**A Feminist Call to**

**Finance a Future of Equality**

**Financing for Development Inputs Paper**

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**Introduction**

*“****The best wealth creation is an investment in women and girls****.”*

Statement of Bjørg Sandkjær, Norwegian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs during the first plenary at the first preparatory meeting of the FfD4 process, Addis Ababa, July 2024

*“****The data is unequivocal: failure to achieve gender equality and fulfill the rights and empowerment of women and girls is an unsurmountable barrier to the entire 2030 Agenda. The consequences affect everyone****.”*

Sima Bahous, UN Women Executive Director,

[Generation Equality Accountability Report 2024](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/generation-equality-accountability-report-2024)

A review of current data on gender equality paints a disturbing picture:

* Not one country is on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* Nearly 40% of countries have stagnated - or even declined – on gender equality indicators.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Women account for only 35% of all science, technology, engineering and math graduates. If left unaddressed, the global gender gap in internet users could cost low- and middle-income countries an estimated $500 billion over the next five years.[[3]](#footnote-3)
* In 2020-2021, the share of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) with a gender equality objective dropped for the first time in a decade. Only 4% of bilateral allocable ODA was dedicated to programs with gender equality as the principal objective**,** a similar share from the previous period.[[4]](#footnote-4)
* Only one-fifth of one percentage of ODA was invested in reducing gender-based violence.[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Women carry out most of the unpaid care work which constrains their participation in the labor market. “*Across the world, without exception, women carry out over 75 percent of the 16 billion hours provided in unpaid care work. Women dedicate, on average, 3.2 times more time than men to unpaid care work. There is no country where women and men perform an equal share of unpaid care work.*”[[6]](#footnote-6)

*“If this trend toward backsliding and stagnating gathers pace, our forecasts reveal that global gender inequality could be worse in 2030 than when the SDGs were agreed back in 2015.”*

* Equal Measures 2030, [A Gender Equal Future in Crisis?](https://equalmeasures2030.org/2024-sdg-gender-index/)

**Financing plays an essential role in generating progress and momentum.** An estimated $6.4 trillion per year is needed across 48 developing countries to achieve gender equality in key areas, including in the goals to end poverty and hunger by 2030.[[7]](#footnote-7) However, domestic resource mobilization is often constrained by soaring sovereign debt and higher borrowing costs for developing countries; illicit financial flows, including through global tax avoidance and evasion; and inequitable trade and investment agreements–all with disproportionate impacts on the economic and human rights of women and girls, in all their diversity.

These global financial and economic inequalities are further entrenched by women’s chronic under-representation in economic decision-making, including at the global level; the persistent under-investment in women’s rights organizations and feminist movements that have a proven track record in advancing gender equality goals; and the rise and reach of well-connected and well-financed anti-gender movements.

**What gets demanded, gets funded**. It is time to place gender equality firmly at the center of financing for development and build economies that prioritize care and the wellbeing of women and girls, their families and their communities.

**I. A Global Financing Framework**

A wealth of commitments to improving financial investments and policies for women’s rights and gender equality has already been articulated in multiple international normative frameworks, such as:

* The Addis Ababa Agenda for Sustainable Development
* The [Beijing Platform for Action](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration)
* The Convention on Eliminating All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
* Agreed Conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women
* Declaration on Future Generations
* Most recently, the [Pact for the Future](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-the-pact-for-the-future.pdf), reaffirmed that the SDGs cannot be achieved without the safe, equal and meaningful participation and representation of all women in political and economic life and reaffirmed commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to increased investments to close the gender gap
* Reparative justice for colonialism, slavery, unfilled ODA commitments, and ecological debt owed to the Global South
* Principle of non-retrogression to ensure that FfD4 outcomes build on previous commitments, including commitments to the rights of women and girls, following from the Addis Ababa Action Agenda
* The universality of human rights for all

A global financing framework should also recognize:

* The urgency of addressing gender equality issues - now is the moment for action on the rights of women and politically marginalized groups.
* The interdependence of progress on SDG5 with the other SDGs. Nearly three-quarters of the SDG targets are directly or significantly reliant on making progress on gender equality.[[8]](#footnote-8)
* The historic gap in gender equality financing.
* The historic importance of strong, independent feminist movements and the importance of their voices in FfD discussions and deliberations.[[9]](#footnote-9)
* The importance of reversing declines in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) financing and giving priority to SRHR in global development strategies, international financing governance and architecture reforms. This is part of a broader dismantling of public health services, including education, health and care.
* The opportunity to adopt concrete, bold reforms to finance the fight against inequality, including the fight for gender and racial justice; advance structural governance reforms that benefit the Global South and put an end to colonial multilateralism; and advance economies and societies that go beyond GDP to centre the care of people and planet.

**II. Action Areas**

1. ***Domestic Public Resources***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to invest in the care infrastructure: This includes comprehensive, sustainable, universal care systems seeking to transform the gendered and racial division of labour. Establishing universally accessible, quality gender transformative public services and infrastructure and social protection mechanisms is key. The [Global Alliance on Care](https://www.globalallianceforcare.org/en/), is a multi-stakeholder community that seeks to advance the [care agenda](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.actionaid.org.uk/publications/another-world-possible-advancing-feminist-economic-alternatives&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1728468583152620&usg=AOvVaw2xpkMI-5lWq-vbAvGKb9Ho) from the local to the global level. The Alliance has extensive recommendations to recognize, reduce, redistribute, reward and represent care work. The Agreed Conclusions of [CSW63](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/62/CSW-Conclusions-62-EN.PDF) are relevant here as well.
* Commit to gender transformative fiscal policy: national investments have the potential to make huge differences in narrowing gender gaps (healthcare spending, education policies, cash transfers, electricity, etc.). By implementing national budgeting processes that are gender-transformative, we can ensure public resource allocation targets the needs of women, girls and systemically marginalized communities and that investments address gender disparities and access to essential SRHR services.
* Commit to gender transformative (not only ‘responsive’) tax [policies](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/e36238c4-en.pdf?expires=1728327070&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=6B39DD8CD3455B1A29CE6104A21E59A0) and regimes, including tax [compliance](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099936005242435341/idu12193d66b10d6214c911a59e1eab368c25f4b), [various forms of taxation](https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/9a84ed06-e768-4399-b649-89e61878a05d/content) (for example, personal income taxes, value-added taxes, excise taxes, and fuel taxes).
* Commit to International tax cooperation: a UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation is a key opportunity to create a fairer and more inclusive global tax system that supports all countries to mobilize domestic public resources. These resources are essential to establish national infrastructures that support gender equality.
* Commit to investments in Disaster Risk Reduction done through a gender lens. Given the disproportionate impact of national disasters on women and girls, addressing DRR has the potential to narrow gender gaps. However, it is essential that DRR initiatives incorporate robust and meaningful attention to gender differences and inequalities.
* Focus on the development of gender budgeting systems that can track and improve investments in gender-sensitive policies and services.

1. ***Domestic and International Private Business and Finance***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to an ongoing process towards a binding, regulatory framework for corporate responsibility, based on international human rights law. This could draw on the [Women’s Empowerment Principles](https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles) and the United Nations Global Compact. It also includes social responsibility reporting codes that include gender equality analysis and measures in corporate value chains.
* Commit to exploring an intersectional gender lens investing as a mechanism to advance gender equality. The [2X Challenge](https://www.2xchallenge.org/) provides examples and lessons.
* Commit to dialogue on mechanisms to improve private sector/feminist movements /member state dialogue and exchange to expand the multi-stakeholder discussions that began with Generation Equality and build greater understanding of joint initiatives to support gender equality.
* Commit to engagement with the domestic and international private sector to ensure that investment decisions align with gender equality and SRHR priorities. Embedding these goals in procurement strategies can promote inclusive economic growth, foster gender equality, and align business practices with broader global gender objectives.
* Acknowledging that the current Basel frameworks discriminate against women, commit to measures to implement the recommendation of the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment (2017) to incorporate gender-sensitive risk assessments into these banking frameworks.

1. ***International Development Cooperation***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to ringfencing specific percentages of ODA for gender equality as a principal objective (15%) and resourcing civil society women’s organizations and feminist movements (10% of gender equality principal flows).
* Given the urgent needs in these areas, commit to allocating at least 15% of all ODA humanitarian assistance funding and climate financing to initiatives that also have gender equality as a principal objective.
* Commit to similar ringfencing percentages in programming by multilateral institutions and IFIs.
* Commit to increasing investments in mechanisms (including women’s funds/feminist funds, and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women) that are committed to providing flexible, long-term, low administrative burden support to women’s organizations and feminist movements in all their diversity.
* Commit to the ODA ‘localization agenda’, strengthening local women’s organizations and feminist movements. This includes reforming funding modalities to emphasize core support, long-term funding, flexibility, reduced bureaucracy and increased responsiveness to local contexts.
* Commit to prioritising SRHR in global financing as an agent that directly contributes to closing gender gaps, improving access to essential SRHR services for women and girls.
* Commit to supporting, promoting and funding local women’s rights organizations and feminist movements in order to enable and strengthen the work of these groups. Feminist organisations are at the forefront of actions to achieve gender equality and are in a unique position to understand the SRHR needs of women and girls in local communities and the intersectionality of these needs.
* Commit to Invest in existing funds/mechanisms (including women’s/feminist funds) dedicated to gender equality with established track records in effectively reaching local women’s rights and feminist organisations with funding that is flexible and responsive to their needs.
* Commit to more regular, transparent, and reliable reporting on and evaluation of the gender equality dimensions of ODA.
* Commit to a reframing of the international development cooperation from a perspective of charity to one of justice and reparations, addressing historical injustices.
* Establish the UN target of 0.7% GNI as a floor on ODA quantity and recognize the trillions in unmet ODA commitments as a debt owed to the Global South.

1. ***International Trade and Investment as an Engine for Development***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to the inclusion and expansion of gender equality provisions in free trade agreements. In negotiations for trade agreements, prioritise those products and services that have positive gender impacts.
* Ensure that trade agreements do not increase women’s unpaid domestic and care work by guaranteeing that governments are not compelled to liberalise public services.
* Commit to regular monitoring of the gender equality impacts of free trade agreements.
* Commit to the Implementation and/or strengthening of “due diligence laws” by introducing civil liability for companies and allowing survivors of human rights abuses to access national courts as well as by including all entities across the value chain.
* Ensure that Investor-state Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanisms do not allow investors to challenge a government’s gender-equality measures that may clash with foreign investors’ interests.[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. ***Debt and Debt Sustainability***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Recognize that current debt significantly undermines countries' ability to finance gender equality initiatives. Countries that emerge from debt crises must receive support to reinvest in critical sectors such as health, education, and social protection, with a particular focus on meeting the needs of women and girls. Ensuring that the fiscal space created by debt relief is used to foster inclusive growth will be key.
* Commit to the UN Framework Convention on Sovereign Debt that addresses the necessary reforms in the global debt architecture, including explicit and robust attention to gender equality dimensions, for the prevention and resolution of the debt crisis.
* Commit to immediate cancellation of all unsustainable and illegitimate debts from all creditors, consistent with states’ human rights obligations.
* Commit to reparations processes that acknowledge and address historic and ongoing injustices including disproportionate climate-induced harms, colonization, land capture/grabbing, and resource extraction. This should be done through resourcing feminist funders that put decisions back in the hands of local communities to be active decision-makers in how reparations should be distributed.

1. ***Addressing Systemic Issues***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to valuing and accounting for non-market labor (primarily in the care sector) that is primarily done by women.
* Commit to closing the gender pay gap at national and international levels. Gender pay gaps represent one of today's greatest social injustices. According to the ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19, women earn on average about 20 per cent less than men.[[11]](#footnote-11)
* Commit to monitoring and restricting funding flows (ODA and other) to anti-rights/anti-gender actors.
* Commit to develop plans for equal representation in multilateral spaces and for leadership roles within IFIs, including but not limited to Multilateral Development Banks.
* Commit to strengthening civil society spaces and organizing. Restrict the use of punitive state measures (such as audits, surveillance, etc.) on feminist, race and caste-marginalized groups, LGBTIQ+, land defenders and other organizations.
* Recognise the linkages between gender inequality and poverty.
* See also the Data, Monitoring and Follow-Up section below.

1. ***Science, Technology, Innovation and Capacity Building***

Relevant commitments to include in FfD4:

* Commit to the implementation of the CSW67 Agreed Conclusions with a focus on science and technology ([E/CN.6/2023/L.3](https://www.undocs.org/E/CN.6/2023/L.3))
* Commit to the financing of solutions and strategies to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
* Commit to the application of a gender lens to all funding for artificial intelligence (AI) development.
* Commit to the implementation of the Global Digital Compact, with a focus on paras 8d, 11g, 30 and 40.

**III. Emerging Issues**

* Acknowledging that the world is facing serious environmental crises, the FfD4 process should promote systemic transformation instead of promoting ongoing economic growth (one of the causes of the current crisis). Feminist climate activists are a key driver of change.
* Acknowledging that anti-rights/anti-gender actors and movements pose challenges for the sustainability of progress to date on gender equality and the rights of women and girls and threaten the rights and well-being of LGBTQI people, the FfD4 process should commit to tracking financial flows to and restricting actions that undermine human rights.
* Ensure financing in response to emerging global challenges, such as climate change and pandemics is gender-responsive. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by these crises, and financing mechanisms must be adapted to ensure that gender equality and SRHR remains a priority in emergency response efforts.
* World [military expenditure](https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity) rose this year for the ninth consecutive year to an all-time high of $2443 billion. FfD4 can address this deadly trend and highlight the devastating costs of armed conflict. Furthermore, these global expenditures leave fewer and fewer resources to invest in public goods.

**IV. Data, Monitoring and Follow-up**

* Understanding gender equality issues is complicated and blurred by insufficient gender and gender-disaggregated data. The FfD4 process should mobilize support for greater investments in gender equality and gender disaggregated data at both the national and international levels.
* Invest in measuring and valuing unpaid care work.
* Greater attention to and public reporting of gender equality ODA is required, specifically on resourcing feminist movements.
* Greater efforts are required to track and report on gender equality financing (through ODA and other sources), ensuring accountability, understanding trends, and ensuring comparability. The FfD4 process should also engage data users (in particular women’s rights organizations and feminist movements) as data owners, producers, and advisors.

**V. Overarching Reflections**

* Overall, there is a desperate need to ensure that all elements of the FfD4 discussions and outcomes incorporate a gender analysis and previous commitments to gender equality. While the Addis Agenda includes good language on gender, the FfD4 process needs to strengthen its commitments to gender equality and the rights of women and girls as core issues. There is an urgent need to tackle the discrimination, poverty, violence, lack of rights experienced by more than half the world’s population and resources and financing are key to making progress.
* The FfD4 process needs to explicitly include the wide-range of global commitments to gender equality. Gender equality expertise can strengthen national delegations. Policy coherence and consistency can ensure that all areas of the FfD4 agenda and process reflect agreed language. The inclusion of feminist civil society can also expand and enrich discussions to push the analysis and commitments further.
* There is a need for new approaches to financing progress on gender equality. The FfD4 process can be an incubator for discussion and innovation.
* Greater focus on gender parity is needed. Efforts are needed to increase the gender composition of delegations and experts consulted/engaged. Special measures are needed to bring the voices and perspectives of feminist civil society, in all its diversity, into the FfD4 discussions. As well, include targets on gender parity within institutions at all levels, including ensuring female frontline staff in aid delivery as well as female institutional leadership.
* Putting the fight against inequality as a key cross-cutting issue in the FfD4 negotiations will lead to discussions on how to overcome the GDP-growth-centric model. This will involve developing new and improved metrics to measure progress based on feminist analysis and involving civil society actors.

***This document is a result of a co-creation effort with leading feminist organizations, movements and academia from Global South and North, involving over 50 participants, convened by the Walking the Talk consortium.***

***The organizations include Countdown 2030, Oxfam International, International Budget Partnership, MamaCash, Alliance for Feminist Movements, Kvinna till Kvinna, as well as leading feminist researchers from the following countries and/or regions (in alphabetical order):***

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***Morocco: Yasmina Banslimane***

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***Turkey: Çağla Parlak, Hilal Gençay, Özgün Akduran Erol and Zeynep Ekin Aklar***

***ZImbabwe: Memory Kadau and Marie-Simone Kadurira***

***These organizations and researchers are collaborating on strengthening feminist financing from an ODA, public and private financing angle.***

***The Walking the Talk consortium brings together five civil society organizations in Europe: Equipop in France, Restless Development in the United Kingdom, the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy in Germany, Hivos in the Netherlands and ODI Europe in Brussels covering the EU. The consortium applies its extensive collective experience and leverages its networks in the Global South to embed gender equality and feminist approaches in foreign policies, practices and especially funding – both through ODA as well as other funding streams. With the wider feminist ecosystem, Walking the Talk is developing a (financial) Common Ask Framework, consolidating the many financial asks feminist funds, gender justice and women’s rights organizations have been advocating for – relating to funding quality and quantity. This submission has already started to apply some of the framework's recommendations as part of our engagement in the fourth Financing for Development process, culminating in a conference called Financing for Feminist Futures to be held in Madrid from 21-23 of May, 2025.***

1. Equal Measures 2030 (2024). [A Gender Equality Future in Crisis? Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index.](https://equalmeasures2030.org/2024-sdg-gender-index/) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Equal Measures 2030 (2024). [A Gender Equality Future in Crisis? Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index.](https://equalmeasures2030.org/2024-sdg-gender-index/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UN Women (2024). [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Equality Snapshot.](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. # OECD page: [Development finance for gender equality and women’s empowerment](https://web-archive.oecd.org/temp/2024-03-07/73550-development-finance-for-gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment.htm) and [DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)1](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/GEN(2024)1/en/pdf)

   [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. # UN Women (2023). [Less than 1 per cent of aid spending targets gender-based violence, according to new reports](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/11/less-than-1-per-cent-of-aid-spending-targets-gender-based-violence-according-to-new-reports)

   [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Charmes, Jacques (2019). [The Unpaid Care Work and the Labour Market: An analysis of time use data based on the latest World Compilation of Time-Use Surveys](https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@gender/documents/publication/wcms_732791.pdf). ILO. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. UN Women (2023). [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023-en.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Equal Measures 2030 (2024). [A Gender Equality Future in Crisis? Findings from the 2024 SDG Gender Index.](https://equalmeasures2030.org/2024-sdg-gender-index/) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This document will use the phrase women’s rights organizations and feminist movements to include the full range of gender justice organizations, alliances and networks. Given our intersectional feminist analysis we include the full diversity of feminist actors, including LGBTIQ+ organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.iisd.org/itn/en/2024/01/13/exploring-investment-treaties-role-in-advancing-gender-equality/> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/gender-pay-gap#:~:text=Gender%20pay%20gaps%20represent%20one,are%20wide%20variations%20across%20countries> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)