

Dutch civil society's recommendations (concept)

69th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and Beijing+30



The year 2025 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The forthcoming CSW69 will focus on the review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action (BPFa) over the past 30 years. What progress has been made in the past 5 years? And what challenges lie ahead?

In recent years, progress on gender equality has been made globally in several areas, such as education and the share of women in politics. The Netherlands has seen progress on the representation of women in top positions in large companies, the abolition of the mandatory minimum reflection period for abortion and the National Action Programme to combat sexually transgressive behaviour and sexual violence (*Nationaal Actieprogramma Aanpak seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag en seksueel geweld*).

In many areas, however, progress has been slow and uneven, stagnating or even backsliding. According to latest Global Gender Gap Index (2024), no single country has yet managed to close the gender gap. Since measurement began in 2006, gender equality has increased by merely 0.1% globally. At the current rate, it will take another 134 years to close the global gender gap. In 43.8% of the 146 participating countries, the gender gap is actually increasing.ⁱ Only 2% of the EU population lives in a country where the gender gap is more than 80% closed (Sweden).ⁱⁱ According to the SDG Gender Index 2024, no country is on track to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 5 for gender equality. Without gender equality, 74% of the SDG goals cannot be met. Reducing the gender gap could have brought the world up to \$12 trillion in economic growth between 2015 and 2025.ⁱⁱⁱ

The world faces significant challenges. We are facing multiple, mutually reinforcing crises, including a climate crisis and related disasters, the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the risk of other global pandemics, armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. Such crises impact women and girls unequally and exacerbate existing inequalities.

Digital developments and new technologies have a major impact on gender equality and the rights of women and girls. It offers opportunities, such as access to information, education and services, and opportunities to organize and speak out. At the same time, it also brings risks. For example, algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI) and the spread of mis- and disinformation reinforce existing gender bias, and these developments create new (expressive) forms of discrimination, exclusion and gender-based violence.

Globally, liberal democracies and international cooperation and treaties are under pressure from the normalization of conservative, far-right, nationalist and anti-gender movements that restrict the basic human rights and freedoms of women and girls. This is especially true for women and girls who are also excluded and disadvantaged on the basis of other characteristics, such as migrant women, black women, women with disabilities, lbtqi+ women, etc. Also in the Netherlands. As a result, the agenda for women's rights and gender equality is increasingly under pressure, there is less space and funding for civil society organizations working towards this goal, and the safety of women human rights defenders (WHRDs) is at risk. **Accelerated implementation of the BPfA and subsequent agreed commitments is essential to prevent further deterioration and is crucial to achieving the SDGs by 2030.**

Dutch civil society therefore calls for a political outcome document for Beijing+30/CSW69 that not only reaffirms but further strengthens the commitments made by governments in Beijing in 1995 and since then at CSW and related processes. We call on the Netherlands and all other states and actors to take **direct transformative action and implementation** of the existing international commitments and treaties in the area of human rights and gender equality, including BPfA, CEDAW, UNSCR 1325, ICPD Platform for Action, ILO Conventions, the Istanbul Convention, COP, UN Convention on Disability, etc., whereby they should be **mutually reinforcing**.

The recommendations below are based on the recommendations of Dutch civil society for CSW65 to 68, Beijing+20 and Beijing+25, the most recent CEDAW and GREVIO shadow reports^{iv v}, the NGO Review Report Beijing+20^{vi} and consultations with a diverse group of organisations and individuals from Dutch civil society. We would like to emphasise that the previous recommendations from civil society remain as relevant, topical and urgent as ever.

General principle: leave no one behind

Women and girls¹ are not a homogenous group. Recognition of this diversity is crucial to the outcome documents of CSW69. There are large groups of marginalised women and girls who face multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination. They are disproportionately affected. It is important that the outcome document recognises how gender norms, roles and stereotypes contribute to gender inequality. And that they have an additional, disproportionate impact on women, girls and gender non-conforming individuals when this intersects with other characteristics, positions or identities, such as having a disability, refugee or migrant status, indigenous origin, single motherhood, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, being a human rights activist or sex worker.

To ensure that no one is left behind, we call on the Dutch government to:

- Take these different factors into account when implementing the BPfA to ensure that all women, girls and gender non-conforming persons can participate and reach their full potential.

¹ In this document, we refer to women, girls and gender non-conforming persons of all religions, ethnicities, classes, sexual orientations, gender characteristics, indigenous origins, employment status, HIV and health conditions, gender identities and expressions and with and without disabilities. Regardless of where they live and any other status that may affect how they live.

- Recognise women and girls in all their diversity, including various forms of identities, households and families² and the associated differences in starting positions and needs, and ensure the protection of the rights of *all* individuals.
- Recognize the importance of language in the CSW process and in political processes in general. To address the root causes of gender inequality, 'gender' and 'gender equality' must be explicitly named, as well as specific groups as named above. Non-binary and inclusive language should be promoted.
- Ensure that the Beijing+30 and CSW process is accessible to the most diverse group of civil society (women's) organisations and youth, including in the preparation and during the negotiations, so that as many voices of women and girls as possible are heard.
- Ensure sufficient funding for the full implementation of existing international human rights and gender equality commitments and treaties and to call on other member states to do so.

1. Counter gender stereotypes and root causes of gender inequality through an intersectional, gender transformative and inclusive approach

A gender transformative and intersectional approach emphasizes the autonomy and agency of women and girls in all their diversity. The root causes of gender inequality, unequal power relations and multiple forms of discrimination, marginalization and exclusion must be addressed to ensure that no one is left behind. Without gender justice, economic justice, climate justice and social justice are not possible.

- Implement gender transformative, intersectional and inclusive approaches in all (policy) domains and at all levels (international, national and local) and ensure policy coherence across all domains and sectors. Make gender equality and anti-discrimination an integral policy goal with associated targets and indicators at all stages of the policy cycle.
- Prevent policies, programs and taxes from negatively impacting gender equality and human rights. Ensure that policies help break down existing unjust power structures and exclusionary mechanisms. In managing and responding to (climate) crises and disasters, take into account their unequal impact on girls and women in all their diversity.
- Ensure that (new) technologies and innovations are gender transformative and inclusive and that they counteract and prevent existing inequality and gender bias, including by mandating Gender Impact Assessments and Gender Equality Plans and co-creative methods as a condition of funding.
- Combat gender stereotypes. Recognize and emphasize that gender stereotypes are socially and culturally constructed and rooted in historically and structurally unequal power relations. Gender stereotypes affect people's personal and public lives and perpetuate gender inequality. Traditions, beliefs and social norms should not be an excuse for weakening international conventions and treaties.
- Recognise and value the unique and essential contribution of women and girls in all their diversity to the prosperity and well-being of society and focus on the returns to investment in gender equality for a more socially just society. Recognise women and girls in all their diversity as agents of change and value the knowledge of local communities and indigenous groups.
- Recognise that gender justice is a shared responsibility of women and men. An active role and responsibility of men and boys is crucial.

² Such as singles, single-parent families, composite families and same sex couples.

- Recognize and combat sexism, racism, xenophobia, afrophobia, transphobia and other forms of intolerance against marginalized groups by actively countering misinformation and disinformation and (online) hate campaigns, combating intersectional forms of discrimination and setting a standard. Governments and politicians have an active responsibility and exemplary role in this as guardians of the democratic rule of law.
- Ensure a globally just economic system. End tax evasion and tax benefits for multinationals so that countries can use these tax revenues to fight poverty and invest in education and healthcare and in achieving the SDGs.

2. Countering (online and technology-facilitated) sexual and gender-based violence (SGGG) and discrimination

SGGG is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations, affecting women and girls in all their diversity. One in eight women and girls aged 15-49 have experienced sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner in the past year; in some countries it is as high as one in three. SGGG is linked to poverty, and the risk of SGGG and trafficking increases in (the aftermath of) conflicts, wars and climatic disasters, such as displacement. When women and girls have access to the Internet, they are more likely to experience digital violence, such as sexual harassment, (physical) intimidation and cyberstalking. Economic violence, such as not being allowed to work or have access to a bank account and financial oppression are forms of SGGG.

- Use legally binding international conventions, including CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention and ILO Convention 190 to hold governments accountable and encourage ratification and implementation of these conventions at all levels.
- Ensure a more coherent, integrated and gender-responsive policy strategy to sustainably prevent and combat (online) SGGG and discrimination. Make efforts to implement the recommendations of GREVIO and CEDAW.
- Develop policies and programmes that address the risk factors and root causes of SGGG. These should explicitly address the role of men and boys in preventing SGGG, counter gender stereotypes and unequal power relations, and promote positive social norms.
- Guarantee access to gender-sensitive, preventive health care and safe access to shelters for people of all gender identities. Governments should also ensure that SGGG can be reported through safe, accessible, confidential and supportive (legal) services that meet the needs of victims. Ensure the promotion of knowledge and awareness of gender-based violence among institutions, employers, aid and care agencies, police and judiciary.
- Ensure inclusive, evidence-based and scientifically accurate sexuality education and training on sexuality, healthy and respectful relationships, gender diversity, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), HIV/AIDS and human rights for both boys and girls in all curricula, at all levels and across the life course, to prevent SGGG.
- Protect groups at additional risk, such as (female) activists, politicians, journalists, human rights defenders, gender equality and LGBTQA+ rights and indigenous group habitat defenders, Women Human Rights Defenders, and sex workers from (online) SGGG and persecution.

3. Ensure full, meaningful and effective participation

Women, girls and youth in all their diversity must have immediate access to tools and resources that enable their full, meaningful and effective participation in decision-making at all levels. This

includes women's full and meaningful participation in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and rebuilding societies. As such, they can shape a better future for all.

- Guarantee gender balance in decision-making and meaningful representation in all institutions and at all levels (local, national and international), including in leadership positions. Break down legal, economic, social and cultural barriers to participation, by countering gender stereotypes and social norms, discrimination and exclusion; ensuring a safe working environment; access to information, networks and funding; (re)recognising, reducing, revaluing and redistributing unpaid work, among others.
- Implement effective measures to promote participation and representation (including monitoring, enforcement and sanctions for non-compliance), such as: gender quotas and gender equality training; role models; mentoring; and arrangements to combine work and care (including flexible working hours and workplaces; maternity, paternity and parental leave; and accessible, affordable and quality childcare).
- Close the digital gender gap and facilitate and strengthen equal, free and fair access for women and girls in all their diversity to knowledge, resources, funding, institutions and services (public and financial).
- Invest in quality education for women and girls in all their diversity and at all stages of life, including evidence-based sexuality education and education on sexual and reproductive health and rights to prevent SGGG, forced (child) labour, financial dependency and poverty, among others.
- Respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, autonomy, privacy, security, participation in democracy, the right to association and demonstration and the protection of human rights of women and girls in all their diversity, both online and offline and without barriers and discrimination.
- Increase and guarantee sustainable and predictable funding for human rights, gender equality, youth and youth-led, and feminist organisations.
- Recognise the crucial role of women in conflict prevention, peace negotiations and reconstruction. Ensure meaningful participation of women in peace negotiations and reconstruction, implement the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda and work towards global disarmament and peace.

4. Invest in intersectional, gender-disaggregated data, analysis and reporting

Collecting, analysing, reporting and applying representative, gender-disaggregated and intersectional data and statistics is crucial for understanding the root causes of gender inequality and for designing and implementing effective and just policies and measures to prevent and counter inequality.

- Call on member states to collect, analyse and report high-quality, representative, gender-disaggregated and intersectional data and statistics – while ensuring privacy and human rights. These data should be publicly available for use by researchers, civil society organisations and the media.
- Develop and implement internationally standardised methods for data collection, analysis and reporting so that consistent, representative and high-quality data and statistics can be collected and compared across different levels and over time.
- Measure, analyse and report the causes and underlying factors of intersectional gender inequality, by explicitly addressing differences and inequalities in roles, activities, needs,

situations, opportunities and rights, gender stereotypes, cultural norms, power relations and discrimination of women and girls in all their diversity.

- Measure, monitor and evaluate the (unequal) impact of policies and interventions on women and girls in all their diversity, and in particular on the most marginalised groups.

Civil society participation

Finally, Dutch civil society is concerned about the shrinking space and (financial) support for civil society in the Netherlands and the (increasingly) limited access for CSOs in the CSW and other UN processes. We see the review year of 30 years of implementation of the Beijing agenda and the new commitment made at the Summit of the Future for a “revitalization of the CSW” as an opportunity for the Netherlands to revise the methods of work within the CSW and ensure meaningful participation of civil society, including by encouraging NGO and youth representatives as part of every delegation and the possibility for CSO representatives who are not part of a delegation to be able to follow the negotiations (physically or online).

Sources:

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^{vi} Atria kennisinstituut voor emancipatie en vrouwengeschiedenis, WO=MEN, & Nederlandse Vrouwen Raad (2015). *NGO review report Beijing+20*. Amsterdam/Den Haag. Available here:

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