



How can feminist development policy contribute to strengthening democracy and governance?

Recommendations on the future Africa strategy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

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Core challenges

Women and girls in all their diversity as well as marginalised groups are restricted in realising their rights and potential. They experience structural, epistemic and individual violence, have limited access to resources, services and decision-making processes. In this context, various forms of oppression and discrimination based on categories such as gender, age, origin, class, ethnicity and/or ability are interlocked and reinforced. Historically established power structures (e.g. patriarchy, colonialism, racism) are structural causes of inequality and multiple discriminations (intersectionality) in the global system, at regional, national, communal, family and individual levels.

Background/development policy classification

Feminist approaches intervene by addressing existing power structures and making visible the different forms and interactions of oppression experienced by women and marginalised groups.

Historically evolved power structures and norms mean that women and marginalised groups face obstacles to realizing their human rights to health, education and participation, they are more affected by poverty, climate change, crises and economic insecurity, as well as Gender Based Violence (GBV).

In the African context, it is important to take into account the colonial history and its prevailing dynamics and exploitative systemic practices which deny certain bodies, identities, genders and cultures their knowledge and experiences and silence them (epistemic violence). Thus, in formulating a feminist development policy, it is imperative to take an approach that is sensitive to the colonial history in Africa by ensuring the involvement of local civil society and diaspora actors who have a deep and nuanced understanding of the realities, both in the Global North and the Global South.

This feminist development must be based on gender equality, on more female leadership and diverse voices that reflect the prevailing social, political, cultural and economic reality.



Hawa Adbalnabi, 31, Sudan: „Supporting women to participate in decision-making and have their voices heard is so important. It not only benefits individual women like me, but it also has a lasting impact on our communities.” CARE/Ala Kheir

Key solutions that a new Africa strategy should provide



Binitie Adem, member of a Village Savings and Loans Association in Ethiopia. CARE/Terhas Berhe

Feminist foreign and development policy is intersectional, transformative and human rights-based, it recognises power inequalities and aims to change them

- **Transformative approach:** Address structural inequalities and the underlying harmful/negative norms and historically evolved power structures (e.g. patriarchal, colonial and racist structures) in and through programmes and projects on all levels and in all sectors, in dialogues and processes with all stakeholders.
- **Postcolonial approach:** Acknowledge and address the colonial past and resulting structural power imbalances in their impact on current development structures, i.e. through significant participation of African partners and diaspora actors including civil society, in all processes.
- **Intersectional perspective:** Analyse and address multiple forms of discrimination and systems of oppression.
- **Human rights-based approach:** Enforce human rights for all, by strengthening right bearers and holding duty bearers accountable.
- **Leave No One Behind and Do No Harm:** Take into account the impact development policy, projects and partnerships have on all people and critically reflect on the unintended negative consequences of their own actions.

Equality needs rights, education, health, resources and youth

- **Focus on rights:** Increase support for projects that promote gender equality and address the structural causes of inequality, with a focus on the right to self-determination and bodily integrity / sexual and reproductive rights and a clear positioning and defence of these rights; access to and rights to resources; actions to address structural and gender-based violence.
- **Education and youth:** Further investments in inclusive and non-discriminatory education with a focus on gender equality and the promotion of the substantive participation of youth, including comprehensive sexuality education in schools.
- **Health sector:** Strengthen projects focusing on health, specifically sexual and reproductive health and nutrition to establish stable, non-discriminatory and sustainable health structures, especially in remote rural areas.
- **Access to resources and promoting upward social mobility:** Promote women's and marginalized groups' access to social and financial resources, such as the formal labour market. Sustainably overcome structural inequality and harmful norms by providing opportunities and enhancing social status.



Aminata Kalokoh, nurse in charge and Maria Fonah, Facility Management Committee Chair, Sierra Leone. CARE/Shantelle Spencer

Acknowledge marginalized voices: women, activists, grassroots movements, diaspora have a right to a seat at the table

- **Promote substantive participation and leadership of affected women and girls** in all their diversity and marginalized groups in decision-making and implementation processes at all levels, in all forums, and in all policy areas. This includes capacity development as well as putting resources and decision-making power in their hands, hearing their expertise and collaborating with them.
- **Focus more strongly on making visible, integrating and promoting the engagement of diaspora actors** and organizations, so that they can unleash their potential, rooted in their transnational identities, connections and networks in their countries of origin and destination.
- **Acknowledge the perspectives and expertise of women and marginalized persons** to dismantle the dominance of hegemonic ideologies and patriarchal structures and eradicate epistemic violence.

Change can't be achieved in silos

- **Strengthen multilateralism:** Recognize that undertakings aimed at empowering women and marginalized groups transcend national and international boundaries and require global processes and collective collaborations, provided by multilateral forums. This also includes the continuation, consistent implementation and further development of international agreements such as the Beijing Declaration, or the Women, Peace, Security agenda including UNSCR 1325.



Melba Mugala, village shop owner, Zambia. CARE/Gary Nicol

- **Coherence of approaches and strategic alignment with other departments:** Place civil conflict transformation and prevention, including addressing gender inequality and human trafficking especially of women and girls in the center of security policy debates and funding. This includes coherent rethinking of the concept of security with a focus on human security.



Women leaders at a Workshop in Uganda. CARE/Tara Agaba

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The present recommendations were developed in the context of the consultation process on the new Africa Strategy of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) with civil society in 2022. They formed the basis of the panel discussion on feminist development policy in the new Africa strategy at the Civil Society Day on 4th July 2022 and were shared with the Ministry.

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Feedback from the organizations mentioned has been incorporated by the authors, but not all positions are necessarily supported by all organizations.

The women speaking on the cover picture is Fatouma Mounkailla. She lives in a village in Niger. CARE/Josh Estey

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