the "positive and inclusive use of power," "transparency and accountability" (to the grantees), "collective decision-making," "gender justice and non-discrimination," as well as "intersectionality."[49] The women's rights organizations and consortium partners discussed how to best apply these principles in learning events to evaluate whether the program was serving grantees' needs in the best possible ways.[50] Although the funds from Resourcing Change were distributed in small grants, they came with a lot of freedom on how to best set priorities and allowed organizations to retain and hire new specialized staff (e.g., for monitoring and evaluation or procurement efforts – expertise that is often particularly hard to fund through project grants). The funding's flexibility enabled grantees to adjust their programming and adapt quickly and without labor-intensive negotiations to crisis-induced changes on the ground as well as to shifting community needs. The quick response time also resulted in higher trust and buy-in from community members and stakeholders, thus bolstering the legitimacy of feminist organizations in often highly contested civil society spaces.[51]

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

The experience of Resourcing Change as well as the feedback from its grantees – including regarding the need for longer implementation timeframes and larger funding sums in order to implement programs more effectively and sustainably – can be used as lessons for similar projects as part of feminist foreign policy efforts.[52] The project modeled a way to support women peacebuilders and women's rights organizations that navigate fragile and conflict-affected contexts while being guided by their communities' needs. In adhering to feminist principles, it went beyond usual grant-making practices by emphasizing the importance of allocating money and time to convening and learning spaces. It did so both in terms of sharing multi-directional learnings from grantees, partners and donors as well as by strengthening a sustainable and well-connected feminist civil society.

Women Reclaiming Their Agency in Peacemaking

53 WRAP was initiated in 2022 and is active in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia. The concept is based on a similar but smaller SIHA project that was previously implemented in Sudan.

54 Council on Foreign Relations, "Women's Participation in Peace Processes," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3LUItZj.

The "Women Reclaiming Their Agency in Peacemaking" (WRAP) project was initiated by the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) in 2022 and is funded by the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development.[53] The project aims to empower local feminist activists to gain influence over peace processes and crisis prevention policies by engaging with regional, national and international decision-making bodies. WRAP operates based on the finding that gender-inclusive peace processes have a higher likelihood of resulting in sustainable peace.[54] However, WRAP recognizes that to maximize their impact, women peacebuilders need more than just a seat at the negotiating table and in peacebuilding initiatives: they also need networks, public support and the operational skills to pursue their agendas.

Who They Work With

WRAP is active in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia, and it incorporates a wide range of practitioners working to implement the UN's Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The project follows a train-the-trainers approach: WRAP educates trainers in areas such as transitional justice, conflict mediation, conflict-related sexual violence, and the role of women in peace and conflict. It identifies trainers by circulating a call for the expression of interest within SIHA's existing network. Once these actors are trained, another round of applications starts at the national level to identify participants for second-level trainings. The target groups for these include women peacebuilders such as WPS and feminist activists, women human rights defenders and women journalists. Besides finding applicants with relevant personal experiences, SIHA aims to create a diverse pool of participants regarding categories such as religion, age, class, and others.

How They Work

As mentioned, the training-the-trainers approach sits at the core of the WRAP project. However, beyond capacity building through knowledge transfer, the project also aims to amplify the political voices of its members through advocacy work. To do so, the WRAP participants build country-based coalitions to create national action plans for WPS advocacy in their respective countries. These country coalitions are further eligible for financial support from SIHA. Beyond country coalitions, the WRAP project also aims to connect participants on a regional level. For this, SIHA created an online communication platform and hosts joint events such as the "Feminist Peace Lab."

55 SIHA, "Our Story," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3I29Du7.

56 Women in Islam Journal, "About," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/44rkK9p.

57 Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Epistemic Freedom in Africa, London: Routledge, 2018.

The Network Behind WRAP

WRAP's focus on coalition building and advocacy corresponds to the broader mission of its mother network, SIHA. SIHA was founded in 1995 by regional women activists and seeks to build an inclusive women's movement in the Horn of Africa. At the time of writing, SIHA has 136 member organizations and is active in Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somaliland, Somalia, Kenya, and Uganda. The main goal of SIHA is to facilitate coalition building and knowledge transfer among feminist actors in the region. The membership of SIHA is very diverse and includes both organizations that implement feminist projects as well as feminist activists. This diversity stems largely from SIHA's operational principle to promote a variety of (local) feminist voices, as women and feminist actors are too often mistaken as a homogenous group.[55] Additionally, SIHA explicitly targets it programs toward women and women's organizations outside of the regional mainstream women's movement. These include, but are not limited to, internally displaced and rural women.

Beyond networking and capacity building, SIHA's work has a strong emphasis on distributing knowledge around the needs – but also the agency and transformative potential – of women in the region. For instance, SIHA publishes the *Women in Islam* journal, which provides scholars and activists with a space to reflect on gender-equitable interpretations of Islam. As such, the journal aims to dismantle common prejudices about the role of women in Islam while also discussing ways to overcome gendered forms of violence and injustice caused by militant Islamism.[56] Similarly, SIHA publishes a wide range of reports on different topics related to feminism in the Horn of Africa. These learnings are designed as a counterweight to conventional knowledge production, which often marginalizes perspectives from the Global South.[57]

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

SIHA and the WRAP project demonstrate the merits of regional feminist movement building. By strengthening the networks and capacities of women peacebuilders, SIHA uses WRAP to empower women to become agents of change in and beyond their communities. Through this network focus, SIHA supports local feminist projects while also strengthening a regional women's movement, thus demonstrating the transformative potential of bottom-up feminist networks. From a feminist foreign policy perspective, creating a space for feminist activists to come together, build solidarity, share knowledge, and collaborate is important for strengthening local and regional feminist actors beyond the mere provision of project funding.

The MenEngage Network

58 Leandra Bias and Yasmine Janah, "Scoping Study: Masculinities, Violence, and Peace," Swisspeace, November 2022, accessed May 5, 2023, https://bit.ly/3QBApO0.

MenEngage is a global network that brings together organizations working with men to fight against gendered social inequalities and gender-based violence. For instance, the network supports initiatives in conflict contexts that gather men to discuss their ideas of what it means to be a man, how these expectations contribute to violence, and how they can be overcome. This approach is based on the finding that patriarchal characteristics like violence and domination are learned behaviors determined by dominant social ideas of what it means to be a man (i.e., masculinities). As such, these characteristics are one of the root causes of violence.[58] MenEngage encourages the transformation of masculinities toward less oppressive and less violent alternatives.

How It Works

Founded in 2006, the MenEngage network brings together over 1,000 regional and local feminist organizations that conduct projects aimed at transforming masculinities in Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, and South Asia. While not all MenEngage members operate in peacebuilding or crisis contexts, the network supports a variety of projects that are concerned with dismantling violence-centered masculinities in (post-)conflict situations. Beyond the geographical and contextual diversity of the initiatives, MenEngage members deploy a wide variety of methods to challenge masculinities centered on violence. Among others, their methods include awareness raising campaigns, movement building workshops, dialogue programs, and political advocacy efforts.

For instance, MenEngage's member organization COMEN approaches the problem of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by promoting peaceful ideas of masculinity. To do so, COMEN creates safe spaces for men – including ex-combatants – to meet and discuss their ideas of what manhood looks like, reflect how these ideas are shaped by conflict and understand how they lead to the perpetration of violence. Additionally, COMEN distributes educational resources that promote alternative, peaceful ideas of masculinity. Similarly, many MenEngage members in different (post-)conflict contexts employ comparable methods to reduce levels of sexual violence and prevent men from (re-)mobilizing for conflict.

How the Network Operates

Because of its network character, MenEngage itself is not involved in implementing projects on the ground. Instead, the network supports its members through activities that can be subsumed into three categories: movement building, capacity building and political advocacy.

Firstly, by encouraging exchange and cooperation between members across the globe, the network aims to create a movement that transforms masculinities as part of the global feminist fight against the patriarchy. Secondly, through capacity-building activities, the MenEngage network aspires to supports its members in building structures that sustainably benefit their project work. For instance, MenEngage supports members through trainings and networking to bolster their fundraising capacities for their projects. Thirdly, the network channels the input of its members to engage in political advocacy. As such, the MenEngage network regularly provides input to national and international policymakers and advocates for tackling the structural drivers of violence-centered masculinities like militarization.

While the global network is headquartered in Washington, DC, MenEngage's members are organized into six regional networks: Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America, and South Asia. Each regional network has a permanent regional secretariat that receives core funding from the global network but remains operationally independent. Similarly, the global network enjoys a high degree of decision-making freedom from its main funder, the Swedish International Development Agency. While the latter requires MenEngage to provide yearly reports on their operations and finances, it does not influence MenEngage's programmatic and operational decisions.

To become a member of the network, organizations must adhere to MenEngage's code of conduct and values, which include a commitment to working in solidarity with other feminist organizations. However, beyond this requirement, MenEngage has no stake in its member's decision-making processes, meaning that the network does not dictate programmatic and administrative decisions to its members. Instead, MenEngage seeks to empower local feminists who work on transforming violence-centered masculinities to implement their own ideas and engage in exchange with one another. Accordingly, the network recognizes that the problems posed by violence-centered masculinities require context-specific, localized solutions rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. While this entails that members' individual approaches can differ significantly, it enables local agency.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

Most directly, the transformation of masculinities can lead to a reduction of gendered social hierarchies and a decrease in gender-based violence. In addition, it can reduce men's overall willingness to engage in violence and armed conflict, thus contributing to non-violent political competition and – ultimately – political stability. Furthermore, MenEngage demonstrates how creating a global movement for gender equality can be combined with localized project design and decision-making. The local character of decision-making not only leads to more context-sensitive project work – it also creates local ownership of transformative processes. This bottom-up approach benefits the public acceptance and sustainability of projects, as they are more likely to be perceived as indigenous initiatives rather than foreign interventions.

From Female Combatants to Filmmakers

59 Evelyn Pauls, Tripani Baijali, Alabai, Buisan Mikunug, Gypsy Queen Buisan Sumampao, Grace Nitunga, Lila Sharma, and Salawati S.Pd, "I Have to Speak: Voices of Female Ex-Combatants from Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal," March 2020, accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3VwXGSq.

60 Evelyn Pauls et al., "I Have to Speak: Voices of Female Ex-Combatants from Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal."

The participatory research project "From Female Combatants to Filmmakers" was implemented by the Berghof Foundation and female ex-combatants now working as researchers in Nepal, Indonesia, the Philippines, Burundi, Uganda, and Colombia. It was funded by the GIZ. The project was initiated by a Nepalese organization for women ex-combatants that was seeking a space for guided reflection on common and diverging experiences of war and post-war integration for women ex-combatants. Through participatory visual research and dialogue formats, the project aimed to create reflection spaces for ex-combatants to talk about their experiences as well as to contribute to community healing. It was also intended to inform decision-making on the inclusion of women ex-combatants in peace dialogues and advocate for the inclusion of their perspectives in the design of post-war reconstruction and reconciliation efforts.[59] Different iterations of the project resulted in three documentary short films, two storytelling booklets and a number of written reports.[60] The short films were further used to inspire and inform intergenerational dialogues within the respective communities.

Who They Work With

The participants were women ex-combatants who had "won" their respective conflict – for instance, MILF and MLNF in the Philippines. The ex-combatant groups were identified through existing partnerships with the Berghof Foundation. Within these groups, the projects involved a diverse set of participants, such as women of various ethnic groups or former combatants with disabilities, while also acknowledging potential conflict lines within ex-combatant communities. In cases where there was a split within a community or a divide along certain demographic lines, project leaders worked with two separate groups. The first project was based in Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal and implemented in cooperation with women-led ex-combatant organizations. The thematic focus of the projects, be it on political participation, trauma or intergenerational dialogue, was defined by the groups themselves. In Nepal and Indonesia, the groups focused on the difficulties for ex-combatants to participate politically, whereas in the Philippines the focus was on intergenerational dialogue.

How It Works

In each country, local partner organizations for ex-combatants chose researchers from among their own members who then received training on filmmaking and were provided

61 Evelyn Pauls et al., "I Have to Speak: Voices of Female Ex-Combatants from Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal."

62 Evelyn Pauls et al., "I Have to Speak: Voices of Female Ex-Combatants from Aceh, Burundi, Mindanao, and Nepal."

with the necessary equipment as well as remunerated for their time. The participants were speaking to their own experiences and thus set their own priorities in retelling the conflict and post-war experiences made by others within and outside of the non-state armed groups that they are/were a part of. The choice of film as a medium enabled a collaborative and accessible way of conducting participatory research. However, a limitation of the medium is its reliance on visual testimony by individuals. A changing security situation in a project country may necessitate that the videos and reports be taken down from online portals to protect the project participants, which may limit the project's contribution to future debates.

Why It Works

The process of interviewing and film production as well as the accompanying intergenerational dialogues created and fostered a space for open communication and sharing about experiences that otherwise often remain unspoken. This was done with the aim of working toward broadening efforts at reconciliation on a community level within and outside of the women's peer groups, which were often limited to their fellow demobilized male combatants. The latter were often women ex-combatants' main peers yet also shaped a community space in which the women were confronted with a loss of agency and limiting gender expectations post-demobilization.

The project was seen as a chance for women to transform gender relations inside and outside of their communities. The methodology of participatory action research was chosen because it worked well to help participants grasp their conflict experiences and because it enabled and empowered them to set the agenda in a self-governed way. Through the production of short films and storytelling booklets, the voices and expertise of women ex-combatants were centered and can now serve as a reference point for future gender-responsive programming.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

Women's agency as members of armed groups often does not translate into political capital in post-war settings.[61] This is demonstrated by their exclusion from peace negotiations, the absence of women's political participation and the overarching notion put forward by peers and society that they should go "back home" and resume stereotypically gendered roles.[62] The project's aim was to create a more nuanced image of women's situations in post-war environments, in particular by challenging the idea that women are only to be seen as victims of violence. A more complex and gender-sensitive understanding of how women participate in conflict and how this shapes their experiences after war can enable more effective and sustainable solutions for peace. A feminist foreign policy recognizes post-war settings as offering vital momentum for the (re)configuration of gender relations after conflict. All this necessitates a more granular understanding of conflict parties, including of the gendered dimensions of individuals' participation in violent conflict.

New Social Initiative

63   Vedran Dzihic, "Kosovo and Serbia: Teetering on the Brink of Escalation," ZOiS Spotlight, February 2023, accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3NFnDNY.

64   New Social Initiative, "Inclusion of Women at the Negotiating Table in Kosovo," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/44t8PYA.

The New Social Initiative (NSI) is an NGO that aims to contribute to inclusivity and peace in post-war Kosovo by fostering inter-ethnic reconciliation and trust as well as by empowering minority communities to participate in Kosovo's social life, politics and institutions. Even though the organization is not feminist by name, the NSI falls under a feminist foreign policy paradigm in that it promotes inclusivity and inter-ethnic dialogue in a context that is dominated by rising social tensions and political and ethnic confrontation.[63] In its work, the NSI supports dialogue between the Albanian majority and the Serbian and other minority communities throughout Kosovo. To do so, the NSI conducts a variety of projects, such as trust-building exercises, campaigns against hate-speech and disinformation, formats for the political empowerment of minorities, women's empowerment exercises, and transitional justice initiatives.

Who They Work With

The NSI started operating in 2017 and is based out of Mitrovica, a city in northern Kosovo that is characterized by a stark division between Serbian and Albanian-dominated areas. While the NSI mainly targets the Serbian minority in Kosovo, other minorities are also addressed by NSI initiatives. Only a small number of NSI projects have a specific focus on women or gender. For instance, the NSI conducted the EU-funded project "Inclusion of Women at the Negotiating Table" in 2021, which sought to engage more women in the peacebuilding process.[64] However, the majority of NSI projects do not contain a gender focus. Instead, the NSI regards gender as a cross-sectional topic that must be addressed in all projects, regardless of their target group.

The NSI is a women-led, grassroots NGO with a small, multi-ethnic staff. As such, the NSI practices inter-ethnic cooperation not only in its projects but also in its work culture. The diverse make-up of the NSI's staff is relevant from a feminist perspective, as it means that minorities are stakeholders in the NSI's project design and agenda setting. Furthermore, the NSI's diverse and grassroots approach gives it legitimacy within its respective target communities, as it reduces the impression of partisanship.

How They Work

As mentioned above, the NSI conducts a series of projects that aim to empower non-majority groups and promote inter-ethnic reconciliation. To achieve these objectives, their implementers utilize a variety of methods, such as personal dialogue meetings, research-based advocacy, inter-ethnic training and learning activities, workshops on the political empowerment of civil society, and social media campaigns. Most projects are small, have a short to medium-term time horizon, are driven by current local demands, and receive individual funding from a variety of donors. These include national

65 New Social Initiative, "About," n.d., accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3VwUS7S.

66 LTL Website, "About Us," accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/44rtCMb.

67 New Social Initiative, "Civil Society Facilitation for Development of a Citizen-Centered National Strategy for Transitional Justice in Kosovo," accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3HGiQbf.

and foreign governments, international organizations and private foundations.[65] Since 2017, the NSI has implemented 40 projects. Among others, these include:

"Linking Through Lenses" (LTL): LTL was a digital initiative funded by the Swiss Embassy to involve social media influencers in Kosovo in efforts to counter hate speech and promote positive narratives around inter-ethnic cooperation. By using online platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and YouTube, LTL aimed to reach a young audience from different ethnic communities. In addition to featuring famous influencers, LTL created a competition of ideas to promote local civil society initiatives that demonstrate peaceful relations between young people from different communities.[66] As such, LTL followed NSI's overall mission to promote reconciliation between ethnic communities.

"Civil Society Facilitation for the Development of a Citizen-Centered National Strategy for Transitional Justice": Funded by the Embassy of the Netherlands between May 2021 and October 2022, this project aimed to provide diverse, victim-centered input for the development of Kosovo's National Strategy for Transitional Justice. In cooperation with PAX International, the International Center for Transitional Justice, Integra, and the Division for Transitional Justice, the project hosted citizen dialogues to empower a diverse set of citizens to voice their preferred ideas for how Kosovo should approach transitional justice. These perspectives were collected and submitted to the Kosovar government for consideration in the design of the transitional justice strategy. As such, the project followed the NSI's aim to improve the civic participation of non-majority communities in Kosovo.[67]

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

The NSI demonstrates that an initiative does not have to be feminist by name or focus primarily on gender to fall under a feminist peacebuilding paradigm. By focusing on the inclusion of minority communities and promoting ethnic reconciliation in Kosovo, the NSI follows wider, intersectional principles that are at the heart of feminist foreign policy. Furthermore, the NSI's mission to foster inter-ethnic reconciliation contributes to preventing the reoccurrence of political violence in Kosovo, thus representing an important part of peacebuilding. As a women-led, grassroots NGO, the NSI performs a variety of activities that not only aim to reach diverse communities but are also designed and implemented by an inclusive team. This corresponds to the feminist principle of including groups that are impacted by peacebuilding initiatives in the design of these programs.

Peace Champions

"Building Peace Through Young Adult Peace Champions in Post-Conflict Communities to Prevent Youth Re-Radicalization" (Peace Champions) is a project funded by the German Federal Foreign Office through the ifa zivik program and currently in its fourth year. The project implementer is the Kampala-based NGO Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE). Peace Champions aims to prevent a re-radicalization of youths between the ages of 18 and 30 who were previously involved in violent conflict. It identifies and brings together former combatants and youths with a history of engaging in violent actions but also engages survivors of child abduction as well as young adults who were born in captivity. Even though not feminist by name, the project falls under a feminist paradigm as it promotes the inclusion of individuals that are often viewed as perpetual perpetrators of violence and consequently experience stigma and marginalization in communities affected by conflict. Many of the project participants fail to meet the criteria that would allow them to benefit from government programming aimed at stabilizing post-conflict communities. In an effort to support young people and prevent them from becoming radicalized and resorting to violence again, CECORE engages with them to help them become peacebuilders and agents of positive change for their communities instead. This effort is rooted in the understanding that youths often engage in violence because of coercion, manipulation or economic and financial hardship. Through activities like convening, capacity building and mentoring, CECORE thus aims to nurture a younger generation that has a sense of belonging, a purpose and is equipped to promote a culture of peace.

Who They Work With

In selecting project participants, CECORE proceeds geographically. First, the organization identifies conflict hotspots and regions where youths are most affected, such as areas close to sites of conflict or IDP camps. In Uganda, these were the districts of Kasese, Kaabong, Amudat, and Karamoja. CECORE further conducts baseline studies to identify the most vulnerable individuals among the pool of possible participants. With the help of local leaders, they then select three groups as direct target beneficiaries. Each Peace Champions group has about 30 members, whom CECORE equips with the political, social, economic and mental health resources needed to help them become agents for peace. The groups consist of community members who have been actively involved in conflict and young people who have not or who, in contrast, are already actively engaged in peacebuilding activities. Among other things, this is meant to prevent discontent within the communities that may result from a perception that the project only supports "perpetrators" while leaving other young people behind. CECORE aims for an even gender distribution within the participant groups and strives to bring together young adults with diverse experiences and life stories.

How They Work

Participants first receive input and trainings that range from community dialogues meant to raise awareness to learning about trauma healing, the climate-conflict nexus or reconciliation. Those peace champions then act as ambassadors and mobilize their networks into peace activism. Mobilization takes the form of "training the trainers," meaning that the peace champions pass on their skills and learnings, ideally initiating a cascade or snowball effect within their peer groups. This method is meant to ultimately enable local or community ownership of conflict resolution and serves to include those who are otherwise often hard to reach.

A third component is the "Connectors for Peace" project stream. It addresses the socio-economic origins that drive re-radicalization among the many unemployed youths in Uganda. Through diverse training initiatives – from bee keeping and goat rearing to welding, metal production and crafting – young adults are provided with skills and respective opportunities to generate an income through employment and to showcase that subsistence and purpose are possible outside of the spiral of violence.

Why It Works

The young peace champions choose the activities they deem most important to implement. During the baseline study phase, the potential participants and key stakeholders in the communities voice their needs vis-à-vis CECORE and thus already take ownership of the process. By providing mentorship and inspiration, CECORE harnesses existing potential and capacities and thus demystifies the often-held belief that ex-combatants are perpetual perpetrators. Additionally, the project enables participants to pursue other income-generating activities than participation in conflict. This greatly diminishes the incentive of re-militarization. CECORE also stresses the importance of engaging with traditional and religious leaders since their influential position is important to advance the project cause. Similarly, local government authorities are invited to be present during workshop sessions to ensure that the project's ideas and logic will be sustained even after it has officially ended.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

While not feminist by name, the Peace Champions project illustrates a core notion at the heart of the feminist foreign policy approach: it identifies groups in Ugandan society that are highly affected by violent conflict yet fail to meet the criteria to benefit from government aid. The underlying peacebuilding agenda follows a bottom-up logic, meaning it is identified and driven by those it is supposed to benefit. Those in need of support become agents of change. This transformative approach to creating a culture of peace establishes the ground on which a durable and sustainable peaceful coexistence can flourish. The fact that Peace Champions engages girls and boys, young women and men, and that it brings participants in touch with political and economic stakeholders, illustrates a feminist agenda that views norms and power structures as a primary locus for change, not merely women and girls.

Women's Initiative for Peace in Donbas

68 The project still operates, but in a different and evolving way. We refer to WIPD in the past tense as this case study focuses on its operations before February 2022.

69 Julia Friedrich and Niklas Balbon, "What Should We Have to Say About It? Perspectives on Peace in Eastern Ukraine," Global Public Policy Institute, April 20, 2022, accessed May 4, 2023, https://bit.ly/3ATSY7P.

70 Julia Friedrich and Niklas Balbon, "What Should We Have to Say About It? Perspectives on Peace in Eastern Ukraine."

71 OCHA, "Humanitarian Bulletin: Ukraine," ReliefWeb, accessed May 4, 2023, bit.ly/3NEhvFG.

The "Women's Initiative for Peace in Donbas" (WIPD) was a project implemented by the Berlin-based NGO OWEN, which aimed to strengthen women as actors for peace in Ukraine. The project was launched in 2016, during a time characterized by a deadlocked conflict in the eastern Ukrainian Donbas region. As a note, OWEN operated in the way described in this case study until the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[68]

In 2016, the Donbas was partitioned into areas under the control of the Ukrainian government and areas controlled by Russia-backed separatists (NGCA).[69] The accompanying political dialogue between the conflict parties was stalling and for the most part excluded women.[70] At the same time, the humanitarian situation in the Donbas region deteriorated dramatically.[71] Against this backdrop, OWEN created WIPD to establish a dialogue platform between conflict-affected women from both sides of the conflict line in the hopes of reducing local tensions. Beyond this dialogue component, WIPD empowered women to become local peacebuilders by supporting the development of women-led initiatives to address shared local problems, such as difficulties in receiving pensions and passports in occupied areas.

Who They Worked With

WIPD was led by OWEN and implemented in cooperation with a Ukrainian and a Russian partner organization. The project addressed women from both Ukrainian government-controlled areas and occupied areas of Ukraine as well as the Russian Federation. It has received funding from the German Federal Foreign Office and Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as operational support from the Clingendael Institute.

How They Worked

As mentioned, WIPD pursued two main goals: (1) alleviate tensions through dialogue and (2) initiate women-led projects that empower women peacebuilders to improve the situation of those affected by conflict. As part of the dialogue component, WIPD organized personal meetings between women from Ukraine, Russia and the NGCA areas. Since the project's inception, WIPD conducted approximately 20 personal dialogue and training meetings as well as five large online assemblies and 20 smaller online meetings. The aim of these meetings was to discuss differences and similarities

72   Ideas for Change, "Pidstorinka Dva," 2020, https://bit.ly/414gk5o.

in perspectives on the conflict, reduce mutual stereotypes and de-mythologize the perspective of "the other side." Alongside topical discussions and trust-building exercises, dialogue meetings often featured trainings such as a negotiation skills course.[72] These dialogue meetings created a rare opportunity for women to participate in conflict transformation and, at times, establish solidarity with one another. However, the goal was not always to create consensus among participants; instead, dialogue was seen as an inherently valuable instrument to build trust, even in cases where participants disagreed on the substance of their discussions.

The second pillar of WIPD was the development of new initiatives by dialogue participants, which received financial and operational support from WIPD. At dialogue meetings, WIPD participants were encouraged to discuss local conflict-induced problems and how they could be solved. In particular, WIPD aimed to support initiatives that were jointly implemented by women from different sides of the Donbas conflict line. While not always feasible, this approach yielded three positive outcomes: Firstly, projects provided grassroots solutions to local, conflict-induced problems. Secondly, by collaborating across conflict lines, women on both sides were able to build communication channels and mutual trust. Thirdly, these initiatives empowered women peacebuilders as agents of change. Beyond encouraging their inception, WIPD supported the initiatives by passing on financial assistance and through regular consultation. While this effectively meant that initiatives could not operate independently, it also meant that the projects benefited from a close relationship with WIPD, including the project team's network and experience in project management. Between 2016 and 2022, WIPD supported over 50 initiatives. These projects were locally based, small in size and included initiatives to improve local living conditions, surveys, cultural initiatives, and local round tables.

What It Means for Feminist Foreign Policy

From a feminist foreign policy perspective, WIPD demonstrates potential on three levels: Firstly, by addressing women, the project engaged people who were often excluded from traditional peacebuilding. Secondly, WIPD promoted grassroots solutions to local problems created by conflict. Thirdly, WIPD identified gender as a uniting element between people that are on different sides of political conflict lines. With this approach, WIPD showcased the merits of an often-overlooked approach to peacebuilding, that is, promoting reconciliation through gender solidarity. While Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine shows that this approach is politically limited, WIPD's example demonstrates that below the level of political confrontation, small-scale peacebuilding can yield incremental, positive developments for conflict-affected people. Despite the limitations of this approach, overcoming traditional conflict lines through gender solidarity can be seen as an important addition to the toolkit of feminist peacebuilding.