

COUNTING SEX WORKERS IN

Feminist Foreign Policies

“It's not feminist if it's not inclusive of sex workers”



ABOUT FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY

Against a backdrop of growing economic injustice, authoritarianism, and climate destruction, the momentum around feminist foreign policy offers an important opportunity to respond to pressing global issues. While there is no internationally agreed definition of feminist foreign policy, for the purpose of this factsheet we use ICRW's definition :

Feminist foreign policy “prioritises peace, gender equality and environmental integrity; enshrines, promotes, and protects the human rights of all; seeks to disrupt colonial, racist, patriarchal and male-dominated power structures; and allocates significant resources, including research, to achieve that vision. Feminist foreign policy is coherent in its approach across all its levers of influence... co-created with feminist activists, groups and movements, at home and abroad.”¹



WHO IS COMMITTED TO FEMINIST FOREIGN POLICY?

The number of countries that have committed to a form of feminist foreign policy keeps growing. Early 2023 the list includes: Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Luxembourg, Germany, Chile, Colombia, Liberia and the Netherlands. Sweden pioneered feminist foreign policy in 2014 but revoked it shortly after their new cabinet was formed in 2022.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE POLICIES

In practice, policy and agenda-setting processes usually do not count in sex workers and other structurally excluded groups.² For a feminist foreign policy to be truly inclusive and deliver on its transformative potential, rhetoric must be matched by feminist practice. This requires securing the rights of structurally excluded groups. Sex workers are poorly recognised in existing feminist foreign policy frameworks and yet are directly affected by foreign policies.



Governments that commit to a feminist foreign policy can and must do better and make real their SDG commitment to ‘leave no one behind’. This means **recognising sex workers as an important constituency when developing and implementing new policies and frameworks. They must also take concrete steps to ensure sex workers are meaningfully included every step of the way, in the spirit of “nothing about us without us”.**

1. ICRW defining feminist foreign policy: - a 2021 update : (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/4062/2016/en/>)

2. CMI! defines structurally excluded groups as those facing multiple, intersecting injustices, including but not limited to: women and girls with disabilities, sex workers, and lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) women and girls. CMI!'s partners are all 'self-led': led by the constituencies of structurally excluded women and girls that they work on behalf of.

COUNT ME IN!

Recommendations

Elements of an inclusive feminist foreign policy

APPROACH

- * Be grounded in a human rights-based approach that recognises, promotes, protects and fulfils the rights of structurally excluded groups including sex workers of all genders.³
- * Actively contribute to destigmatise sex work. As a starting point, this means avoiding stigmatising and harmful terminology.⁴
- * Recognise the personal autonomy of people and their right to self-determination over their body, life, work, identity and sexuality.
- * Adopt an intersectional approach that considers gender alongside race, class, caste, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, (dis)ability and any other relevant factor.
- * Take an inclusive approach that goes beyond binary understandings of gender to include non-binary, gender non-conforming, trans and intersex people.
- * Challenge colonial and neo-colonial legacies in order to guard against the reproduction of harmful systems of oppression.
- * Allow for the free movement, safety and dignity of people fleeing violence and oppression of all kinds.
- * Call for decriminalisation of sex work as the best way to secure the health and rights of all sex workers.

POLICY COHERENCE

Ensure consistency and coherence between domestic and foreign policies. For instance, insufficiently protecting the rights of groups such as sex workers within some countries undermines credibility to advocate for those same rights elsewhere.

RESOURCING

Resource the most underfunded women, and support sex workers organisations of all gender, across funding programme areas. Less than 1% of human rights funding from foundations is directed towards sex workers rights, and there are many sex worker-led groups that function with no or too little funding.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN POLICY AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

- * Be co-created with, informed and monitored by inclusive civil society and movements, including sex workers.
- * Result in radically transformed societies by addressing and transforming the root causes of oppression.
- * Ensure that State programmes and services do not discriminate on the basis of country of origin or work.



For additional fact sheets and more resources on sex worker rights, visit: cmiconsortium.org



CMI recommends these key elements based on conversations with sex workers



3. See also: Amnesty International Policy on state obligations to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of sex workers :

4. See, for example, ESWA's letter to Members of the European Parliament for more explanation: amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/4062/2016/en/eswalliance.org/open_letter_of_coalition_on_sex_workers_rights_and_inclusion_to_members_of_the_european_parliament_re_vaw_report_and_prostitution_report