

# Review of the International Gender Equality Strategy

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The Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) at the Australian National University is pleased to provide a submission for the review of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's International Gender Equality Strategy. We have considered the following questions, and provided our suggestions below:

1. *What are international gender equality priorities?*

## *Cascading Crises*

While many of the priorities outlined in the 2016 Gender equality and women's empowerment strategy remain relevant in designing a new International Gender Equality Strategy in 2023, emerging, destabilising events over the last seven years should signal a shift in DFAT's priorities towards international gender equality. GIWL ANU categorises these shifting factors in two distinct but intersecting ways: exogenous threats that have cascading effects on gender equality priorities, such as **climate change, AI, health pandemics** and **extremism**, and civil society organisations and movements that degrade and obfuscate gender equality priorities, such as the **'anti-women' movement, women's online safety, and the undermining of women's economic engagement**.

It is crucial to note that these issues significantly intersect across domestic/international spheres and will often exacerbate existing gendered inequalities, which disproportionately affect particular groups – such as women and girls, in all their diversities, children and youth, older people, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, LGBTQI+ people, rural and outer island communities, and migrants. Addressing climate change as a 'threat multiplier' – one that leads to both the gradual inhospitality of certain environments or displacement of people, and to climate disasters with more severe and concurrent immediate impacts – is a key priority in slowing down the highly gendered impact of climate change on women and children.

This might look like:

- Research on backlash, backsliding, the rise of the anti-rights movement, and funding/policy to navigate backlash.
- A more embedded approach to the domestic/international interface, including through the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.
- More research and learning on the impact of catalytic events/cascading crises on gender equality (e.g. taking into account the need to protect climate-vulnerable biodiversity, gendered impacts of AI, technology facilitated gender-based violence, climate, etc.).
- A Whole-of-Government focus to the new GES that identifies opportunities for inter-departmental input and coordination, including potentially strengthening or developing regional mechanisms, and integrating financial and technical resources.

- Exploring opportunities to harmonise existing policies and practices concerning humanitarian admission and stay of people displaced in the context of climate change and disasters at the regional and/or sub-regional levels, on the basis of reciprocity and solidarity.

### *Climate Just Entrepreneurship*

The benefits of women's equal inclusion and access to entrepreneurship, as well as their pro-social and pro-environmental tendencies, support women's greater leadership and representation in climate entrepreneurship as a critical lever to ensure climate actions are sustainable and do not leave communities behind. Not only would a more embedded and supportive approach to gender equality and climate action ensure that women have greater opportunity to reap the economic benefits of climate entrepreneurship, but it would also contribute to climate enterprises' greater sustainability, innovation, and impact. Critically, **climate entrepreneurship is a crucial force for climate action, yet effective climate action is impossible without gender equality and gender justice.** Shifting the circumstances so that women are more equally represented in leadership roles would not only benefit women by improving their socio-economic situation, but also increase efforts towards sustainable development. The creation of new, greener jobs provides an ideal opportunity for women to engage in the workforce as leaders. This would be beneficial in cultivating climate just entrepreneurship and highlights the importance of ensuring current gender inequalities are not perpetuated.

This may include:

- Ensuring all climate funding initiatives have a gender component.
- Developing specific programs and interventions around the intersection of climate and gender equality.
- Funding/supporting climate/gender just entrepreneurship.

### *Procurement*

DFAT should consider establishing (or publishing) analysis of procurement spend gender data, including understanding procurement from women-led, women-majority enterprises or other gender-minority-led enterprises (proportion of total procurement in dollars (\$) and in total number (#) of tenders), Workplace Gender Equality (WGE) compliant organisations, and WGE non-compliant organisations. This data should be made publicly available (for instance, through DFAT Annual Reports), to allow for accountability and to support research.

DFAT should consider establishing appropriate spend targets for procurement from WGE compliant organisations **and** women-led/gender minority-led enterprises more generally. Including women-led/gender minority-led enterprises in targets is important, noting that many of these enterprises may be too small to be required to do mandatory reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to gain WGE compliance certification, but still uphold the principles of supporting gender equality in procurement.

DFAT should consider supporting other nations/regions to embed gender equality procurement principles. This would allow DFAT to both a) advocate and provide support for gender equality procurement principles in the broader region/globe and b) build the skills and capacity for women-led enterprises who could respond to procurement opportunities.

DFAT should consider ways to embed/align the gender equality procurement principles across grants or other funding opportunities that do not fall strictly under the category of 'procurement', and making this data public for both accountability and research purposes.

2. *What are the most effective approaches for achieving gender equality globally?*

The following should be considered:

1. **Longitudinal projects:** committing to longer-term funding for gender equality initiatives and research, ensuring continuity and stability for projects.
2. **Localisation:** allocate a significant portion of development aid directly to local partners (women and minority-led organisations), ensuring they have the resources to address gender inequalities in their communities.
3. **Education:** recognising that COVID-19 has displaced 11 million girls and young women from education, DFAT should renew support for local, women led education programs that re-engage girls and young women into the education pipeline.
4. **Targeted approaches:** for instance, upholding global climate finance commitments while also providing targeted support to Pacific Island countries. This includes greater access to climate information, enabling gender diverse leadership in climate governance, social protection to address needs in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters and protection from gender-based violence in relocation to temporary dwellings through displacement.
5. **Ongoing learning:** undertake comprehensive gender analysis of DFAT-supported projects to ensure policies and programs are informed by a deep understanding of gendered power dynamics in different contexts.
6. **Ongoing training:** ensure that all departmental staff undertake informed gender training, including an awareness of Australia's obligations under the National Action Plan for the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.
7. **Gender parity abroad:** DFAT should aim for a gender parity of department staff in all diplomatic interactions. While the department is close to achieving statistical gender parity, there is a disproportional spread of women across leadership positions. Embedding gender parity as a departmental policy is an effective method to address this disparity.
8. **Fix systems, not women:** shift in language and principles from individualised approaches to organisational and systems-level interventions. This may include for instance a focus on organisational and norms change, rather than only individualised programs (e.g. funding for women's leadership programs or networks still has a place, but should not be the only action undertaken), or promoting gender equality in economic empowerment, rather than women's economic empowerment (which centre's women's economic lack of *empowerment* as the issue rather than wider social and systemic gender inequality issues).
9. **Intersectionality:** gender inequalities affect all genders. Women can still be a focus of programming, but a focus on "women and gender minorities" may more accurately target the support needed and provide more inclusive framing.