



Taking A Feminist Approach To International Relations

Contents

Ministerial Foreword	1
Executive Summary	3
Scotland's Approach	4
1.1 What is a feminist approach and why do we need one?	4
1.2 Action to date	5
1.3 Scotland Act	5
1.4 Policy development	6
1.5 Defining a feminist approach for Scotland: our guiding principles	6
1.6 Where will a feminist approach apply?	7
1.7 Delivering a feminist approach	7
Scope of the Policy	9
1.8 Cross-cutting actions	9
1.9 Focus 1: international development and humanitarian	10
1.10 Focus 2: climate justice	13
1.11 Focus 3: trade	14
1.12 Focus 4: peace and security	15
Next Steps	17
1.13 Framework for delivery	17
1.14 Ongoing collaborative approach	17
1.15 Further recommendations	17
1.16 Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL)	18

Ministerial Foreword



Across the world, women and girls face continued systemic issues from economic insecurity to gender-based violence, from violations of sexual and reproductive health rights and climate injustice, to barriers to accessing education. At the same time we are confronting a documented, organised roll-back on the rights of women and girls globally.

The global challenges we face today – climate change, pandemics, conflict – serve as a reminder of our global interconnectedness and the reality that what happens in the Global North also affects the Global South and vice versa. To address these challenges, collaboration is crucial.

Climate change and nature loss are the greatest long-term threats facing people and our planet. We know the impacts of these twin crises are not felt equally amongst all groups. In particular, there is an important gender dimension to the great injustice at the heart of the climate challenge that we must understand and address.

In Afghanistan and Iran, women and girls are being deprived of their most fundamental human rights. In the face of the invasion of Ukraine and the desperate situation in the middle east, nations are being tested on whether they support not just the principle, but the reality, of a rules-based approach.

It is in this challenging context I present below, a concrete commitment setting out how Scotland will seek to deliver a feminist approach to international relations (FAIR) which puts the rights of women and girls, and other marginalised groups, at the heart of our international activities. Our approach is driven by a focus on understanding and addressing the root causes of inequality and the shared global challenges that drive insecurity.

We place a great deal of importance on Scotland being a good global citizen. While foreign policy remains the responsibility of the UK Government, there is a clear role for Scotland in making a constructive contribution to addressing global challenges. We have a proud record of engaging, contributing and leading internationally within the current constitutional arrangements, in areas such as international development and climate justice.

We have adopted a progressive approach to all our international development work, which underpins our new programmes and investments. We are committed to being partner-led and seek to equalise power in our international relationships, including through establishing new mechanisms such as our Global South Advisory Panel. Scotland has also long acknowledged the need for urgent action on Climate Justice and has become recognised globally for our leadership on this key issue. Our world-leading funding for practical action to address loss and damage recognises the differential impacts of the climate crisis on women and girls.

Given the increasingly clear impact international affairs have on achieving domestic objectives and vice versa, it is imperative Scotland engages directly with others to address our shared global challenges. Through our international work, we can contribute to reducing gender and other inequalities and insecurities overseas, including by sharing Scotland's experience in engaging with these challenges. By contributing globally, we can also learn from others, applying lessons to domestic policies to further reduce gender and other inequalities at home.

In many ways this is not a new approach. Our commitment to women, girls and other marginalised groups is demonstrated in our record – from our investment in Women in Conflict 1325 Fellowships in support of UN Resolution 1325 and other targeted programmes funded through our International Development Fund, through to our partnership with UN Women to launch the Glasgow Women's Leadership Statement at COP26.

However, I recognise the power in now taking an explicitly feminist stance. Our approach must be driven by those most affected by global challenges. We must be led by the priorities of women and girls and marginalised groups in Scotland and partners overseas, particularly the Global South. It must go further to address gendered inequalities and insecurities by addressing their root causes, towards an international system that works for all.

Drawing on the evidence gathered from a diverse range of sources, the guiding principles and actions below set out our cross-government approach. Our four areas of focus build on work to date and recognise where we can, and will, do more to embed feminist principles in all international policy.

It is vital we go beyond warm words. As a good global citizen we seek to be guided by our values, and in doing so we recognise all of our decisions have implications which can necessitate tough choices. The implementation of FAIR will be a journey that evolves in response to specific circumstances and shared perspectives. The nature of the global challenges we face means governments need be able to respond quickly and adapt to circumstances to collaborate, build trust and encourage greater action and more ambitious commitments from leadership at all levels. That is why we are committed to transparent accountability mechanisms to both assess our international objectives and help us understand where we should go further.

The challenges we face are increasingly connected and complex. We must ensure our feminist approach is transformative and takes us towards a fairer international system that works for all.

Christina McKelvie

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development

Executive Summary

There is no community on earth untouched by the global challenges we face – from climate change and humanitarian disasters to conflict and insecurity. But the impacts of these crises are not felt equally and require collective global action. Our vision of Scotland remains outward looking: a nation committed to good global citizenship, with a strong, respected voice in the world.

Gender equality is at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision for a fairer world. The [2023-24 Programme for Government](#) sets out our commitment to gender equality. We want women and girls to be empowered to exercise equal rights and opportunities, have equitable access to economic resources and decision-making, and live their lives free from all forms of violence, abuse and harassment.

A feminist approach recognises the relationship between addressing inequality and tackling insecurity in pursuit of a fairer world for all. In the [2021-22 Programme for Government](#), the Scottish Government reiterated our commitment to ensuring our policies and actions abroad were consistent with our focus on fairness and inclusion at home, ensuring our international work reflected a feminist approach to our international policymaking. We have since been reflecting further on what a feminist approach could look like for Scotland, seeking to ensure progressive steps in our domestic policy are mirrored in our international activity. The guiding principles we set out in this paper are the lens through which we will review Scottish Government policy that has an international dimension, in line with our [Global Affairs Framework](#) and the programme of work set out in our forthcoming international strategy.

The Scottish Government is determined to be a good global citizen, making a constructive contribution to addressing global challenges and achieving fairer outcomes. Our international work is rooted in:

- ▶ The key values of fairness, equality, inclusion;
- ▶ A commitment to international human rights standards;
- ▶ Securing a fair and just global transition to a net zero and climate-resilient future; and
- ▶ An internationalist outlook based on cooperation and the rule of law.

Scotland's feminist approach to international relations will be different in its reach compared to countries with the full powers of an independent state. As a progressive country, we have the opportunity to contribute to advancing the core principles of feminist approaches to foreign policy and, working with others, to help drive the transformative change needed to ensure greater equality.

This position paper sets out:

1. Why the Scottish Government is taking a feminist approach and what that means;
2. Action taken to date to understand and prioritise where Scotland can make the greatest impact;
3. Cross-government actions and four thematic areas of focus:
 - a. International development and humanitarian;
 - b. Climate justice;
 - c. Trade; and
 - d. Peace and security.
4. Next steps, including how we propose to monitor impact while remaining collaborative, accountable and transparent.

Our feminist approach is a journey towards systemic change considering not only *what* we do, but *how* we do it. This position paper is the first part of a process to consider and respond to recommendations drawn from engagement with experts, including contributors from the Global South. A second phase will further consider recommendations made on four priority areas: international development, trade, climate justice, and peace and security. A third phase will set out a monitoring and evaluation framework to underpin transparency, learning and accountability.

Scotland's Approach

1.1 What is a feminist approach and why do we need one?

Globally, there is growing momentum towards adopting a feminist approach to foreign policy, one that is fair, intersectional and human rights based.

The global climate and biodiversity emergencies are twin reinforcing crises which disproportionately impact those who have done least to cause them. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated [structural inequalities](#) within Scotland and globally. Similarly, the UK's exit from the EU highlights a significant number of potential and continuing [social and equality impacts](#), particularly for the most vulnerable. As concerns about women, children and marginalised groups in Ukraine, Afghanistan and the Middle East and other countries affected by conflict continue to grow, the impact of conflict on women is ever clearer.

Gender inequality affects everyone – not just women and girls. And yet the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030. The latest [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals](#) demonstrates the rights of women and girls around the world continue to be rolled back. By protecting and promoting equality, inclusion and human rights the Scottish Government can help to challenge and change this.

In the current global climate it is more important than ever that we drive an ambitious and progressive agenda to ensure equality, inclusion and human rights are embedded in all we do, both at home and abroad. These global challenges are interconnected and gendered. Tackling the root causes and power structures which cause these inequalities will benefit all of us.

The Scottish Government aims to be a good global citizen in everything we do internationally, making distinctive contributions to addressing these global challenges. As part of this the Scottish Government is committed to a feminist approach to international relations (FAIR). A feminist approach for Scotland will leverage all aspects of Scotland's international policy

to advance gender equality and the rights of women, girls and marginalised groups in pursuit of a fairer world. Our approach prioritises peace and gender equality, while also questioning and challenging existing power structures. We believe a feminist approach can support all international actors to advance a more equitable world.

This means prioritising collaboration and cooperation over adversarial processes. It means championing democracy, multilateralism, and a rules-based international system. It means promoting a post-colonial and anti-racist vision of international policymaking. It means protecting and promoting human rights, paying particular attention to protecting and promoting the rights of the most marginalised. It means considering the collective wellbeing of both current and future generations.

The Scottish Government is a strong supporter of multilateralism and the rules-based international system and seeks to have international influence and communicate shared interests in international fora. We place great importance on Scotland being a good global citizen and act accordingly by participating in international networks and sharing knowledge that can be of mutual benefit to Scotland and partners around the world. A feminist approach will continue to support efforts to strengthen international institutions and ensure appropriate representation and the influence of a diverse range of voices in key multilateral processes for a system that works for all.

The Scottish Government recognises the distinct forms of disadvantage, harm and injustice experienced by individuals when multiple categories of social identities are considered, such as race and ethnicity, socio-economic background, religion, disability, and all genders. The inequality faced by women and girls is complex and harmful and this gender inequality affects everyone – it affects us collectively.

As part of FAIR we will continue to strive to give people most affected by structural inequalities and injustice, conflict, climate change and environmental damage a platform to speak for themselves and influence and make decisions.

There is more that we can, and should do as we seek to implement a feminist approach to our international work. We will continue to take an anti-racist, inclusive, collaborative approach by harnessing a range of diverse voices, and to ensure we confront historic and continuing injustice. An inclusive approach requires us to play our part towards dismantling the barriers that impede Global South representation. We must be open to contending with our past while contributing to addressing global challenges and achieving fairer outcomes in the world today.

Crucially, we must recognise Scotland's FAIR as a journey and as an ongoing process. We know that our work must be evidence-based and that a 'one size fits all' approach will fail to deliver for us all. This position paper commits us to a set of principles which will help us guide our work and identify the focus and parameters of the policy. We will set out aims and desired outcomes which will help us track progress over time. In line with our commitment to international knowledge exchange and policy partnerships we are committed to continuous dialogue with stakeholders. We remain open to constructive challenge, and acknowledging gaps – and to take action as a result of improved understanding.

1.2 Action to date

Scotland has a proud record of engaging internationally within the current constitutional arrangements. As set out in our [background note](#), we also have a strong commitment to advancing feminist policies internationally, demonstrated from our Women in Conflict 1325 Fellowships all the way through to the work we are taking forward in our [Vision for Trade](#). We want to build on this to help contribute to a fairer world, applying a feminist lens to all Scottish Government policies and programmes with an international dimension.

1.3 Scotland Act

The [Scotland Act 1998](#) states that “international relations, including relations with territories outside the United Kingdom, the European Union (and their institutions) and other international organisations, regulation of international trade, and international development assistance and cooperation are reserved matters”. This means that powers over defence and national security, foreign affairs, immigration and asylum, and trade policy are reserved to the Government of the United Kingdom.

Notes on clauses to the Scotland Act explain that Scottish Ministers can communicate with other countries, regions or international institutions so long as they do not purport to speak for the UK or to reach agreements which commit the UK. In addition, Scottish Ministers are not prevented from pursuing their interests internationally and Scottish Ministers can enter into agreements that are not binding Treaties.

Scottish Ministers may assist Ministers of the Crown with international relations, including international development assistance. Like all other parts of the UK, Scotland has always contributed through its taxpayers to the UK Government's international development work – delivered through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and other UK Government Departments such as the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

With the agreement of the UK Government, the Scottish Government established its international development footprint from 2005. Our international development work is funded from within the Scottish Government's own budget and, like any other part of that budget, is subject to Scottish Parliament approval and scrutiny. However, the UK Government takes account of all of the Scottish Government's international development spend, therefore our International Development Fund, Humanitarian Emergency Fund and Climate Justice Fund are all included in Official Development Assistance.

The Scottish Government has nine international offices to promote its relationships, plus engagement strategies with the US, China, Canada, India and Pakistan. It is active in a range of regional and subnational multilateral coalitions. Within Scotland, private and public sector bodies have a good deal of autonomy over procurement and investment, which can have implications for relations with countries outside Scotland.

1.4 Policy development

The Scottish Government is committed to a consultative and collaborative feminist approach to international work. We have learnt from an evidence review, [expert interviews](#) as well as feedback from the Scottish Government gender stakeholder group and National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG). We will continue to engage with a diverse range of groups and expertise as our approach continues to develop and be implemented.

[Scotland's International Development Alliance](#) and the [Scottish Council for Global Affairs](#) were contracted to run a series of workshops with UK and Global South based stakeholders. The aims of the externally commissioned work were to:

1. Inform the policy focus and measurable outcomes of Scotland's feminist approach to foreign policy;
2. Identify and fill gaps in existing knowledge about global gender issues, thereby improving the Scottish Government's evidence base;
3. Help to shape the definition of the Scottish Government's feminist approach to foreign policy; and
4. Build relationships with key stakeholders and develop long-term networks.

The feedback from the workshops was consolidated into an [independent report](#) which outlines recommendations to inform our approach in Scotland. The Scottish Government has also engaged with key stakeholders throughout the process, including: the [Scottish Youth Parliament](#), LGBTI+ stakeholders, international development stakeholders, trade and business groups, [Global South Advisory Panel](#), [National Advisory Council on Women and Girls](#), [Human Rights Defenders](#) and many others.

Following a multi-criteria analysis process, this position paper responds to these inputs by outlining how Scotland's international relations policies and programmes will be developed in line with a feminist approach.

1.5 Defining a feminist approach for Scotland: our guiding principles

In line with international best practice, our stakeholder engagement and evidence review sought to define the parameters of a feminist approach to international relations in Scotland. This has informed the following set of core principles, which will guide the Scottish Government's approach to international relations:

- ▶ **Transformative:** We prioritise addressing the shared systemic barriers which drive inequality and insecurity. We collaborate and speak out in pursuit of innovative, progressive solutions.
- ▶ **Intersectional:** We view inequality through an intersectional lens and understand the compounding impact of marginalisation and oppression.
- ▶ **Equitable:** We commit to an equalising power agenda which seeks to be actively anti-racist and anti-colonial and we ensure reducing inequalities is central to how we work.

- ▶ **Participatory:** We engage in participatory consultations at home and abroad and adopt accessible, collaborative approaches with civil society and women, girls and marginalised groups around the world.
- ▶ **Consistent:** We ensure coherence between international, domestic, and local policies, integrating feminist principles across all aspects of our international policymaking.
- ▶ **Accountable:** We promote transparency and accountability in Scotland and abroad in measuring both policy process and impact.

1.6 Where will a feminist approach apply?

Our feminist approach to international relations complements our domestic objective to address inequality in Scotland. The Scottish Government is working to ensure no one in Scotland is denied rights or opportunities because of their gender. We will ensure our focus on equality, inclusion and human rights in Scotland is mirrored in our international activity.

Our international engagement provides us with the opportunity to help deliver on Scotland's domestic objectives and the [First Minister's three missions of equality, opportunity, and community](#). We recognise we must focus resource where Scotland, as a devolved nation, can add most value.

Working across the Scottish Government, we will continually review our policies and programmes, where they have an international dimension, to ensure they reflect our guiding principles as set out above. Doing so recognises the importance of being led by our values while acknowledging the power Government has as an actor, and the need for the Scottish Government to be adaptable.

1.7 Delivering a feminist approach

Scotland's feminist approach to international relations recognises that the challenges we face are interconnected and require a cross-government response. To ensure feminist international policymaking is mainstreamed across the Scottish Government, our approach will align with our commitment to mainstream equality and human rights. This includes:

- ▶ Ensuring learning and development for our staff in Scotland and in our overseas network is guided by an understanding of feminist principles for international policy.
- ▶ Aligning with the developing Equality and Human Rights Mainstreaming Strategy, with a focus on building organisation capability, capacity and culture.
- ▶ Developing and piloting a human rights impact assessment framework for both legislative and policy work.
- ▶ Embedding equality and human rights within the economic policymaking process and build capacity and capability across economic policy officials. The Scottish Government's first Centre of Expertise in Equality and Human Rights was established in May 2022 with an initial focus on mainstreaming gender equality and gender intersectionality across economic policy development and implementation, including through upskilling officials in gender competence.
- ▶ Considering the best means and models to set up more Centres of Expertise as part of our work to develop a mainstreaming equality and human rights strategy.
- ▶ Recognising, within other initiatives, such as the Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship, the relevance of feminist principles and of the contribution made by women in advocating for human rights, equality and environmental justice, including in the Global South.

- ▶ Continuing to engage our International Board and the recently established Senior Leadership Group on Equality and Human Rights, which will scrutinise and bring challenge to the Scottish Government's strategic approach to embed equality and human rights, ensuring they are at the heart of policy development. This will follow the three key themes of – Leadership, Accountability and Creating Conditions.
- ▶ Continuing to take a progressive approach to international development as we seek to implement our [International Development Principles](#) and further align with our new feminist principles. We are committed to ensuring that a human-rights based approach, the equalisation of power and reducing inequalities are central to how we deliver our international development work.
- ▶ Continuing to engage our [Global South Advisory Panel](#) on our international development policy and programming. As we work with the Panel and our other partners in the Global South to consider the future purpose, structure, and remit of the Panel, we will explore opportunities to harness Global South expertise on wider Scottish Government policy as it relates to a feminist approach to international relations.
- ▶ Using our principles to guide the Scottish Government's international engagement, including the work of our overseas offices and our approach to working with Scots around the world.

Scope of the Policy

1.8 Cross-cutting actions

In April 2023, the First Minister set out his [vision for Scotland](#) and the outcomes the Scottish Government aims to achieve by 2026. Equality, human rights and opportunity are at the heart of this vision. This change will be delivered in a number of ways, including:

- ▶ Introducing legislation to incorporate more international human rights into Scotland's domestic law;
- ▶ Reforming the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- ▶ Building capacity and changing culture;
- ▶ Strengthening leadership at all levels;
- ▶ Making better use of equality data; and
- ▶ Building equality and rights into our budgeting processes.

The Scottish Government's international work builds strategic relationships to promote Scotland's strengths and values internationally. Scotland's feminist approach to international relations, embedded across the work of the Scottish Government, will seek to support delivery of domestic policy objectives and continue to project the values we espouse on the global stage.

In line with the evidence presented as part of developing our feminist approach to international relations, the Scottish Government will:

- ▶ Prioritise policy coherence in the pursuit of positive outcomes in Scotland and overseas.
- ▶ Support women's organisations, feminist networks and other grassroots movements, including by providing platforms and resources for activists from marginalised groups and communities to learn and share expertise and meaningfully influence decision-making processes.

- ▶ Take steps to ensure funding allocated by the Scottish Government is in line with feminist principles, and that it is accessible and flexible with proportionate oversight, particularly for small grants.
- ▶ Engage in international knowledge exchange and policy partnerships, listening and learning from others while sharing and reflecting on progressive policies delivered and supported domestically, such as the Wellbeing Economy¹, community wealth building, period poverty, just transition and Scotland's Equally Safe strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.
- ▶ Speak out for structural change. Scotland does not have the full powers of an independent state and the levers in the international sphere that come with that. However, we can, as we did with our commitment to loss and damage, seek to act as a bridge to amplify voices that are too rarely heard. These include young people, women and those from the Global South and their calls for just solutions to the root causes of inequality and insecurity.
- ▶ Explore the development of legislative proposals in a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill to ensure the interests of future generations are taken into account in decisions.

¹ For example, the Wellbeing Economy Governments (WEGo) network, which Scotland co-founded, promotes the sharing of expertise and transferable economic policy practices in order to deliver societal wellbeing through the use of policy labs to discuss topics such as the Just Transition.

1.9 Focus 1: international development and humanitarian

The Scottish Government is committed to exploring how it can develop an effective feminist approach to international development as part of a feminist approach to international relations.

International development is a key part of Scotland's global contribution. It encompasses our core values of fairness and equality, and contributes to and promotes good global citizenship. The Scottish Government's aim is for Scotland to contribute to sustainable development and the fight against poverty, injustice and inequality internationally, by playing our part in global efforts to achieve the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#).

In the context of the global challenges we face today, we believe Scotland has a valuable development contribution to make, by taking a principled and progressive approach, harnessing Scotland's own expertise, being innovative, and employing our partnership approach, for global good.

Through our international development programmes, we have a particular focus on working in partnership with Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan, with investments made through our [International Development Fund](#). In 2021, we committed to increase our International Development Fund from £10 million to £15 million per annum within the current parliament.

We also provide additional investments to our partner countries and elsewhere through our [Climate Justice Fund](#) (see Focus 2: Climate Justice). Further, in recognition of Scotland's role as a good global citizen, the Scottish Government has responded to international humanitarian crises through our separate [Humanitarian Emergency Fund](#).

In 2021 [we reviewed our approach to international development](#), in light of COVID-19 and issues raised by global movements, such as Black Lives Matter. Following this review, our programme is evolving, both in terms of what we invest in and how our international development investment is deployed.

One of the key outcomes of our review is the Scottish Government's new [International Development Principles](#) which now underpin all our Official Development Assistance (ODA) work and have been adopted to apply across the Scottish Government. These international development principles align with the themes presented in the evidence to define Scotland's feminist approach to international relations. The commitments in our International Development Principles include:

- ▶ Embedding a human rights-based approach within our international development work;
- ▶ Being actively anti-racist in our approach;
- ▶ Prioritising the advancement of gender equality and the rights of women and girls
- ▶ Being inclusive; and
- ▶ Being transparent and accountable.

These principles also recognise the enduring and intersectional inequalities that exist, with a commitment 'to ensure reducing inequalities is central to how we work.'

At the forefront of this is our ambition to drive forward the equalising power agenda, also known as 'shifting power' through adopting partner-country led development and amplifying Global South voices with the aim to promote more equitable, people-led development.

In line with the outcomes of the 2021 International Development Review, including our International Development Principles and the evidence presented as part of developing Scotland's feminist approach, we will continue to explore how our approach to international development can support the equalisation of power and the advancement of gender equality.

In order to equalise power within our international development work the Scottish Government's international development programming will seek to be led by the Global South. This means working with governments and civil society in our partner countries (Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Pakistan) to ensure that our work through our International Development Fund supports local and national strategies to deliver sustainable outcomes.

For example, our International Development Fund focuses on areas identified by governments in our partner countries as those to prioritise health, inclusive education, equalities, and renewable energy. Our international development programmes have been designed in consultation with our partner countries so that our development investment in key sectors aligns with their stated priorities:

- ▶ In 2022, we launched a Scottish Global Renewables Centre to facilitate knowledge exchange between our international development partner countries and the Scottish renewables sector; and
- ▶ In the [First Minister's 2023 Policy Prospectus](#), we committed to launch new international development programmes with our partner countries to tackle non-communicable diseases, to support inclusive education for those who have additional support needs and to advance the rights of women and girls.

Another practical step we have already taken in support of our commitment to equalising power is our establishment, in September 2022, of a Global South Advisory Panel to the Scottish Government on international development policy and programming, the world's first such panel.

As we design and implement our new international development programmes in collaboration with our partners, we will take further practical steps towards equalising power. For example, we will:

1. Continue to evolve our programmes to provide new direct funding streams for Civil Society Organisations in our partner countries, starting with our new Women and Girls Fund (mentioned below), and a new Global Citizenship Fund which will provide funding in Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda, for capacity strengthening and advocacy initiatives.
2. Explore opportunities to provide long-term institutional south-south investment, such as continued support for our long-term partnership with Kamuzu University of Health Sciences in Blantyre, Malawi. This partnership is now supporting south-south collaboration and development through the expansion of research and capacity building with the University of Zambia, driving forward life-saving research in Africa, by Africans, for Africa.
3. Explore further opportunities to invest in south-south knowledge exchange between other stakeholders in our international development partner countries in key agreed areas, such as through our Global Renewables Centre. This Centre will promote and support leadership from the Global South through collaboration with local stakeholders in our partner countries to gather perspectives on energy sector priorities and will design and deliver appropriate knowledge exchange activities. The Centre has cross-cutting themes of climate justice and gender equality embedded in its strategy.

4. Embed participatory methodology, where possible, into programme design, implementation, and evaluation processes to ensure decisions on our new programmes are driven by local expertise, including those who are 'experts by lived experience.' Our commitment on equalising power means also working with our Global South partners on our approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning.
 5. Review our due diligence framework to build more transparent and accessible processes to encourage a broader range of applications. Again, our commitment on equalising power means also working with our Global South partners on this. We will seek opportunities to remove potential barriers for Global South partners in a way that is proportionate to the scope and scale of funding.
 6. Continue to listen to experts in our partner countries. For example, we will continue to work with the Global South Advisory Panel and our other partners in the Global South to consider the future purpose, structure and remit of the Panel as we seek to build strong Global South consultation mechanisms. This will provide an opportunity to further ensure policy coherence and build accountability and transparency.
- a. Establishing a new Women and Girls Fund, with the aim of providing direct funding to support women and girl-led organisations in Malawi, Zambia and Rwanda, with the advancement of gender equality and the rights of women and girls as a principal objective. Taking a participatory approach, this fund will be co-created with women and girls and women and girl-led organisations in our three sub-Saharan African partner countries.
 - b. Continued support for the partnership between Police Scotland and the Police Services of Malawi and Zambia. This programme focuses on systems strengthening, the protection of marginalised groups such as women, people with albinism and disabled people, including tackling issues such as gender-based violence and child protection.
2. Mainstreaming gender equality within our international development work. This requires building more gender-responsive international development programmes across our sector portfolios. To support the delivery of this commitment, we will score our new bilateral and multilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding for the implementation of specific projects against the [OECD² DAC³ gender equality policy marker](#). In doing so, we will seek to fund more work that is gender responsive (strengthens gender equality) or gender-transformative (changes gender-norms and power relations)⁴. Using this tool will increase transparency on how the Scottish Government's ODA spending promotes gender equality and women's rights. In recognition of the intersectional inequalities that exist, and noting the ways in which gender intersects with other protected characteristics, we will seek to apply an intersectional lens to our approach.

To support the advancement of gender equality, in line with the [UN Sustainable Development Goal 5](#), we are seeking to adopt a twin-track approach of mainstreaming gender equality throughout our international development portfolio and creating dedicated gender equality focused programmes. This includes:

1. Providing investment through our International Development Fund's new Equalities Programme including:

² Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

³ Development Assistance Committee

⁴ Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: DAC Guidance for Development Partners [URL: [Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls : DAC Guidance for Development Partners | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)] [Last accessed: 2 November 2023]

1.10 Focus 2: climate justice

Climate change and nature loss are the greatest threats facing people and our planet and we are already seeing the impact across the globe, including here in Scotland, as outlined by the [Climate Change Committee](#). We know that the impacts of climate change are not felt equally amongst all groups⁵. In particular, there is an important gender dimension to the great injustice at the heart of the climate challenge⁶. Across many communities, women are at the frontline and remain disproportionately affected by climate change and nature loss.

The Scottish Government was among the first to [put climate justice](#) at the heart of its international action. We urge others to join us in making pledges and mobilising the finances needed to enable communities to take action to address the impacts of climate change. In a climate justice approach, we recognise the inherent injustice of climate change, its ability to exacerbate existing inequalities and the fact that those who have contributed the least to the crisis often suffer the impacts first and worst.

The principles of climate justice align with our feminist approach to international relations. We do not underestimate the scale of action required to tackle climate change and nature loss. We aspire to create a more inclusive society where women and girls are empowered to exercise equal rights and have equitable access to opportunities, economic resources and decision-making, and live their lives free from all forms of conflict and insecurity, which are often exacerbated due to the impacts of climate change.

We are committed to enhancing the global knowledge and evidence base by funding research on the connections between climate justice, conflict and gender (published in September 2022). This has helped shape the strategic direction for our international climate and gender work.

The Scottish Government has also announced its intention to become a commitment maker under the Feminist Action for Climate Justice theme through the UN Women's Generation Equality Campaign.

Scotland's global outlook on climate justice is underpinned by our domestic action on tackling climate change. Scotland's landmark Climate Change Act is one of the most ambitious legislative frameworks for emissions reduction in the world, our next Climate Change Plan will include a measurable trajectory to 2040 on our path to Net Zero by 2045.

The Scottish Government's gender responsive climate action will build from our work on:

1. Addressing and reducing gendered impacts of climate change based on existing entrenched gender inequalities which are exacerbated by climate change.
 - a. In 2012 we launched the world's first Climate Justice Fund. We were also the first country to declare a climate emergency in 2019. At COP26⁷, Scotland became the first country in the Global North to pledge financial support to address Loss and Damage. At COP27 we again led the way, committing another £5 million for the neglected area of non-economic loss and damage, which recognises the [differential impacts of the climate crisis](#) on women and girls. And in September 2023 announcing a further £1 million programme to address loss and damage to be delivered through Scotland's Humanitarian Emergency Fund.
 - b. Our climate justice funding strives to minimise downstream reporting burdens, recognising the administrative strain of such reporting on small organisations representing the most marginalised, while maintaining the highest quality assurance standards.

⁵ Report from the IPCC Task Group on Gender [URL: [110520190810-Doc.-10-Rev.1TG-Gender.pdf \(ipcc.ch\)](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/task-force-on-gender-equality/)] [last accessed: 17 October 2023].

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Conference of the Parties – the main decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

- c. All our Climate Justice Fund programming is delivered through a participatory approach where the needs of communities are explicitly recognised.
 - d. We also recognise the importance of capacity sharing, which forms an important part of our Climate Just Communities programme, a flexible, multi-year programme which will allocate up to £24m in Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia over this parliament.
2. Enhancing women's participation in climate change policy and decision-making.
- a. For the last 5 years, we have funded the [Women's Environment & Development Organisation](#) (WEDO) to support the work of the Women's Delegate Fund, Gender Just Climate Solutions and the Gender Climate Tracker. Our funding also supports women from the Global South participating in climate COPs.
 - b. Recognising that people often face multiple barriers to inclusion in international processes, we supported the Climate Youth Negotiator programme and trained and supported young leaders to negotiate on behalf of their country at COP27.
 - c. At COP27, we announced the creation of a new Gender and Environment Programme at the University of Dundee. The Programme expands on the existing Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship Programme and is being delivered in partnership with civil society organisations. The Programme will give women Human Rights Defenders from the Global South the opportunity to spend several months in Scotland, where they can continue their work in a place of safety. Its focus will be on maintaining and building gender and environmental capacity.
3. Securing transformation to a just and inclusive global economy by taking steps towards a long-term goal for structural change that reduces inequalities.
- a. Through our support of WEDO, we also support indigenous women leaders to invest in and scale up climate solutions, for example the Gender Just Climate Solutions project which supports gender-responsive initiatives to scale up their projects.
4. Our Human Rights Bill is due to be introduced to the Scottish Parliament during the 2023/24 parliamentary year. We are considering how to progress the inclusion and recognition of the right to a healthy environment through this proposed Bill.

1.11 Focus 3: trade

In 2021, the Scottish Government published [Scotland's Vision for Trade](#) (the Vision). It sets out five principles that underpin our decisions on trade: wellbeing, inclusive growth, sustainability, net zero, and good governance. The Vision recognises the roles of women as workers, consumers, entrepreneurs, carers and public service users, and the barriers they face in participating and accessing the full benefits of international trade.

The Vision sets out underlying elements that could support the application of a feminist approach to trade, including a values-based approach and the positioning of trade within a broader economic, social and environmental context. The Vision connects international and domestic policy. For example, it highlights the importance of trade complementing domestic policy that aims to address gender inequality in Scotland. It also recognises the differential impacts of trade within Scotland, including within social groups according to gender, ethnicity, disability, and age, amongst other factors.

Our recently published [Annual Report](#) outlines the work we have taken over the last year, including engaging with a range of stakeholders to identify practical steps that the Scottish Government can take to put into practice those ambitions in the Vision that relate to a feminist approach to trade. We have also consistently called on the UK Government to take account of the impact of trade policy and trade deals on women in all their multifaceted roles.

In line with the evidence presented as part of developing Scotland's feminist approach and our engagement with other stakeholders on gender and trade, our focus on gender and international trade will include:

1. Promoting our principle-based approach as set out in the Vision for Trade to international partners and stakeholders, including highlighting our work on the differential impacts of trade on marginalised groups, including women, and the barriers they face in accessing the full benefits of international trade.
2. Pressing the UK Government to include gender chapters in all Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with trading partners, including identifying mechanisms to address any potential negative impacts of trade and the inclusion of structured consultation mechanisms that ensure women and representative groups are active participants and able to provide feedback on an ongoing basis.
3. Pressing for UK trade agreements to include gender-specific impact analyses, labour provisions on the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls, and strong monitoring and institutional support around these provisions.
4. Exploring other avenues to build our evidence base on gender and trade in Scotland, as part of our wider work on the differential impacts of trade, such as through further engagement with our stakeholders and the [Centre for Inclusive Trade Policy](#).
5. Identifying and reviewing policy levers available to the Scottish Government to mitigate or address the differential impacts of trade, including to widen underrepresented groups' access to the opportunities from trade. This includes identifying practical actions that the Scottish Government could take to increase the benefits of trade for women.

1.12 Focus 4: peace and security

As a good global citizen it is incumbent on the Scottish Government to demonstrate our own commitment to securing democracy, the rule of law and fundamental human rights – the vital underpinning of a feminist approach. We know conflict drives inequality and poverty, including [specific, gendered impacts on women and girls](#).

Scotland has a responsibility to lead by example and we will therefore introduce a new Human Rights Bill for Scotland during the 2023/24 parliamentary year. This will build on existing human rights and equality protections enshrined in the Scotland Act 1998, Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010, within the limits of devolved competence. It will seek to incorporate into Scots law, within the limits of devolved competence:

- ▶ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- ▶ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
- ▶ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; and
- ▶ International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We will seek to ensure the rights are incorporated in a way, within the limits of devolved competence, that creates and promotes a multi-institutional approach, provides a clear set of duties for public bodies, ensures they can be enjoyed and accessed by everyone without discrimination, and ensures there are routes to remedy available for when there has been an individual or systemic infringement of people's human rights.

In line with the evidence presented from gender peace and security stakeholders as part of developing Scotland's feminist approach, our focus on peace and security, will continue to:

1. Recognise the importance of equal participation in all efforts for the promotion of peace and security.
 - a. The Scottish Government supports female activists so they can be heard in policymaking and peace-building processes. This is delivered through the Women's Environment & Development Organisation and through our Climate Justice Fund and the Women in Conflict 1325 Fellowship.
2. Support Human Rights Defenders and civil society activists so that they can work to promote human rights, accountability and good governance.
 - a. We recognise the importance of the work of Human Rights Defenders in international policymaking and engagement.
 - b. We fund the Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship Programme, which offers Human Rights Defenders working in difficult conditions temporary respite and an opportunity to undertake research, further develop skills and build enhanced networks.
 - c. We will continue to learn from the experiences and expertise of Human Rights Defenders.
 - d. We will continue to encourage the UK Government to consult directly with Human Rights Defenders, including alumni of the Scottish Human Rights Defender Fellowship, and with Scottish civil society. We stand ready to assist in facilitating that engagement.
3. Continue to protect Scottish interests and values in our engagement with the UK Government on defence policy, an area which is fully reserved to the UK Government, including:
 - a. Pressing the UK Government in the strongest terms to refuse or suspend licenses when there is a risk that arms could be used to violate human rights.
 - b. Support the Ministry of Defence's Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach alongside encouraging other efforts to reduce the environmental impact of the UK's armed forces.
 - c. Remain firmly opposed to the threat and use of nuclear weapons, pursuing the safe and complete withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from Scotland.
4. Work with local community-led organisations and partners to support migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum, including through:
 - a. The [New Scots refugee integration strategy](#), which sets out Scotland's approach to welcoming and supporting refugees and people seeking asylum, including in relation to social, cultural and economic activities and sets out a framework to support integration. The Scottish Government has committed to work with partners to refresh the strategy.
 - b. Funding for organisations supporting migrants including Worker Support Centre and Talent Beyond Boundaries.
5. Seek to influence the UK Government to take a progressive stance on immigration and asylum matters, which are currently fully reserved to the UK Government.
 - a. Our ambition includes providing an evidence base to lobby UK Government to ensure asylum seekers in Scotland have the opportunity to work to improve their integration and general wellbeing and demonstrate the wider benefits to an inclusive society.
 - b. The Scottish Government has been clear on its position in response to the Illegal Migration Act 2023, prior to that the Nationality and Borders Act 2022, and in a number of reserved policy areas which impact people living in Scotland.
 - c. [Migration: Helping Scotland Prosper](#) sets out how a tailored migration policy, within a UK framework, could operate to meet Scotland's distinct needs.
 - d. We are committed to introducing a Talent Attraction and Migration Service, providing immigration information and advice to employers looking to attract talent to Scotland as well as supporting people considering Scotland, from across the UK and abroad, as a place to live and work.

Next Steps

1.13 Framework for delivery

The [National Performance Framework](#) (NPF) is Scotland's wellbeing framework. Through 11 National Outcomes, it sets out the kind of Scotland it aims to create. The NPF measures progress on these Outcomes and brings together environmental, social, economic and cultural measures of success.

The National Outcomes:

- ▶ Reflect the values and aspirations of the people of Scotland;
- ▶ Are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs); and
- ▶ Help track progress in reducing inequality.

Scotland was one of the first countries to commit to the UN SDGs, which includes the goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. The Scottish Government is committed to tackling poverty and inequality both at home and abroad to promote fair and sustainable growth. Our integration of the SDGs into the NPF underlines our ambition to make the SDGs a fundamental part of the work we do as a government.

The Scottish Government's international work builds strategic relationships to promote Scotland's strengths and values internationally, directly contributing to the National Performance Framework outcome "We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally". Our feminist approach to international relations will support the delivery of domestic policy objectives as we continue to project the values we espouse on the global stage.

We will ensure the outcomes from our feminist approach to international relations are mapped onto the NPF National Outcomes. We will seek to ensure that monitoring and evaluation provides the information required to understand progress towards our outcomes, the impact of the policy and its impact on other National Outcomes and SDGs.

The National Outcomes are currently being reviewed to ensure that the NPF reflects the ambition of communities in Scotland. The review is ongoing and is due to conclude in 2024.

1.14 Ongoing collaborative approach

In line with our commitment to be participatory and accountable, we will establish a standing civil society feedback mechanism to guide us as we seek to implement a feminist approach. We will continue to look for innovative ways to break down barriers, to harness a diverse range of voices and ideas across Scotland and beyond to drive change.

We will explore opportunities to use the mechanism of our Global South Advisory Panel to harness Global South expertise. Our panel was established through our review of our approach to international development to provide ongoing Global South expertise and advice in relation to the Scottish Government's international development policy and programming. We will work with the Panel and our other partners in the Global South to consider the future purpose, structure and remit of the Panel, including how it could be used to provide a Global South consultation mechanism in relation to Scotland's feminist approach to international relations.

1.15 Further recommendations

This publication has focused on the overarching recommendations shaping the principles of Scotland's Feminist Approach to International Relations. Our commitment to a feminist approach demonstrates both our ambition and our current priorities. There is more we can do to drive transformative change through our feminist approach to international relations. As a next step we will consider the further recommendations made on the four broad themes of international development and humanitarian, trade, climate justice, and peace and security.

As with the recommendations covered in this publication, these thematic recommendations will be considered against the following four criteria:

- ▶ The recommendation does not duplicate work already underway;
- ▶ The Scottish Government has the legal competence to progress the recommendation;
- ▶ Existing independent evidence supports the adoption of the recommendation; and
- ▶ The recommendation is feasible to progress in terms of available resource, capacity and delivery mechanisms.

Recommendations meeting these criteria will feed into further development of our feminist approach to international relations. This process ensures we are prioritising our work appropriately and assigning resources to where they will make the most difference.

1.16 Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning

The Scottish Government is committed to continuous improvement, evidence-based decision-making, and stakeholder participation and engagement. Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) helps to:

- ▶ Ensure accountability and transparency⁸;
- ▶ Manage risk and uncertainty;
- ▶ Improve current interventions by providing evidence to make better decisions
- ▶ Gain a general understanding of what works, for whom and when, and generate examples for future policymaking; and
- ▶ Develop evidence to inform future interventions.

In line with our feminist approach to international relations, we will seek to make the monitoring and evaluation process inclusive and collaborative. We will engage with relevant stakeholders, including those impacted by our policies, to build this active participation into our approach. We will also aim for our MEAL process to challenge power structures, enabling us to learn from mistakes and question assumptions.

The Scottish Government is accountable to the people of Scotland through its Parliament. Our feminist approach to international relations also recognises a moral accountability to those outwith Scotland, in particular communities in the Global South. We will support this by sharing information, supporting accessible participation and ensuring appropriate monitoring and feedback mechanisms.

We are committed to undertaking regular, proportionate and robust monitoring and evaluation. As our feminist approach to international relations continues to evolve, we will seek to identify specific commitments and be realistic about how long it takes to achieve cultural, social, economic and other types of change. We will publish a detailed monitoring and evaluation framework which will be based on the discussions and dialogue, once the multi-criteria analysis of the thematic recommendations has been concluded.

8 HM Treasury and Evaluation Task Force (2011) The Magenta Book [[URL: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-magenta-book)] [Last Accessed: 2 November 2023]



© Crown copyright 2023

OGL

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-598-2 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, November 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1355022 (11/23)

w w w . g o v . s c o t