

Understanding the Feminist Foreign Policy: A view from India



THE GLOBAL CONVERSATION

There is a growing global awareness on the need and potential for inclusive decision-making structures and processes in dynamic policy making. As leaders wake up to a crisis of global governance there is a realization that the legitimacy of international institutions is faltering, and emerging and newly assertive economies are reshaping the models of global cooperation. Within these fault lines lies an important and necessary debate on global values, norms, and ethics that are, for the first time, more inclusive than before, allowing for a diversity of voices. Perspectives, thoughts, and possible solutions are emerging from a variety of geographic, economic, and socio-cultural spaces. For any new form of global society to be truly transformational, diversity needs to be not only gender equal, but also inform all solutions and policies, from core aspects of peace and security to emerging non-traditional challenges, including climate change and global health. Women and other marginalized sections of society are almost always disproportionately affected by any major global problem, and in an increasingly interconnected world, half the population can no longer be ignored.

Several countries have announced gender mainstreaming in their foreign policy, beginning with Sweden's adoption of a Feminist Foreign Policy (FFP) in 2014. The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) defines FFP as one where a country **"prioritizes gender equality and enshrines the human rights of women and other traditionally marginalized groups, allocates significant resources to achieve that vision and seeks through its implementation to disrupt patriarchal and male-dominated power structures across all of its levers of influence (aid, trade, defence and diplomacy), informed by the voices of feminist activists, groups and movements."** While this definition covers the basic aspects of a FFP, it is important to note that the approach for defining and adopting gender mainstreaming policies varies between countries and regions, depending on their lived experiences, and processes.

In the present-day scenario, where **104 countries** around the world have laws preventing women from carrying out jobs in sectors like mining, manufacturing and construction, and over **600 million women** live in countries where domestic violence is not punishable, gender mainstreaming in broader policy objectives and a wider adoption of FFP can shape the future of our civilization. Kubernein Initiative's research indicates there is no debate that a conversation around a feminist foreign policy and the need for greater gender mainstreaming is an important one. These are still early days, and an opportune time to bring greater diversity to the thinking behind such a policy, that could then allow it to be operationalized in a wider geography and bringing us closer to generation equality goals¹.

¹A multigenerational campaign bringing together the next generations of women's rights activists with gender quality advocates and visionaries who were instrumental in creating the Beijing Platform for Action more than two decades ago. Its goals are: equal pay, equal sharing of unpaid care and domestic work, an end to sexual harassment and all forms of violence against women and girls, health-care services that respond to their needs, and equal participation in political life and decision-making in all areas of life.

“Adopting a feminist foreign policy means a commitment to have gender equality and women’s rights present in both foreign and national policies including health, climate, education, nuclear, security, economic issues & others”

-Delphine O, Ambassador-at-large, France, and Secretary General for the Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25) speaking at the Raisina Dialogue 2021

The idea of a FFP faces criticism and several questions that must be acknowledged. Countries that are leading the conversation deal with their own struggles, contradictions, and questions around internal inequality. For example, Sweden, while a strong proponent of peace, is also one of the top manufacturers and exporters of arms to states in conflict. Some of the earlier work around FFP does little to address issues of non-binary, indigenous groups and people from diverse races. Canada, for example, has a Feminist International Assistance Policy and yet, has witnessed disproportionately high rates of sexual assault and violent victimization of aboriginal women. Critics of the FFP also argue that the current approach and its link with normative soft power undermines its capacity to confront aggression and hard security concerns.

Above all else, the use of the term ‘feminist’ tends to incite both shock and awe. The historic idea of ‘feminism’ is often widely misunderstood to mean the downfall of other genders. The term, often relegated to activism and development, is uncommon in traditional policy-making parlance. This reaction, we have learnt, is shared across geographies and leads countries to use alternate terminology, including gender mainstreaming, intersectionality amongst others. Many of these criticisms are valid and allow for greater introspection and reflection. The very fact that emerging conversations and frameworks are addressing them, speaks to the very nature of what a FFP is - where the core concepts of equality and a more inclusive form of policy-making, and governance enshrined in universal human rights remain.

This paper examines aspects of both gender mainstreaming in foreign policy and an overarching feminist foreign policy concept currently in play, that could be considered in various measure to suit wider geographies. While countries from Canada to Mexico to Libya, (the newest entrant into this growing club²), offer a variety of approaches, the core concepts of gender equality, equity and the push for a more inclusive society remain the same. This paper also looks at where India stands, presenting a brief snapshot of gender components within our foreign aid and assistance and highlighting the need to begin a more sustained mainstream conversation on gender within our larger gamut of external affairs. We hope this paper will aid in adding an Indian perspective to the evolving dialogue and catalyze greater discussion on how India could have a more formal gender mainstreaming policy in place.

² Libya’s first female Foreign Minister, Najla Mangoush made this announcement at a Generation Equality Forum 2021 side event by ICRW: “Our launching a feminist foreign policy would not only help Libya in achieving its stabilization, but would also stabilize our region.”

FOUNDATIONS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN FOREIGN POLICY: A VARIETY OF EVOLVING APPROACHES

Feminist approaches to international affairs, rooted in a deep tradition of feminist thinking and activism, can be traced back to the 1980's when academics sought to reform International Relations (IR) theory and practice, using a gender lens. Feminist thinkers were critical of conventional theories like realism, neo-realism and liberal institutionalism for their failure to explain the collapse of the Soviet Union, the somewhat unexpected end to the Cold War, and diffusion of security threats later in the 1990s. Feminist IR employs a bottom-up approach to examining power structures with the objective of placing human rights at the center of decision-making. This is aligned with the basic understanding and realization that women and men experience conflict and war differently, and thus contribute different but equally central perspectives to peace building.

In 2000, UNSCR 1325 made the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda operational, and changed the global approach to diplomacy around conflict by recognizing that recovery, relief and reconstruction are areas that require the representation and participation of all genders. Traditional views on security and international affairs have seen this to be a 'masculine' domain, where priority areas for diplomacy are around arms control and disarmament and are delegated predominantly to men. While it was acknowledged that conflict often leaves women without agency, they had, hitherto, been ignored from decision-making roles.

UNSCR 1325 was a turning point in history, as a result of which the necessity to include women in the processes of peacekeeping and peace building began to be more widely discussed. After the implementation of UNSCR 1325, the percentage of peace agreements making any reference to women or gender increased from **11 percent** to 27 percent. In 2014, 88 percent of all peace processes, where the UN was involved, included regular consultations with women's organizations, a notable rise from 50 percent in 2011. Yet even in the areas of the UN and other multilateral engagement, which is largely focused on peace and conflict, much work remains to be done.³

³ A 2012 study by UN Women indicated that out of a representative sample of 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011, only 2 percent of chief mediators, 4 percent of witnesses and signatories, and 9 percent of negotiators were women. Only 3 percent of the military in UN missions are women, and the majority of these are employed as support staff. However, the participation of women in formal peace processes has been inching up and in 2014, women in senior positions were found in 75 per-cent of peace processes led or co-led by the UN, compared with only 36 per cent in 2011.

Margot Wallstrom, the force behind Sweden's FFP famously said in an [interview](#), "More women means more peace. If women are around the table when peace deals are negotiated, then those peace agreements will last longer." Sweden's FFP journey and commitment takes a step forward: acknowledging the link between gender, peace and security, and evolving from the critical role the country has played in peace efforts around the globe as well as its commitment to the WPS agenda.⁴ Sweden now applies a gender lens to wider areas of foreign policy and uses it to take a critical look at the internal status quo. Since then, several countries have adopted FFPs or have taken similar gender mainstreaming approaches in their foreign policy.

"More women means more peace. If women are around the table when peace deals are negotiated, then those peace agreements will last longer."

**Margot Wallstrom, Former Deputy Prime Minister
& Former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden**

⁴ Sweden is one of the largest donors to the UN, the UN Peace building Fund, and plays an active role in conflict prevention and peace building, promotion of gender equality and women's rights.



COUNTRIES WITH A FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY



Sweden

Announced a **Feminist Foreign Policy** in 2014



France

Implemented **feminist diplomacy** through an International Strategy for Gender Equality since 2018



Canada

Announced a **Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP)** in 2017



Luxemburg

Adopted an **Action Plan** on WPS & the pursuit of a Feminist Foreign Policy in 2018.



Mexico

Adopted a **Feminist Foreign Policy in 2020**



Spain

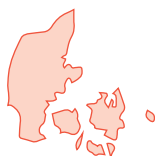
The Spanish cabinet **submitted** a draft for a “Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy” in 2021.

COUNTRIES WITH SIGNIFICANT GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN VARIOUS AREAS OF FOREIGN POLICY⁵



Australia

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) launched the **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy** in 2016.



Denmark

Established a Gender Equality Office in 2019.



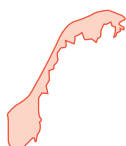
Germany

The Federal Foreign Office published a document on gender equality through foreign policy in 2020



New Zealand

Launched a **Gender Action Plan** 2021–2025 to increase the gender component in ODA in 2021



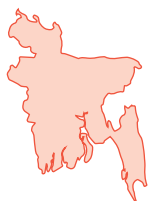
Norway

Mandated **half of all bilateral aid** have gender equality as a principal or significant objective in 2019.



Italy

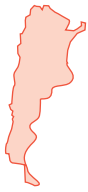
Allocated 44 percent of total funds under its **development cooperation initiatives** for gender equality and women's empowerment in 2019



Bangladesh:

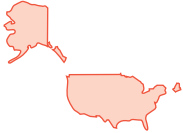
Deployed the **first all-female formed police unit in Haiti in 2018**, a critical step towards expanding women's participation in United Nations' peace operations.

⁵ This is a snapshot of global approaches. India is not included in this list as a snapshot of policies and efforts is detailed in the next section.



Argentina

Instituted a 'Division for Women' as the gender equity focal point within the Foreign Ministry in 2016.



USA

In 2019, the United States committed **22.7 percent** of its screened bilateral allocable aid to gender equality and women's empowerment overall, as either a principal or significant objective



South Korea

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) is investing **US \$100 million**, between 2020 and 2026, to support the political participation of marginalized women and girls



China

Between 2016 and 2020, China hosted 30,000 women from developing countries for training programmes in China and provided 100,000 skills training opportunities in local communities in developing countries.



South Africa

Between 2016-2020, South Africa committed to focus on equal representation.



African Union

Agenda 2063 Strategic Framework, includes **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE)** to ensure the inclusion of women in Africa's development agenda



The European Parliament

Adopted a **text** calling for the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Commission, the EU agencies and member states to integrate gender mainstreaming into the EU's foreign and security policy, in 2020

The European Commission

Released an Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III) in 2020.

WHAT DOES FFP/GENDER MAINSTREAMING MEAN IN FOREIGN POLICY?

Countries are adopting different facets of gender mainstreaming in external actions best suited to their context and future strategic trajectories, presenting partner countries with a basket of approaches to consider. Many of these countries view this as a step towards a more formal feminist foreign policy. Not only is it apparent that no one size fits all, but there is also a stark indication of the need to adopt some measure of gender inclusion in foreign policy making, however small. The number of different approaches adopted by countries around the world subverts the justification that mainstreaming gender in foreign policy making is something to be considered not now, but at a later stage in a nation's trajectory.

In this section, based on the study of approaches by various countries, we present a few salient features of such a policy in action. Ongoing discussions on gender mainstreaming go beyond the scope of actions around UNSCR 1325 that are largely limited to peace and security. Several countries have used their National Action Plans (NAP)⁶ and Official Development Assistance (ODA) considerations as a starting point; others have ventured further to include gender in other areas of foreign policy such as trade relations.

Some have integrated external and internal actions, sometimes through the institution of special agencies tasked with applying a gender framework to activities and actions across ministries. Mexico's announcement of a FFP brings greater diversity to the table as it is the only country to do so without an existing NAP. To limit the scope of our study, we consider only those countries, whose actions go beyond the adoption of NAPs to include gender more formally in their foreign policy actions.

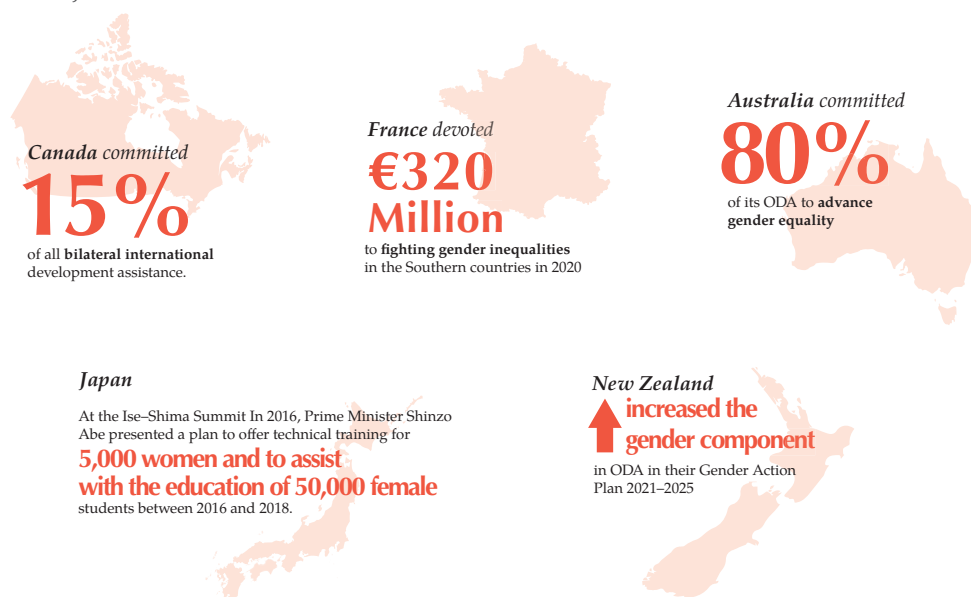
INTEGRATING EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL ACTION

To integrate external action with efforts domestically, several countries have instituted agencies that look at gender mainstreaming across ministries. [The Swedish Gender Equality Agency](#), for example, supports Swedish government agencies with integrating a gender perspective in all their operations. France has in place a High Council for Gender Equality. Denmark's [Gender Equality Office](#) includes gender equality in all areas of society, raises awareness, as well as increases the number of women in decision-making positions. Argentina has a parity policy in appointments to high-ranking positions. The EU is pursuing a [Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) for gender mainstreaming within the EU.

⁶ As a critical part of localizing commitments in UNSCR 1325 into concrete action, the UN has advised countries to adopt NAPs; outlining domestic and/or foreign policy of a country to meet the Women, Peace and Security objectives.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGH OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

Oversees Development Assistance or Aid is largely defined as government aid designed to promote development and welfare of societies in developing countries and increase bilateral relations in a positive manner. Gender mainstreaming through the primary development aid agency, under a strategy with specific targets and budget consideration, is common across several countries and in many ways precedes the newer concepts of a feminist foreign policy. However, often times, this aid is reactive, following global movements, events and catastrophes. Thus, in that context, it is important to note that only a few countries have formalized it as a core component of foreign policy, and most countries carry out their gender mainstreaming initiatives through their respective development cooperation agencies and include it amongst their ODA objectives.



GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

While several countries promote gender mainstreaming through ODA and their missions abroad, some have also applied the gender lens to other aspects of foreign policy. Sweden now has a **Feminist Trade Policy**, which ensures that trade agreements benefit men and women equally. Canada has a **new gender chapter** within the Canada-Chile free trade agreement.⁷ The Spanish cabinet’s draft ‘Feminist Foreign Policy Strategy’ incorporates gender in all foreign actions. The EU’s Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021–2025 (GAP III) looks to collaborate with stakeholders at national, regional and multilateral levels, and in strategic thematic areas. Argentina’s Division for Women – a gender equity focal point within the Foreign Ministry, promotes international cooperation with organizations competent in the field of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

⁷ In this, Italy mainly gave gender-focused funding in the areas of humanitarian assistance and health and population (both USD61 million), agriculture (USD49 million) as well as government and civil society (USD44 million).

GENDER MAINSTREAMING OUTSIDE OF THE WPS/NAP APPROACH

Mexico is currently the only country from the global south that has not only formally announced but has begun to take steps to implement a Feminist Foreign Policy. Libya made an announcement of intention during the July 2021 Generation Equality Forum held in Paris, though more information is yet to be released. The case of Mexico is unique, as till date it does not have a NAP which indicates that gender mainstreaming in foreign policy need not be considered as an extension of WPS commitments. Secondly, like many countries, Mexico is also plagued by the prevalence of gender gaps internally, which includes high instances of gender-based violence and femicide.

Mexico's strategy (to be implemented during 2020-2024) is aspirational and works towards a goal to "promote government actions to reduce and eliminate structural differences, gender gaps and inequalities, in order to build a more just and prosperous society." Through the FFP, Mexico is bringing its distinct experiences and perspectives on gender mainstreaming to the global platform, and publicly committing to bridging the gap that exists internally. To achieve its goals, Mexico's government has taken certain steps including gender sensitization training with key actors. The 'Pro-Equality' project launched in 2018 to increase support for international women's rights treaties and promote women within the ministry has resulted in women holding 56 per cent of Foreign Service staff positions in 2019 which is an increase from **42.4 per cent in 2015.**

GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGH ADVOCACY

Countries have integrated the theme of inclusion in their global advocacy agenda while engaging on various issues via multilateral institutions. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing gender inequalities, highlighting the need to put gender at the center of recovery plans both at the home front and in multi-stakeholder partnerships and avenues. The recently concluded **Generation Equality Forum** co-hosted by UN Women, France and Mexico, brought more focus to some of the sectors in need of greater advocacy, as well as cooperation across governments and most importantly targeted funding, without which the actions of many of these multilateral efforts will remain minimal and piecemeal.

....it's crucial to make sure that increased and more flexible funding goes to feminist movements and organisations everywhere: if we don't deliver the resources to fund the changes envisioned in feminist foreign policies, then we just end up with rhetoric."

-Theo Sowa, Co-Chair of the Equality Fund, speaking at a Generation Equality Forum 2021 side event

- Argentina advocates the global gender agenda in **regional and international forums** (UN, OAS, ECLAC, EU-CELAC).
- Sweden started the **Group of Friends of Women in Nuclear** within the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and is working with the United Nations Institute of Disarmament (UNIDIR) to integrate a gender perspective into multilateral disarmament platforms.
- Germany has **advocated** for 85 per cent of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) funds to be used to promote gender equity.
- New Zealand joined the **Global Trade and Gender Arrangement**⁸ initiative in 2020, with Canada and Chile that aims to increase women's participation in global trade.
- In a first, at an **informal meeting** at the ministerial level in February 2021, ministers from six countries - Luxembourg, Sweden, Spain, France, Canada and Mexico - came together virtually to exchange views on feminist foreign policy, and to identify good practices and initiatives for future collaboration

Beyond governments and intergovernmental forums, diverse players in civil society, independent organizations and think tanks are also working together to take forward discussions on FFP. In the USA, conversation around a Feminist Foreign Policy has evolved as a movement, led by the efforts of the International Center for Research on Women. **A coalition for a feminist foreign policy in the United States** comprising of over 50 organizations and individual advocates working in the space of foreign policy, gender equality and human rights, ICRW is leading the effort to include a gender perspective both in **U.S. foreign policy**, and aid efforts in other countries. This group includes the Center for Feminist Foreign Policy, which has also played a critical role in bringing a gender lens to EU and German foreign policy. In July 2021, a **Global Partner Network** was also launched, with over 30 government and non-government actors joining the network (including Kubernein Initiative) and committing to encourage learning, understanding and sharing of resources to further the concepts of a feminist foreign policy and discuss best practices.

⁸ This is the first arrangement of its kind to be negotiated by the three members of the Inclusive Trade Action Group (ITAG). The initiative commits to jointly implement activities to facilitate women's access to international trade opportunities, avoid discrimination on the basis of gender for licensing and certification in the services sector, and work together in international forums, such as the WTO, OECD, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, to advance trade and gender issues.

GENDER IN INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Gender is a visible component of India's foreign aid, through bilateral assistance both in the neighbourhood and with global partners across Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. India has also significantly contributed to multilateral programs that have a strong gender component, especially various avenues of women's empowerment over the last two decades. While India does not have a National Action Plan as part of the global WPS Agenda, the country has, on several **occasions**, reiterated the need for UNSCR 1325 and committed to the core concepts of women in peace and security. Some of the earliest forms of this was seen in 2007, when India deployed the first-ever all female police unit to the UN Mission in Liberia. Hailed positively by the global community, this also encouraged Liberian women to join the national police, tripling the number of female applicants, from approximately 120 to 350 within two months of the arrival of the Indian unit and a growing female representation from 10 per cent to 17 per cent in the Liberian Security Services.

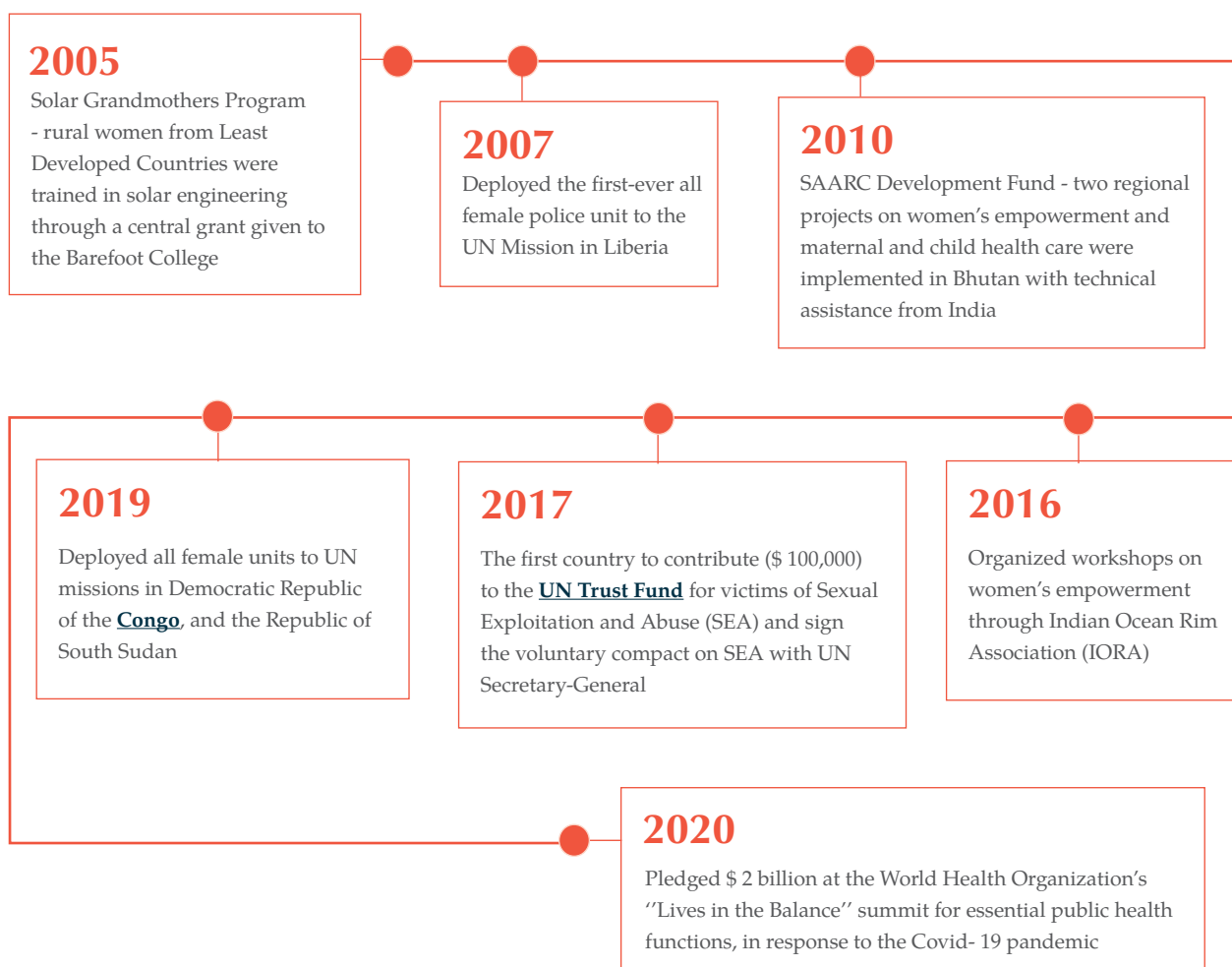
Gender is also a visible component of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs at home, though arguably much less. We have come a long way from the time of the establishment of the Indian Foreign Service, where women were actively discouraged from applying or made to sign waivers that prevented them from marrying; to **CB Muthamma's landmark case** against the government in the 1970s on being denied a promotion on the basis of her gender, that ultimately led to the discontinuation of this practice; to our first female Minister of External Affairs in 2014. As of early 2021, women constitute 21.5 per cent of Foreign Service Officers with 19 serving as the heads of Indian Missions. While progress has been slow, every year the number of women applying and being accepted to the foreign services core is increasing. However, of the 33 foreign secretaries appointed thus far, only three have been women, underscoring the reality that women are far and few between at the higher levels of governance.

This direct impact, achieved by creating conditions for better gender equity, has also been witnessed in several other programmes arising out of India's foreign development assistance, financial and otherwise. There is no doubt that programs promoting women's entrepreneurship, technical training and assistance to maternal and child health care and others have positively affected the lives and livelihoods of women and children in partner countries. However, many of these programs have been designed and implemented in a seemingly ad hoc manner, sometimes within the realities of the existing bilateral relationships or for other political considerations, or in reaction to a global event. What is needed is a more institutionalised approach to gender in foreign policy assistance, where we can not only create a formal mechanism to increase our impact, but also put in place a framework that can bring in a diverse perspective to the growing global movement.

⁹ Although this is an increase from 18.4% in 2012, the pace is still quite slow. This paper does not consider ongoing changes in the MEA through summer 2021.

The intention to create an institutionalized formal approach to our gender mainstreaming efforts in foreign policy cannot distract us from the glaring gender gaps domestically - a common and pertinent criticism to the ongoing conversation around a feminist foreign policy. While India has some excellent laws and a multitude of fairly well thought out schemes and initiatives by various ministries¹⁰ to ensure the protection of women’s rights and encourage socio-economic empowerment, their implementation is inadequate. The **Gender Budget Statement**, which was an important step taken in **2005-06** and introduced into the Union Budget, has seen a decrease – from INR 24,240 crores out of the total budget of 5,08,705 crores in 2005-06, to INR 1,43,461 crores out of 30,42,230 crores in 2020-21. This poor allocation is worrisome and inadequate to make up for the disproportionate job losses, increased exposure to domestic abuse, spikes in dropout rates of girls and the disruption of reproductive and maternal health care facilities, especially in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic.

WITHIN MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS:



¹⁰ For example, the Sexual Harassment of Women at Work Place (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Trade Related Entrepreneurship Assistance & Development Scheme for Women (TREAD), Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP), National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW).

“A feminist foreign policy does not always have to do with women leading the change, but more about women having a voice, an agenda and an equal representation. This nullifies the belief that defence and diplomacy is a male domain, while women should be limited to aspects like soft decision making, human resources etc.”

- Priyanka Chaturvedi, Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha, speaking at a roundtable discussion during NGOCSW 2021

Domestic realities must be considered and acknowledged to achieve substantial progress on gender mainstreaming in the longer term, even in our foreign policy, aid and assistance. While India continues to work with various UN peace keeping and peace building missions, in domestic peace negotiations, the role of women is often limited to participation through civil society organizations or field-level development initiatives. For example, in 2016, **seventeen peace talks** were held in Northeast India, with no female representation in the negotiations. Although, in several instances, interventions by women belonging to civil society organizations, such as **the Naga Women’s Union of Manipur**¹¹ and the Naga Mothers’ Association, have led to the de-escalation of violence between militant groups and promoted reconciliation at the community level, their participation has always remained peripheral.

Roles open to women remain highly gendered and, according to the **India Justice Report 2019**, women account for only 7 per cent of India’s 2.4 million police personnel, and only 6 per cent of those women are at the officer level. **The Status of Policing in India Report 2019** shows that while men perform ‘on-the-field’ tasks like investigation, patrolling, providing security to VIPs, maintaining law and order, etc, women are more likely to engage in in-house tasks, such as maintaining registers/data, dealing with the public and the filing of FIRs, NCRs and other complaints. It also reports that gender-sensitization training for the police force is offered only when it is likely that female police are attending these workshops, which only increases the difference in the treatment of both sexes.

The gaps that exist between progressive policy intent and actual outcome/impact has much to do with a socio-cultural context held back by strong cultures of patriarchy. Several countries that have embarked upon or are considering the framework of a feminist foreign policy face similar dichotomies and often have experiences to offer, including Canada, Mexico and Argentina. As more countries embark on this mission of gender mainstreaming, both in their foreign partnerships and internal governance, India’s experiences will also aid in understanding, planning and ensuring that global frameworks are gender inclusive in design as well as implementation.

¹¹ The Naga Women’s Union of Manipur was formed in 1994 in preparation for the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Since its creation, NWUM has been at the forefront to extend the ceasefire to the bloody clashes between the Nagas and Kukis at that time. In the period before the 1999 parliamentary elections, NWUM intervened eight times to stop violence from exploding. During the Manipur Assembly elections in 2000, NWUM women intervened ten times to defuse tension.

WITHIN BILATERAL PARTNERSHIPS:

2001

Women's entrepreneurship and professional excellence promoted in Afghanistan through **development assistance** of over \$2 billion since 2001, and **3000 scholarships** granted to young Afghan women to pursue higher studies in India

2017

Grant assistance to **Cambodia in 2017** funded programmes on capacity building in ICT trainings for women entrepreneurs to achieve inclusive economic growth

2020

India and Italy issued a **joint statement** stating their intent to cooperate in all relevant multilateral forums on strengthening gender equality in 2020

2018

Financial support of **\$ 16,000** in 2018 to Ministry of Agriculture, Azerbaijan, where Indian experts shared knowledge and experience of setting up self-help groups and micro-finance to women participants

THE WAY FORWARD: CONVERSATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

As traditional centers of global power and governance realign, India's role in shaping this discourse is increasing. From sponsoring global campaigns, such as the International Solar Alliance Campaign, to demanding better accountability in climate talks or more balanced multilateral institutions, Delhi's prominence is no longer a matter of 'if and when' it is time for India not only to add to and shape the discourse on a feminist foreign policy but also to join the growing group of countries that have embarked on this path.

As this paper indicates, India has already made remarkable strides in the direction of integrating gender in a wide range of foreign policy spheres, both in core areas of peace and security, but also in multilateral discussions, through resources as well as through representation to a certain extent. What is missing, however, is a well-defined purpose and a framework of accountability for intended outcomes and future benchmarks. Adopting some version of a FFP framework could provide India a wider strategy on gender mainstreaming for a stronger long-term impact. It is time we went beyond piecemeal efforts to create an environment that fosters diversity in thought and action with policy outputs that strategically consider the impact on women and the marginalized. For this we must go beyond the original three R's of rights, resources and responsibility and include components of research, reporting, reach and resources.

Addressing some aspects of research and reporting, Kubernein Initiative aims to raise the awareness of the global conversation through this paper; increase understanding of what a feminist foreign policy might entail and dispel myths around the subject. The paper offers a small snapshot of where countries stand in this endeavor, and the many different approaches taken. The core concepts of a feminist foreign policy allow for a variety of considerations, where countries take into account and address both domestic realities and regional and global ambitions. We hope that a better understanding will lead to a wider conversation on gender in the foreign policy and security arena.

There is no doubt that the global movement will only increase with more and more countries joining the commitment and applying components of gender mainstreaming in both their domestic and foreign policies and governance. Libya's recent announcement has paved the way for others to bring a fresh perspective to a small group of like-minded countries. Do we watch and wait, and ultimately play catch-up as we have in the past? Or do we, embark on this path and shape the conversation to ensure that future global considerations on a feminist foreign policy are truly inclusive?

ABOUT KUBERNEIN INITIATIVE

Kubernein Initiative is an independent, female led, geopolitical advisory firm based in Mumbai (India) working to mainstream issues that need greater intellectual capacity and focus. Our vision is to build an organisation that considers critical questions with a perspective that balances traditionally 'western' thought in the field of international relations and diplomacy with new and emerging ideas from the global south. Kubernein Initiative is co-founded by Ambika Vishwanath and Priyanka Bhide, who bring their combined skills of research, analysis and strategic communications to successfully execute projects relating to security, governance, sustainability and development.

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