

Feminist Foreign Policy and Development Finance for Gender Equality: An Assessment of Commitments

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Introduction

Increasingly aware of their potential role as catalysts for change, development donors have been strengthening their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, as evidenced in the growing number of gender equality strategies and other initiatives.¹ The rhetoric, however, has not been consistently matched by equally ambitious commitments in Official Development Assistance (ODA).² Feminist foreign policies (FFP) and feminist development policies seek to bridge this gap by increasing funding, utilizing innovative delivery mechanisms, and ensuring long-term support for women's equality organizations and institutions (WEOs)—the critical, but chronically under-funded agents of transformative change.³

This brief uses publicly available data on bilateral allocable aid commitments by Development Assistance Committee (DAC)⁴ members with a feminist foreign policy and/or feminist development policy (namely Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden) to provide aggregate and country-specific analysis of their gender-focused commitments, the sectors they prioritize, and their aid commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions. In line with OECD methodology, our analysis uses data on commitments, rather than disbursements, since the gap between the two over time is very small and the former better reflect the changing political priorities of donors.⁵

Methodology

Bilateral allocable aid commitment data are drawn from the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database⁶, which applies the OECD gender marker – a statistical tool for the evaluation of aid activities that target gender equality as a policy objective.⁷ The marker distinguishes between screened programs that are found not to target gender equality (score 0); those that incorporate gender equality as a significant objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/program (score 1); and those for which gender equality is the principal objective, fundamental to its design and expected results (score 2). Commitments that have not been screened against the marker are not scored. DAC members have to screen at least 50 percent of their commitments to be included in the annual OECD analyses of gender-sensitive development aid. In line with our recommendation that every country mandate the introduction of at least one gender-related objective to programs, non-gender-focused funds, (i.e. that have not been targeted or screened) are included in the calculations of total commitments between 2014-2020. However, they are not included in calculations pertaining to sector-specific funding and/or funding for women's equality organizations and institutions.

In addition to the gender marker, DAC members are required to classify their commitments under specific purpose codes to identify “which specific area of the recipient's economic or social structure the transfer is intended to foster.”⁸ Within the Government and Civil Society Purpose Code, sub-code 15170 “Women's rights organizations and movements, and government institutions” captures support for activities and core funding to enhance the effectiveness, influence, and sustainability of these organizations and achieve transformative change for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The countries in our dataset were given opportunities to review the research, and their feedback has been addressed in the analysis to the extent possible. With this project, we aim to start a process of exchange that will clarify funding decisions including the political, fiscal, and other enabling factors and constraints that affect commitments to gender equality over time.

Summary of Findings

While a causal link between a feminist foreign and/or development policy and increased gender-sensitive development aid is not established in this brief, due to the small sample size, short timeframe, and limitations inherent in the donor reporting methodology itself, some preliminary findings emerge from our analysis:

- ◆ **The announcement of a feminist foreign and/or development policy is often (but not always) accompanied by an increase in commitments or the announcement of a funding mechanism for women's equality organizations and institutions. Therefore, the findings suggest that donors consider increasing or securing gender-sensitive development aid as an important part of their feminist foreign and/or development policy.**
- ◆ Only four percent of commitments in the period under review were not screened, indicating that the gender marker is now an established methodology for evaluating commitments. However, **54 percent of screened commitments did not include any gender component**, pointing to persistent challenges with designing high-quality programs that meaningfully integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.⁹
- ◆ **Overall, gender-focused commitments (marked as principal and significant) almost doubled** in the period under review (2014-2020). Those marked as principal, however, remain low in actual volume.
- ◆ **Sector-specific funding is unevenly distributed**, as just two sectors (government and civil society, and the education sector) attracted almost half of all commitments in 2014-2020, while others, such as population policies/ reproductive health and the energy sectors, were deprioritized.
- ◆ **At \$2.37 billion, commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions remain a fraction (9%) of the group's commitments to the government and civil society sector (\$26.1 billion) and a sliver (2%) of their overall gender-focused aid (\$117.6 billion).**
- ◆ **The top two donors by volume (Germany and France) also have very low shares of commitments marked as principal and aid commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions.** Addressing this imbalance should be a priority for both and can have a sizeable impact on the two types of commitments.

These early findings and recommendations serve as an evidence base of reflection and exchange for feminist foreign policy countries, particularly in the face of competing priorities and proposed budget adjustments.^{10,11} They can also serve as a reference point for those interested in announcing or engaging with feminist foreign policies or feminist development policies, demonstrating that gender-sensitive aid is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but a consistent approach can lead to successful outcomes.

Analysis

At a glance

FIGURE 1: ODA for gender equality by DAC members — Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments.

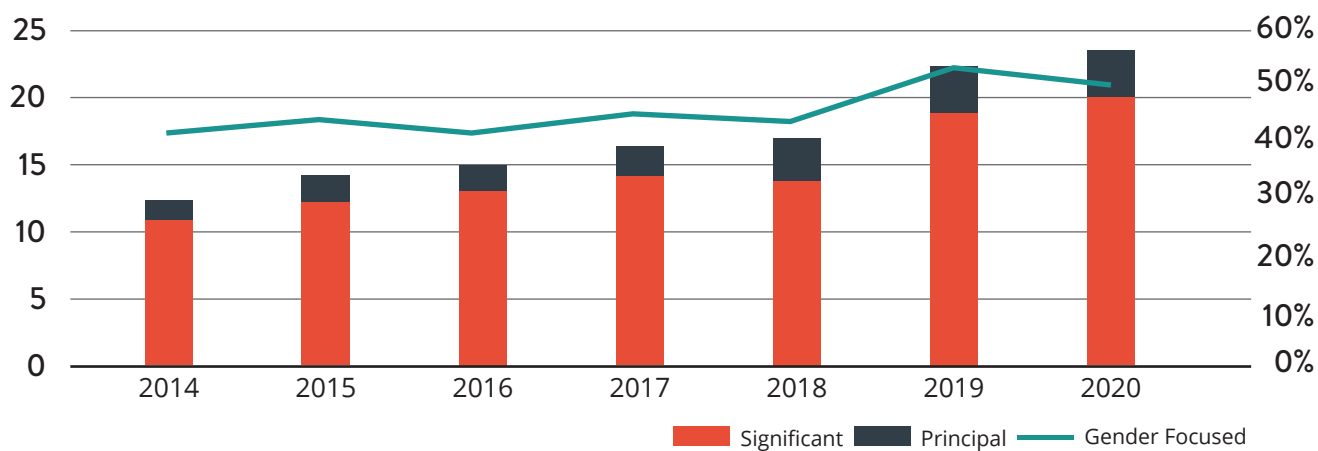
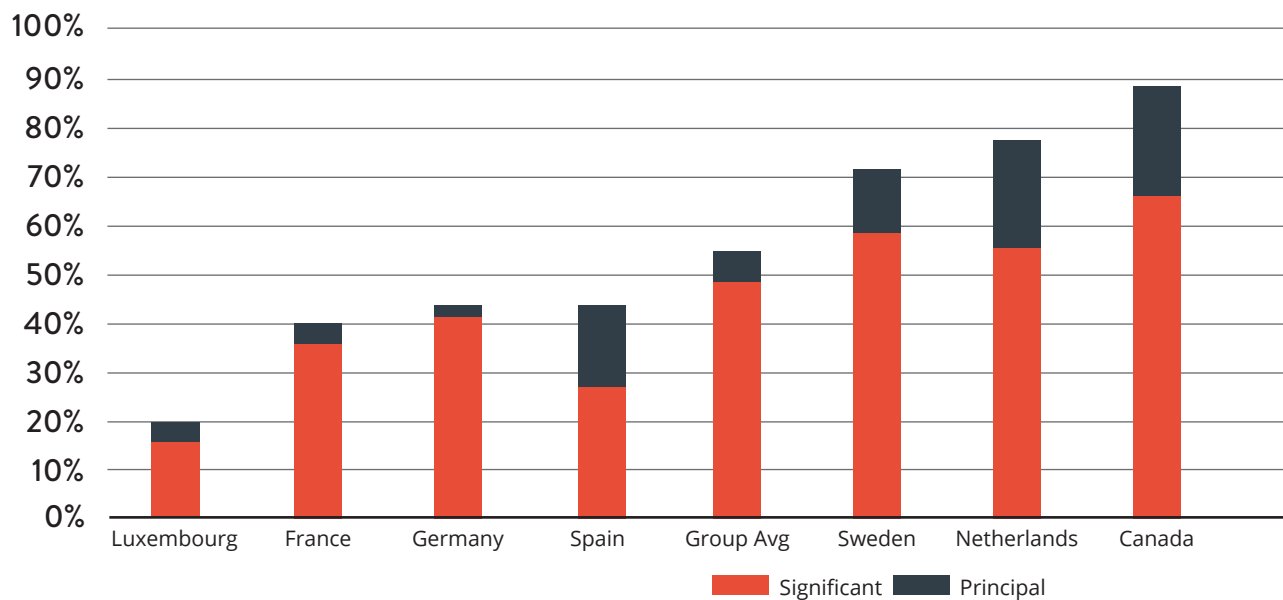


FIGURE 2: Average share of gender-focused aid, 2019-2020 bilateral allocable aid commitments.



Percent of aid screened	96
Percent of gender-focused aid (avg)	49
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	12
Percent of total aid marked principal	5
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	2

Between 2014-2020, the countries in our dataset assessed 96 percent of their aid commitments against the OECD gender marker. Overall, gender-focused aid commitments — that is the sum of commitments marked as both principal and significant — almost doubled, reaching a high of \$23 billion in 2020. Aid commitments marked only as significant also doubled, for a high of \$20.1 billion in 2020. Commitments marked only as principal almost tripled, but continue to account for just 12 percent on average of gender-focused aid commitments, due to their overall low volume (a mere \$3 billion in 2020).

Five out of the seven countries in this group committed the largest share of their funding to activities for the government and civil society purpose code, which has received a total of \$26.1 billion in this period — more than twice the volume of commitments compared to the second-ranked sector (education, \$12.2 billion). Pledges to protect and promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), on the other hand, have not been sufficiently resourced; despite significant unmet needs in developing countries,¹² only Canada (ranked 5th) and the Netherlands (ranked 2nd) have prioritized the population policies/reproductive health sector. General environmental protection — which includes environmental policy, research and education, biosphere protection, and biodiversity, among others — has received approximately \$5 billion. However, the energy sector — with its focus on policy, renewables, nuclear energy, energy generation, conservation, and distribution — is the second most neglected, despite its enormous potential for women’s economic empowerment in the context of a green and just transition.

TABLE 1: GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Government and civil society	26.1	29
Education	12.2	14
Economic infrastructure	11.8	13
Humanitarian aid	10.4	12
Agriculture	8.9	10
Other mult-sector ¹³	8	9
Water and sanitation	8	8.7
Health	8	8.7
Social infrastructure and services	6.3	7
Population policies/ reproductive health	5.7	6
General environmental protection	5.4	6
Banking and financial services	3.5	4
Energy	2.4	3
Industry, mining, construction	2	2

From 2014 to 2020, these seven countries committed a combined total of \$2.4 billion to funding for women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to only nine percent of the \$26 billion committed to the government and civil society sector and just two percent of overall gender-focused commitments. It is encouraging that some DAC members with a feminist foreign policy or feminist development policy are developing and implementing innovative mechanisms to raise and disburse additional funds for women's equality organizations and institutions. Partners have already identified Canada's Equality Fund and the Netherlands' Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW I and II) instruments as positive examples that others can replicate. These funding modalities have been praised for the volume and flexibility of their financial allocations. They have extended their reach to grassroots women's equality organizations through their deliberate outreach and refined eligibility criteria. But more importantly, their receptiveness to critiques and advocacy from the grassroots organizations they seek to support has introduced a level of mutual trust and respect that has strengthened their partnerships considerably.¹⁴

Recommendations:

Despite notable improvements in gender-focused aid commitments in 2014-2020, some well documented issues persist: **a little over half of aid commitments do not include a gender component, the volume of commitments marked as principal is still low, sector-specific funding is unevenly distributed, and women's equality organizations and institutions remain woefully underfunded.** To fully implement a feminist approach to development aid, donor countries with a feminist foreign policy (FFP) should:

- ◆ **At minimum, reduce commitments that are not targeted, in line with our recommendation to ensure that 100 percent of commitments integrate gender equality. To achieve this, a robust gender analysis should be applied to all program development, and each program should identify at least one gender-related objective.**
- ◆ **Pay particular attention to increasing the volume of commitments marked as principal to ensure that at least 20 percent of overall gender-focused aid is dedicated to them.** Despite increased attention, buy-in and investment in recent years, the percentage of this type of commitments has remained low.
- ◆ **Adopt the highest level of ambition possible,** developing initiatives that directly address the structural causes of gender inequality and purposely targeting contentious or neglected sectors, such as SRHR and energy.¹⁵
- ◆ Prioritize a substantial increase to funding for women's equality organizations and institutions focusing on their sustainability and agency, shifting more direct funding to local women's equality organizations, and establishing strategic partnerships on a more equal basis, seeking opportunities for co-creation and complementary collaboration.^{16,17} Donors should seek to foster agency and learning for women's equality organizations and feminist movements with which they partner, and apply feminist principles to monitoring and evaluation.¹⁸

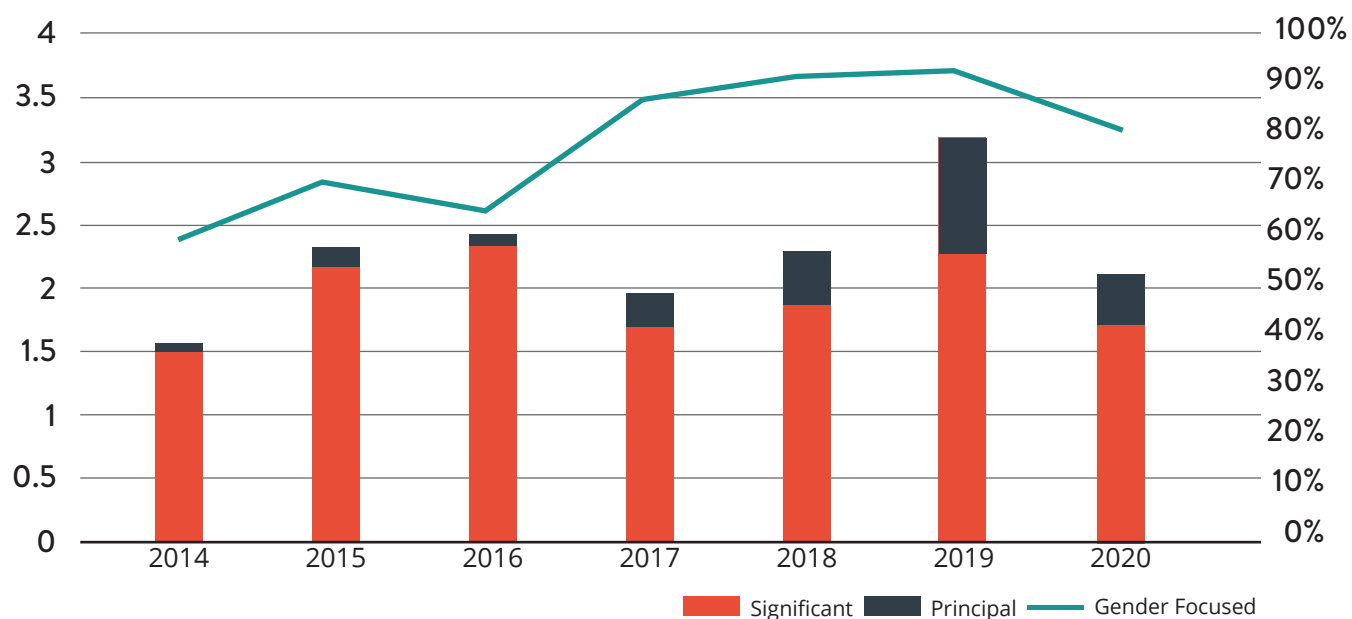
This shift from "business as usual" to a feminist approach to funding can be a transformative game changer — which all members of this group are encouraged to implement.¹⁹

CANADA

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	99.5
Percent of gender-focused aid	79, ranked 2 nd
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	13, ranked 5 th
Percent of total aid marked principal	11, ranked 4 th
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	4, ranked 3 rd
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	3 rd , (\$15.84 billion)

FIGURE 3: Canada's ODA for gender equality — Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments.



With the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP) of 2017, Canada committed to ensuring that 95 percent (15% principal and 80% significant) of bilateral international development assistance targets or integrates gender equality and the empowerment of women by 2021-2022. **Praised by partners for the clear direction it provides, the policy has had tangible impacts on Canada's development activities, earning Canada the title of top bilateral donor for supporting gender equality in the 2020 and 2021 annual reports of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.**^{20,21} Actual spending from 2018 to 2021 increased by \$2.32 billion to support the FIAP, among other initiatives.²² With the announcement of the policy in 2017, Canada also increased the share of gender-focused aid commitments by 18 percentage points and continued to increase it by two percentage points annually up to 2019. Similarly, the share of aid commitments marked as principal rose by 10 percentage points in 2017, sustaining an annual increase of nine percentage points on average up to 2019. Between 2014-2020, Canada has been consistently screening almost 100 percent of its development aid commitments against the gender marker. However, commitments that were screened and found not to support gender equality amounted to 21 percent of the total in this period.

In 2014-2020, Canada's principal commitments amounted to an average of 13 percent of gender-focused commitments — this share rose to 20 percent between the announcement of the FIAP in 2017 and 2020. **Between 2014-2019, Canada's aid commitments marked as principal increased fourteen-fold (from \$60 million to \$873 million).** After 2019, however, they dropped by 56 percent, and commitments marked as significant decreased by 24 percent. According to Canadian officials who previewed this analysis, the peak in commitments in 2019 is due to an increase of the international assistance envelope by CAD 2 billion over five years that the Government of Canada announced in its 2018 budget. This resulted in a significant increase in new programming committed to in 2019 followed by a drop, but will translate into rising expenditures over the coming years. Nevertheless, the percentage of gender-focused commitments in 2020 decreased by nine percentage points from 2019 overall and by 10 percentage points for those marked as principal. As the 2021 DAC mid-term review noted, Canada "will need strong resolve to maintain its intention to continue increasing its overall Official Development Assistance," including commitments for activities targeting gender equality.²³

In 2014-2020, Canada committed almost \$600 million to women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to almost a quarter of Canada's \$2.6 billion for the government and civil society sector, but only four percent of Canada's overall gender-focused aid.

TABLE 2: CANADA'S GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Humanitarian aid	3.5	22
Government and civil society	2.6	16
Health	2.3	14
Education	1.6	10
Population policies and reproductive health	1.5	9
Economic infrastructure	1.2	7
Agriculture	1.1	7
Energy	0.6	4
Other multi-sector	0.6	4
Industry, mining, construction	0.3	2
Other social infrastructure and services	0.2	2
Water and sanitation	0.2	2
Banking and financial services	0.2	1
General environmental protection	0.1	1

Recommendations:

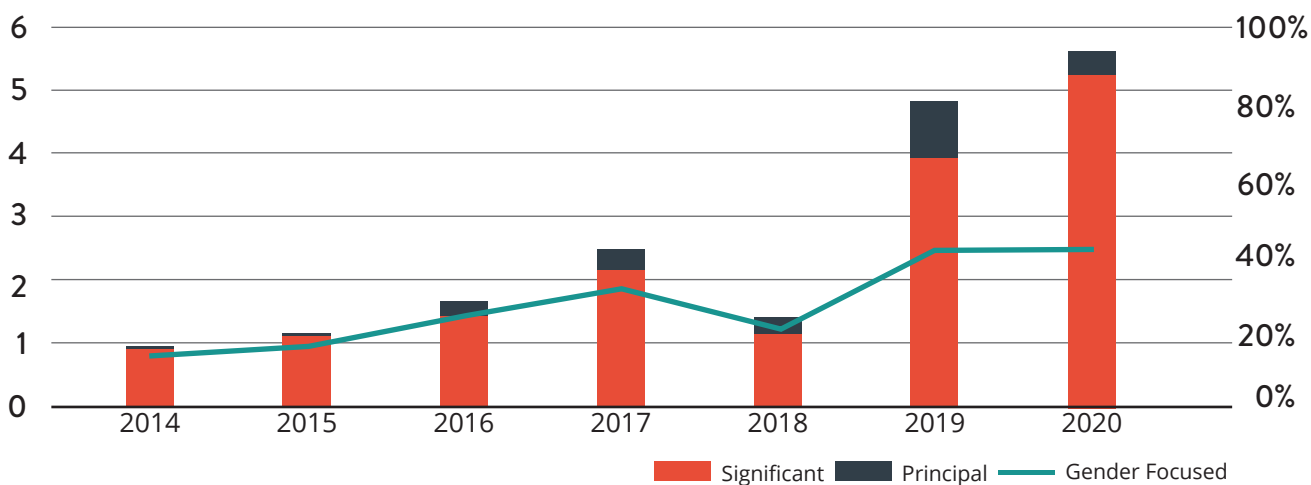
Canada is a reliable, committed partner, leading this group in the average share of gender-focused aid commitments in 2019-2020. While disbursement levels have remained stable, we encourage Canada to work toward returning to pre-pandemic levels for the share of gender-focused aid commitments (which reached an all-time high of 92% in 2019, but dropped at 82% in 2020), particularly for investments that promote gender equality as a principal objective (28% in 2019 versus 15% in 2020). Canada should also work toward reducing commitments that were screened but not targeted (12% on average in 2019-2020), by introducing at least one gender objective to programs. Canada should also continue working toward increasing aid commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions.

FRANCE

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	92
Percent of gender-focused aid	29, ranked 6 th
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	8, ranked 6 th
Percent of total aid marked principal	2, ranked 6 th
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	1, ranked 6 th
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	2 nd , (\$17.32 billion)

FIGURE 4: France's ODA for gender equality — Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



France has been in the process of reforming its approach to development aid, launching an updated Gender and Development Strategy in 2018, committing to feminist foreign policy in 2019, and adopting a new Act (No. 2021-2031) on inclusive development and combating global inequalities, which stipulates that 85 percent of programming must include some gender component, and 20 percent must target gender equality as a principal objective.²⁴

However, although gender-focused commitments increased by 22 percentage points in 2019 with the adoption of a feminist foreign policy (here again, an important indication that announcing a FFP does impact ambition for spending on gender) commitments in 2020 remained below the DAC average of 44.6 percent in 2020.²⁵ Similarly, commitments marked as principal did not sustain the surge of 2019, and in 2020 were almost two percentage points below the DAC average of 4.8 percent. Overall, only an average of eight percent of France's gender-focused aid commitments in 2014-2020 were marked as principal — although this percentage almost tripled in 2019, the year the feminist foreign policy was announced. In 2014-2020, 64 percent of aid commitments were screened but not marked.

TABLE 3: FRANCE'S GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Education	3.5	19
Water and sanitation	2.5	14
Economic infrastructure	2.4	13
Other multi-sector	1.7	9
Agriculture	1.6	9
Health	1.3	7
Other social infrastructure and services	1.1	6
General environmental protection	1.1	6
Government and civil society	1	5
Banking and financial services	0.9	5
Industry, mining, construction	0.4	2
Population policies, Reproductive health	0.3	2
Energy	0.3	1
Humanitarian aid	0.3	1

Fifteen percent of the \$1 billion France committed to the government and civil society sector in 2014-2020 went to funding commitments for women's equality organizations and institutions. However, these commitments only amounted to one percent of France's gender-focused aid in the same period. **The creation of the Support Fund for Feminist Organisations in 2019 is thus an important step toward increasing funding for women's equality organizations and institutions in partner countries.** The fund aimed to mobilize €120 million between 2020 and 2022, prioritizing initiatives in Africa.²⁶

Recommendations:

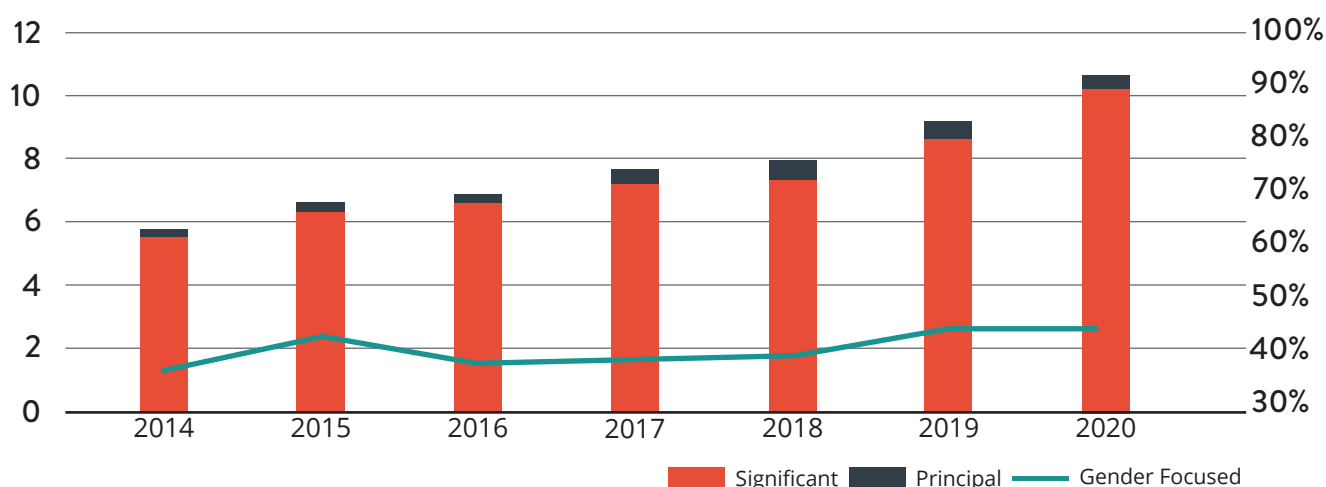
France should focus on maintaining the increase in gender-focused commitments, paying particular attention to reversing the drop in commitments marked as principal since 2019. France should also review its processes to reduce commitments that were screened but not targeted, to ensure that programming includes at least one outcome that advances gender equality. We welcome France's commitments to SRHR at the 2021 Generation Equality Forum and encourage greater investment in this sector in the French ODA portfolio, as well as significantly increased funding for women's equality organizations and institutions.²⁷

GERMANY

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	98
Percent of gender-focused aid	41, ranked 5 th
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	4, ranked 7 th
Percent of total aid marked principal	1, ranked 7 th
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	0.4, ranked 7 th
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	1 st , (\$53.4 billion)

FIGURE 5: Germany's ODA for gender equality – Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



Germany committed to a feminist foreign policy and feminist development policy in 2022 and is currently in consultations with stakeholders to draft these policies. The announcement has been roundly welcomed, as Germany's consistently high volume of development assistance enables the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to develop a substantial portfolio of gender-sensitive investments with great potential for transformative change. Already, under Germany's leadership of the 2022 Group of seven (G7) summit in Elmau, Germany, the outcome document included strong feminist and gender-equality language, as well as pledges to a collective increase of the share of the G7's bilateral allocable aid advancing gender equality and investments in childcare.²⁸

At \$53.4 billion in 2014-2020, Germany is the top donor by volume in this group, committing between three to four times more in gender-focused aid than each of the next four donors. Gender-focused commitments almost doubled but, on average, those marked as principal amounted to just four percent of gender-focused aid and have largely remained below the DAC average. Slightly over half of Germany's aid commitments in this period have been screened but found not to support gender equality.

TABLE 4: GERMANY'S GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Government and civil society	12.3	24
Education	5.6	11
Other multi-sector	4.3	9
Humanitarian aid	4.2	8
Agriculture	4.1	8
Other social infrastructure and services	3.9	8
Water and sanitation	3.1	6
General environmental protection	3.1	6
Health	2.9	6
Economic infrastructure	2.4	5
Banking and financial services	2	4
Population policies/ reproductive health	1	2
Energy	0.8	2
Industry, mining, construction	0.7	1

Between 2014-2020, Germany committed \$230 million to funding for women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to just two percent of the \$12.3 billion Germany committed to the government and civil society sector and only 0.4 percent of Germany's overall gender-focused aid.

Recommendations:

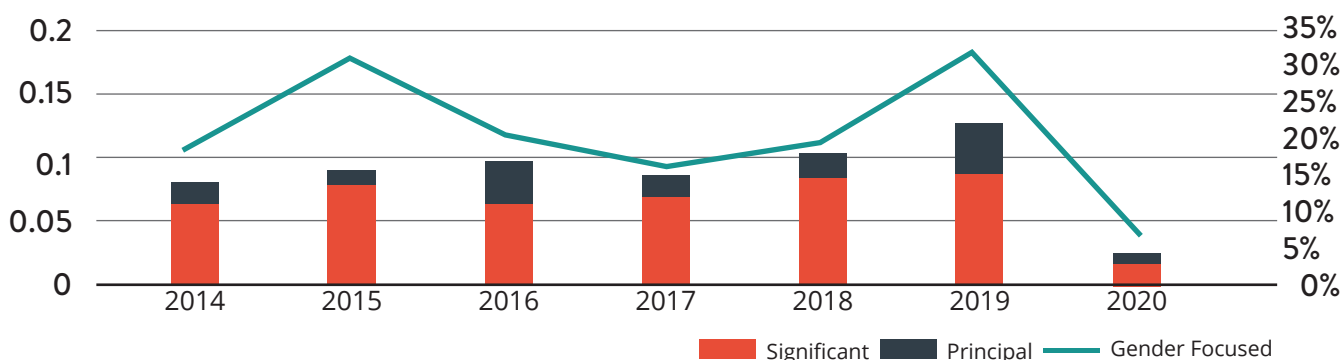
As Germany is working toward a feminist foreign policy and a feminist development policy, support for gender equality will require systematic attention — from program design that ensures gender-sensitive aid commitments, to implementation and monitoring to guide future investments.²⁹ Such an approach can sustain the high volume of commitments and increase those marked as significant. Particular attention is warranted to designing and implementing stand-alone programming that targets gender equality as a principal objective, as well as markedly increasing financial commitments to benefit women's equality organizations and institutions directly.

LUXEMBOURG

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	55
Percent of gender-focused aid	20, ranked 7 th
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	22, ranked 3 rd
Percent of total aid marked principal	4, ranked 5 th
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	2, ranked 5 th
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	7 th , (\$17.32 billion)

FIGURE 6: Luxembourg's ODA for gender equality – Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



Luxembourg was the most generous ODA donor relative to the size of its economy in 2021, and has been consistently providing around one percent or more of gross national income (GNI) to ODA since 2000 — one of the few donor countries to surpass the UN target of 0.7 percent.³⁰ The 2017 DAC peer review commended Luxembourg for its high-quality portfolio and the centrality of its partnerships, grounded in financing conditions that combine predictability, flexibility, and alignments with partner priorities.³¹

The review, however, also flagged a lack of consistency in mainstreaming cross-cutting issues like gender, noting that the use of DAC markers at the design stage does not lead to fullest possible integration.³² Indeed, at 80 percent in the period under review, Luxembourg has by far the highest share of commitments that were not screened or were found to not contribute to gender equality after screening. The drop in gender-focused aid after 2019 in the graph above may be due to the fact that 92 percent of aid commitments in 2020 were not screened.

In 2014-2020, an average of 22 percent of gender-focused commitments were marked as principal.

When Luxembourg announced the adoption of a feminist foreign policy in 2018, the share of these commitments increased by 13 percentage points.

TABLE 5: LUXEMBOURG'S GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Education	0.193	34
Health	0.1	17
Agriculture	0.071	12
Water and sanitation	0.064	11
Government and civil society	0.063	11
Other multi-sector	0.04	7
Other social infrastructure and services	0.011	2
Economics Infrastructure	0.009	2
Population policies/reproductive health	0.009	1
Energy	0.005	1
Banking and financial services	0.004	1
Industry, mining, construction	0.003	0.5
General environmental protection	0.001	0.2
Humanitarian aid	0.001	0.2

In 2014-2020, Luxembourg committed \$11 million to women's equality organizations and institutions, amounting to 18 percent of the \$63 million Luxembourg committed to the government and civil society sector, and two percent of Luxembourg's overall gender-focused commitments.

Recommendations:

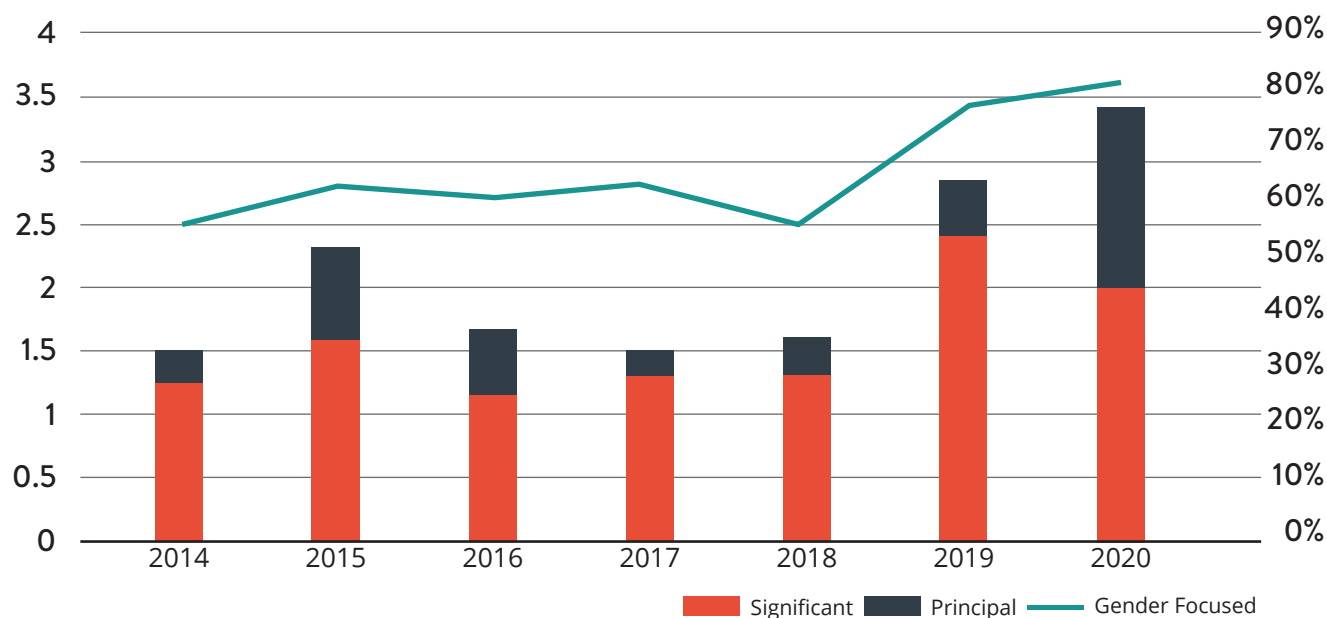
Luxembourg has been developing new strategic and operational guidance, increasing staff dedicated to working on gender, and integrating an objective for targeting equality in its "The Road to 2030" strategy.³³ Revising its processes to ensure consistent application of the gender marker can benefit commitments for programming with at least one objective supporting gender equality, as well as for investments in stand-alone programs, with gender equality as a principal objective.

THE NETHERLANDS

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	100
Percent of gender-focused aid	67, ranked 3 rd
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	26, ranked 2 nd
Percent of total aid marked principal	17.6, ranked 2 nd
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	5, ranked 2 nd
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	4 th , (\$15.03 billion)

FIGURE 7: The Netherlands' ODA for gender equality – Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



The Netherlands committed to a feminist foreign policy in 2020 and had already been an established global leader in financial allocations for gender equality, having raised its share of gender-focused bilateral allocable aid from 15 percent in 2012 to 82 percent in 2020.

In 2014-2020, 67 percent of Dutch aid commitments were gender focused. **In 2020, when the Netherlands announced the adoption of a feminist foreign policy, gender-focused aid commitments increased by six percentage points compared to 2019, reaching a high of 82 percent.** On average, 26 percent of gender-focused aid was marked as principal. After the adoption of a feminist foreign policy in 2019, commitments marked as principal increased by 28 percentage points as a share of gender-focused aid in 2020.

TABLE 6: THE NETHERLANDS' GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Government and civil society	4.5	31
Economic infrastructure	2.3	15
Population policies/reproductive health	2.2	15
Agriculture	1.21	8
Water and sanitation	1.19	8
Humanitarian aid	0.9	6
Other social infrastructure and services	0.5	3
Education	0.5	3
General environmental protection	0.3	2
Industry, mining and construction	0.3	2
Health	0.3	2
Other multi-sector	0.3	2
Energy	0.2	2
Banking and financial services	0.2	1

Through the Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW I and II) mechanisms, the Netherlands has been providing flexible funding directly to women's equality organizations and institutions for the past 12 years. Beyond funding, the Netherlands has also made commendable efforts to direct more funding to local partners rather than to global intermediaries, as well as to establish strategic partnerships with civil society organizations on a more equal basis, based on mutual trust and respect.^{34,35} Between 2014-2020, the Netherlands committed \$751 million to women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to 17 percent of the almost \$5 billion committed to the government and civil society sector and to only five percent of Dutch gender-focused commitments, despite a notable twelve-fold increase (from \$33 million to \$386 million) in commitments for support to women's equality organizations and institutions (code 15170) between 2019-2020.

Recommendations:

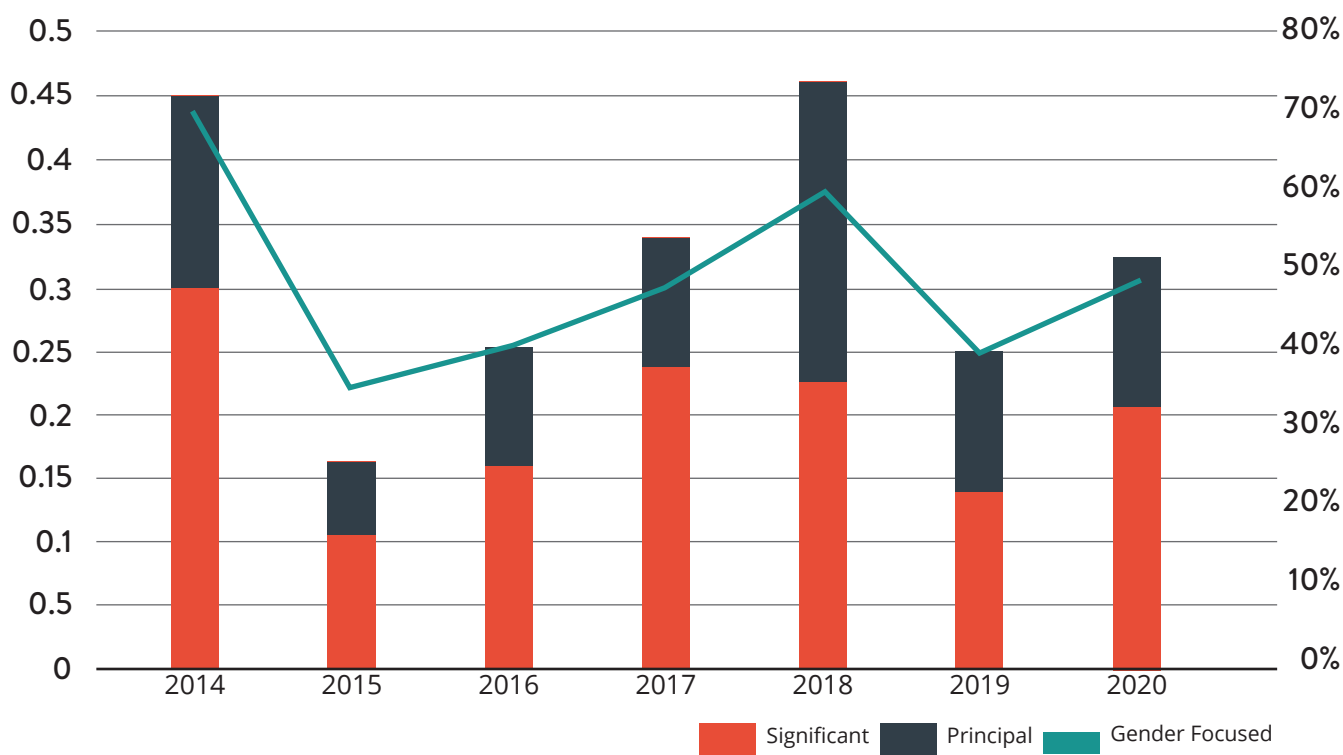
The Netherlands should work to reduce commitments that are screened but not targeted (33 percent of total aid in the period under review), by integrating at least one gender equality objective in its programming to reach the goal of 100 percent aid commitments marked as significant, continue the positive trend of increasing aid commitments that are marked as principal, and prioritize sustaining high-volume commitments in funding for women's equality organizations and institutions.

SPAIN

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	100
Percent of gender-focused aid	51, ranked 4 th
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	39, ranked 1 st
Percent of total aid marked principal	19, ranked 1 st
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	9, ranked 1 st
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	6 th , (\$2.3 billion)

FIGURE 8: Spain's ODA for gender equality - Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



Spain committed to a feminist foreign policy in 2021 but was already valued by partners for its expertise in gender, among other thematic areas, and its use of this expertise to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable.³⁶

In 2014-2020, 51 percent of Spain's screened commitments were gender focused. With 39 percent of those marked as principal, **Spain leads the group in commitments promoting gender equality as a principal objective.** Since 2015, commitments marked as principal rose fourfold, and those marked as significant increased twofold. This upward trend in gender-focused aid commitments, however, has stalled since 2018.

TABLE 7: SPAIN'S GENDER-FOCUSED COMMITMENTS IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Government and civil society	0.65	29
Agriculture	0.28	13
Education	0.28	12
Health	0.24	11
Humanitarian aid	0.2	9
Water and sanitation	0.1	7
Economic infrastructure	0.1	5
Other multi-sector	0.1	5
Population policies/reproductive health	0.08	4
Other social infrastructure and services	0.06	3
Banking and financial services	0.06	3
General environmental protection	0.02	1
Industry, mining, construction	0.01	1
Energy	0.009	0.4

In 2014-2020, Spain committed \$207 million to women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to 32 percent of the \$651 million Spain committed to the government and civil society sector and nine percent of Spain's gender-focused commitments for 2014-2020. Spain is ranked first in the group for both.

Recommendations:

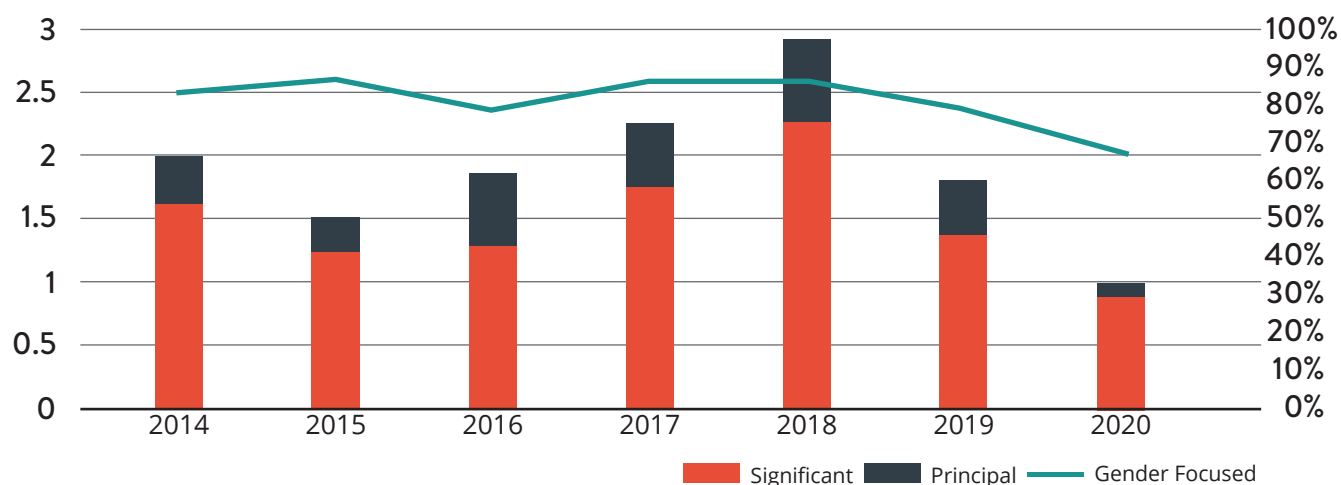
Spain should work toward reversing the downward trend in both types of gender-focused commitments, including by ensuring that 100 percent of aid commitments include at least one gender-related objective. Spain should also work toward maintaining the high share of aid commitments marked as principal and those that directly benefit women's equality organizations and institutions.

SWEDEN

At a glance, 2014-2020

Percent of aid screened	97
Percent of gender-focused aid	82, ranked 1 st
Percent of gender-focused aid marked principal	21, ranked 4 th
Percent of total aid marked principal	17.5, ranked 3 rd
Percent of funding for WEOs as share of gender-focused aid	9, ranked 1 st
Rank by volume of gender-focused aid	5 th , (\$13.2 billion)

FIGURE 8: Sweden ODA for gender equality – Constant 2020 USD billion, bilateral allocable aid commitments



Sweden's pioneering announcement of a feminist foreign policy in 2014, enabling it to ensure that gender equality is systematically integrated across its diplomatic, security, and trade efforts, confirmed its position as a global leader in this space.³⁷

In 2014-2020, 82 percent of Sweden's aid commitments were marked as gender focused, and an average of 21 percent of these gender-focused commitments were marked as principal. However, unlike other donors in this group, Sweden's announcement of a feminist foreign policy was followed by a decrease in the volume of gender-focused aid in 2015. **Between 2016-2018, Sweden increased aid commitments marked as significant by \$1 billion, but their share then dropped by 61 percent by 2020. Similarly, after an initial dip in 2015, aid commitments marked as principal slightly rose to about half a billion until 2018, before decreasing by 74 percent by 2020, a troubling trend.**

More than a third of gender-focused aid commitments in 2014-2020 targeted the government and civil society sector.

TABLE 8: SWEDEN'S GENDER-FOCUSED FUNDING IN 2014-2020, BY SECTOR.

SECTOR	USD (Billion)	PERCENT OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS
Government and civil society	5	37
Humanitarian aid	1.4	11
Other multi-sector	1	7
Economic infrastructure	0.9	7
Protection	0.8	6
Population policies/reproductive health	0.7	5
Health	0.62	5
Education	0.61	5
Other social infrastructure and service	0.57	4
Agriculture	0.54	4
Energy	0.47	4
Water and sanitation	0.4	3
Industry, mining, construction	0.25	2
Banking and financial	0.15	1

In 2014-2020, Sweden committed \$440 million to women's equality organizations and institutions. This amounted to just nine percent of the \$5 billion committed to the government and civil society sector, and an even lower three percent of overall gender-focused aid commitments.

Recommendations:

Sweden should work on reversing the downward trend in gender-focused aid commitments, paying particular attention to commitments marked as principal, which in 2020 were at their lowest point since the adoption of a feminist foreign policy. Introducing gender-sensitive objectives to development programs and improving screening rates can reduce the volume of commitments that do not support gender equality. Furthermore, Sweden should work toward increasing direct funding for women's equality organizations and institutions within its substantial government and civil society portfolio.

Conclusion

Feminist foreign and/or development policies are associated with improved gender-sensitive financing outcomes, typically in the form of a surge in aid commitments at the time of their announcement. We commend this heightened attention to increasing funding, and urge all countries in this group to continue working toward integrating gender objectives across their entire portfolios, with a focus on increasing initiatives and funding commitments with gender equality as a principal target. We also call for substantial investments in sectors that have thus far been neglected, and urge all countries in the group to adopt a feminist approach to funding for women's equality organizations and institutions, premised on the principles of co-creation, mutual trust and feminist monitoring and learning.

ENDNOTES

- 1** 55 percent of OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members have such a strategy, see <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-members-gender-equality-strategies.htm>. Accessed September 2022.
- 2** Official development assistance (ODA) is defined as government aid that promotes and specifically targets the economic development and welfare of developing countries. ODA data is collected, verified and made publicly available by the OECD. For more information, please visit <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>
- 3** For a history and analysis of feminist foreign policy, please see <https://www.icrw.org/publications/feminist-foreign-policy/>
- 4** The OECD Development Assistance Committee is a forum of 30 members, including many of the largest providers of aid. For more information, please see <https://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/>
- 5** For more information on commitments and disbursements, please see the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET). (2016). Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>.
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