

February 2015

NGO Review Report Beijing+20

WOMEN are AGENTS of CHANGE

The 2015 Dutch Civil Society review of the national & international critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action



Introduction

This year, 2015, will mark 20 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) was adopted by Member States of the United Nations, including the Netherlands, at the Fourth World Conference on Women, and 20 years of policy development and implementation for gender equality. Recently, the Dutch government presented the national review of its achievements as part of the international agenda-setting process, Beijing+20.

Dutch civil society is also working hard towards empowerment and equal rights for women, both nationally and internationally. Since the last review in 2009, it has operated in a challenging context of fewer resources and increasing risks. This report describes the contributions of Dutch civil society to the implementation of the BPfA, and also looks at Dutch policy and implementation, addressing the questions: what was the proposed policy? Its goals and achievements? What are the lessons learned from our point of view? And the crucial matter: what are the recommendations that we draw from our analysis? By addressing these questions, this report is an invaluable addition to the government's national review.

The report is the result of a joint venture of a wide variety of (international) non-government organizations ((I) NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), research institutes, networks and individuals. It provides a good picture of the current situation of gender equality in the Netherlands, without claiming to be comprehensive.

The overall conclusion of the report is that **women are agents of change**. A comprehensive effort has been made to take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women, trafficking and child abuse, including female genital mutilation (FGM). Empowerment of women and girls is crucial in development, which is shown in the various case studies provided throughout the report. But there is also a need for men to have an active role to work towards gender equality at all levels of society, politics and the media. Good accountability requires more and specific gender budgeting, as well as gender mainstreaming. The overall observation is that an integrated approach towards gender equality will only succeed through better integration and implementation of all kinds of plans, treaties and policies.

Each critical area of the BPfA has been reviewed by one organization or individual with profound expertise in the specific area, in consultation with other actors who contributed towards its implementation. As Dutch policy focuses on national as well as international implementation, nearly every area is covered in two separate chapters. This has resulted in a rich document, each section written from the viewpoint of experienced experts.

We would like to praise and thank all contributors who made this report possible. The coordinators of the report invite its readers to share their experiences and are willing to answer your questions.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ABD	Algemene Bestuursdienst (Dutch senior civil service)
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil society organization
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FLOW	Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women
INGO	International non-government organization
IOB	Inspectie Ontwikkelingssamenwerking en Beleidsevaluatie (Policy and Operations Evaluation Department)
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-government organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIM	Studie- en Informatiecentrum Mensenrechten (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights)
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WHO	World Health Organization

Human Rights of Women (Area 9)

National

Author: Catherine Bij de Vaate, Atria

Proposed policy and goals

In the Dutch government report, the EU indicators for the BPfA developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) are used as starting points for the review. There are indicators for all areas, except area I: Human Rights of Women. Indicators for this area have not yet been developed.¹

Confronted with the absence of a recognized structure in the review of this area, we propose an alternative. We go back to the source, the strategic objectives of the BPfA.

The BPfA's three strategic objectives for the human rights of women are to:

- * promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- * ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice; and
- * achieve legal literacy.²

The Netherlands recognizes that women's rights are human rights. In 1991 it ratified CEDAW, which assumes a crucial position with regard to women's human rights, as mentioned in the BPfA.³ The Dutch government has a clear duty to protect and promote women's human rights and ensure equality and non-discrimination in law and practice. It is, therefore, positive that the *Memorandum Outlining Points on Women's Equality 2013–2016*, describing Dutch gender equality policy, explicitly acknowledges that women's rights are human rights, which should continuously be monitored and protected.⁴

Still, it is possible that women's human rights may be hindered by inconsistency between human rights policy and other Dutch policy, resulting in an undermining of women's legal position. It is, therefore, crucial to check all kinds of (policy) areas from a gender and/or women's human rights perspective – and not to restrict women's human rights to certain topics such as violence against women.⁵

Furthermore, according to CEDAW, the Dutch government has an obligation to safeguard women's human rights not only before the law but also in policy(making). Take the example of the present

1 <http://eige.europa.eu/content/women-and-men-in-the-eu-facts-and-figures>

2 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/human.htm>

3 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/human.htm#object1>

4 Hoofdlijnenbrief Emancipatiebeleid 2013–2016, May 2013, p. 1: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/05/10/hoofdlijnenbrief-emancipatie-beleid-2013-2016.html>

5 For input on violence against women in this report, we refer to critical area D: Violence against Women

decentralization, reforms and budget cuts in care and social policy coming into force in 2015: if they disproportionately affect women, then these policies are contradicting CEDAW.

Results

Several milestones were achieved over the last few years with regard to human rights in the Netherlands. The crucial question is whether and to what extent a gender perspective was considered in these (policy) developments.

2012: Netherlands Institute for Human Rights

By ratifying international human rights treaties, the Netherlands has accepted international supervision of its human rights policy through UN bodies. During the elections to become a member of the UN Human Rights Council (2006) the Netherlands promised to set up a national human rights institute. The Dutch Parliament approved the law in 2011, and in October 2012 the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights was established.⁶ The existing Equal Treatment Commission was incorporated into the new institute.⁷

2014: A-status

The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights acquired the so-called A-status in May 2014. It means that the Institute meets the required quality criteria for human rights institutes worldwide according to the Paris principles adopted in 1993 by the UN. Institutes with the A-status have a broad mandate to protect human rights, are independent from the government and have a pluralistic structure, sufficient (financial) means and research capacity. This A-status allows the Institute to participate fully in meetings of the UN Human Rights Council and other UN supervisory bodies.⁸

Annual reports on human rights in the Netherlands

The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights explains, monitors and protects human rights, promotes respect for human rights (including equal treatment) in practice, policy and legislation, and increases the awareness of human rights in the Netherlands.⁹ It does this through research, advice, information provision and the individual assessment of cases of discrimination. The institute reports annually on the situation related to human rights in the Netherlands.

6 Amended bill on the establishment of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights (Netherlands Institute for Human Rights Act), April 2011: <http://mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/detail/17477>

7 The most important reason cited for the incorporation of the Equal Treatment Commission into the new institute is that the principle of equality is not just an independent human right but also an important component of all the other human rights. It is not possible, after all, to observe human rights and discriminate at the same time. See <http://mensenrechten.nl/questions-and-answers>

8 <http://www.mensenrechten.nl/berichten/college-krijgt-de-a-status> and <http://mensenrechten.nl/questions-and-answers>

9 <http://www.mensenrechten.nl/mission-and-ambition>

Crucial consultation of and cooperation with diverse (gender equality) stakeholders

The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights is consulting stakeholders, cooperating with them and gathering information from the field. This consultation and cooperation with women and gender equality NGOs with regard to human rights is crucial to bring women into the focus of human rights concerns.¹⁰

2013: first Dutch National Action Plan for Human Rights

In its annual reports, the Netherlands Human Rights Institutes urged the government for a National Action Plan for Human Rights. The first Dutch National Action Plan for Human Rights was launched on 10 December 2013 by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.¹¹ The human rights of women were specifically mentioned in the first National Action Plan. This is a good start, but it is strongly recommended to develop this area further in the future and to involve women and gender equality NGOs in the process.

Lessons learned

Consultation of and cooperation between government and women's and gender equality NGOs

To ensure the integration of a gender perspective, it is crucial that women's and gender equality NGOs are (more) involved – and at an early stage – in the networks and processes around diverse reports and policymaking with regard to human rights, such as the National Action Plan for Human Rights or the UN Universal Periodic Review.

Discrimination on the basis of pregnancy and motherhood at work denounced thanks to 'watchdog'

In 2012 the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights presented a report on pregnancy and maternity discrimination at work. The study reveals that 45% of the women who became mothers and worked and/or applied for a job between 2007 and 2011 experienced a situation that involved possible discrimination. Following a recommendation of the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment announced in 2014 that discrimination because of pregnancy and motherhood will be taken into account in the policymaking/measures against discrimination at work. It is important to have a 'watchdog' among NGOs which critically follows the government's performance on women's human rights and which can provide politicians and policy makers with sound facts and figures.

Discrimination of domestic workers in social security legislation and labour legislation

Only sections of the social security legislation and labour legislation are applicable to domestic workers who are employed for less than four days by the same private employer. As a result, they are in a less favourable position than other employees. The Convention of the International

Labour Organization (ILO Convention No. 189) protects the rights of domestic workers. ILO Convention No. 189 should be ratified as soon as possible and all necessary measures should be taken to implement this Convention, in order to ensure that domestic workers have access to the social security system on the same footing as other employees.¹²

Dependent right of residence of migrant women

Migrant women who come to join their families in the Netherlands do not have an independent legal position. They are given a dependent right of residence, i.e. they are their husband's dependant. To be eligible for an independent permit, they must have lived with their partner for a certain number of years. As mentioned in previous Beijing NGO-Reports: "CEDAW has still not been completely complied with in terms of the Independent Right of Residence. This has far-reaching consequences for migrant women and particularly for the victims of domestic violence. Their dependent right of residence means that they are practically compelled to remain with their violent partners because they are afraid that they will be unable to acquire independent right of residence. Although domestic violence is recognized by the government as grounds for granting independent right of residence, it is absolutely no guarantee of success".¹³ It is a great concern that in 2012 the number of years necessary to be eligible for an independent permit was increased from three to five years.

Recommendations

Intersectional approach

Take into account the diversity and differences between women in terms of age, disability, ethnic background, level of education etc. Pay special attention to the human rights of migrant women.

Decentralization and reforms in care and social policy

The decentralization and reforms of care and social policy developed over the past few years will largely come into force in 2015. Several NGOs have already warned of negative effects on women's em-

10 Hoofdlijnenbrief Emancipatiebeleid 2013–2016, May 2013, p.1: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/05/10/hoofdlijnenbrief-emancipatie-beleid-2013-2016.html>

11 <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/nieuws/2013/12/10/kabinet-brengt-voor-het-eerst-een-nederlands-nationaal-actieplan-mensenrechten-uit-het-gaat-goed-alertheid-blijft-geboden.html>

12 Human Rights in The Netherlands - Summary and recommendations of the Annual Status Report 2013. July, 2014. Published by The Netherlands institute for Human Rights
13 The Beijing + 5 NGO-Report of the Netherlands, Platform Actieplan 2000. E-Quality: Den Haag (1999)

ployment and over-representation of women (especially those with a low level of education) in unpaid informal care for the elderly and the sick, and plead for (more) gender-sensitive policy-making.¹⁴ Therefore, monitor the implementation of policy and its consequences for men and women. Tackle the gender-stereotyped division of unpaid (care) work. Additionally, monitor whether and how far the care-sector employment plan translates into concrete positive results for women's employment.¹⁵ Monitor especially whether women in the (home)care sector, once dismissed, are employed again but with a weaker legal status and lower remuneration (as so-called 'alfahulps').

Women's human rights at local level (municipalities)

By presenting the National Action Plan for Human Rights, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights highlighted the government's responsibility for the realization of human rights at the local level of municipalities, especially through the decentralization and reforms of care and social policy.¹⁶ Make local politicians and local policy-makers aware that they have their own responsibility to respect international agreements such as CEDAW. Train them on how to integrate a (women's) human rights perspective into their work and local policy. Share good practices.

NGO cases

Maternity benefit for self-employed females

Self-employed females who were pregnant between August 1st, 2004 and June 4th, 2008 could not receive maternity benefits in The Netherlands. This is contradicting CEDAW Article 11.2. In February 2014, the CEDAW committee ruled in an individual complaint procedure of 6 Dutch women that self-employed females who were pregnant between 2004 and 2008 should still receive maternity benefits.¹⁷ The 6 complainants were supported by Proefprocessenfonds Clara Wichmann. www.clara-wichmann.nl/ However, on September 19th, 2014 the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment informed Parliament that the recommendations of the CEDAW committee will not be followed and that no allowances would be paid to these women.¹⁸ On the initiative of the Nederlands Juristen Comité voor de Mensenrechten, Proefprocessenfonds Clara Wichmann and the Vereniging Vrouw en Recht

organized in December 2014 a seminar to discuss the complaint procedure and the needed follow up steps.¹⁹

For recent developments, see Vereniging voor Vrouw en Recht www.vrouwenrecht.nl

Bringing human rights home: human rights action at the local level²⁰

In 2011 a few organizations decided to cooperate to exchange knowledge and good practices with regard to bringing human rights into local policy. To become more effective, the informal network decided in 2013 to continue its efforts under the name Netwerk Mensenrechten Lokaal (Network for Human Rights at Local Level).²¹

Proefprocessenfonds Clara Wichman and the Dutch political party SGP

Lilian Janse-van der Weele from Vlissingen was the first woman in the Dutch political party SGP to be able to use her passive electoral right: she became a candidate for a seat on the city council in August 2013. She was elected as the first female representative of the SGP during the municipal elections of March 2014. Thanks to the year-long strategic litigation of many Dutch NGOs, especially the Dutch Proefprocessenfonds the SGP stopped denying its women members the right to use their passive voting rights. The case was even brought to the European Court of Human Rights, which decided in 2012 that the political party was not allowed to exclude female candidates, on the grounds of religion.²²

Platform Article 19

Platform Article 19 is a cooperation platform of several Dutch NGOs working together on the issue of equal treatment and combating discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. The basic principle behind Platform Article 19 is that all opponents of discrimination should work together for a higher level of protection of rights (and not compete with one another, with the risk of reducing protection or causing inequality between different grounds for discrimination).

14 <http://www.nederlandsevroutenraad.nl/html/index.php?paginaID=2478> and Atria (2014) *De nieuwe mantelzorger v/m; Bouwstenen voor een gendersensitief mantelzorg beleid*, Amsterdam: Atria.

15 The care-sector employment plan aims at providing training, upgrading of skills and retraining courses for laid-off people to keep them in the labour market. It was approved and launched in February 2014 by the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment.

16 <http://www.mensenrechten.nl/berichten/mensenrechten-nederland-%E2%80%93-10-april-tweede-kamer>

17 Vereniging voor Vrouw en Recht (2014) *CEDAW: staat moet zwangere zelfstandigen zonder uitkering compenseren*. Consulted on 17 September 2014. Available on: <http://www.vrouwenrecht.nl/2014/04/01/cedaw-staat-moet-zwangere-zelfstandigen-zonder-uitkering-compenseren/>

18 Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (2014). Brief van de minister van SZW: Opvattingen CEDAW over zwangerschaps- en bevallingsuitkering van vrouwelijke zelfstandigen. 2014Z16125. Available on: http://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail.jsp?id=2014Z16125&did=2014D32782

19 <http://www.vrouwenrecht.nl/2014/11/26/11489/>

20 Statement by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, at the 20th Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, 2011

21 <http://www.mensenrechtenlokaal.nl/>

22 <http://www.clara-wichmann.nl/proefprocessen/2002/sgp-zaak>

Human Rights of Women (Area 9)

International

Author: Joke Oranje, Peace Brigades International

A major change noticed in the Netherlands and worldwide is a change in attitude. In many countries there is no question any longer about whether women should participate in public demonstrations, politics and policymaking; they **are** participating, organizing and, gradually, developing their own style. Many women are done with the violence and violent culture that affect their communities and with the malfunctioning of public provisions such as health, protection and education. Defending their communities, women are claiming their position as activists and defenders of human rights, and they are accepted and admired as leaders in many human rights movements. The Pakistani girl Malala Yousafzai, who received the Nobel Prize in 2014 for defending the right to education for girls, embodies this message.

We all know the flip side of such engagement. As defenders of human rights, women face all the resistance and risks that are part of it, even more so, since their position is vulnerable because they cannot be sure that people will respect their own rights as women. NGOs in the Netherlands, especially those that are engaged in actions around United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, are concerned about the lack of protection for strong women activists in countries where official protection mechanisms fail. The courageous Libyan lawyer Salwa Bugaighis, who was assassinated this year, is an example of the risks women take in countries in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Proposed government policies and results

One of the most important instruments to protect active women is global recognition of a woman's right to express her opinion and to act in public realms – especially recognition by the police, religious institutions and the judiciary. Another instrument is to prevent and prosecute sexual (and other) violence against women, including sexual intimidation and domestic violence. This was the conclusion of a conference of women human rights defenders in The Hague in May 2014. Another indispensable instrument mentioned on that occasion is to weave networks of influential people around women activists, at local, national and international levels. Finally, publicly active women need to have access to tools to analyse their security situation and to take adequate and specific safety measures for their organizations and for their family.

In the Dutch government's Beijing+20 report we can read how good policies can promote women's rights. In general, women's rights as human rights are mainstreamed through the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights. A European convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence has been drafted with strong support from our country. The Netherlands has been especially engaged in preventing and prosecuting practices of forced marriage, polygamy and FGM in domestic policy.

In all these cases, the State takes the role of protecting women through legal, judicial and sometimes educational instruments. These are excellent initiatives, and it would be even better if those laws could inspire good legislation in other countries as well.

However, these initiatives reflect a limited understanding of the support which active women need to do their part. We all acknowledge that laws will not change harmful practices if there are no human rights defenders to challenge society and governments. There is a complementary role available for the Dutch government: to strengthen women activists and women's movements to fight for their rights themselves. Already some promising experiments in this direction have been developed in separate programmes – **and we hope for more!** In those programmes the Dutch government cooperates explicitly and closely with civil society. There are partnerships aimed at cooperation on or delegation of the implementation of Dutch human rights policies to NGOs working in developing countries and countries in armed conflict. Three successful examples are worth mentioning:

- * The 4-yearly reports to CEDAW: As the Netherlands, in close cooperation with international women's NGOs, takes a clear stand to defend the right of women to be treated as full citizens, other conservative voices are counterbalanced.
- * Cooperation to enhance the participation of women in mediation, peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts through the national action plan on 1325 (referring to UNSCR 1325): The success of this programme is impressive. It allows not only well-established NGOs to participate, but also so-called diaspora organizations that have many contacts in the affected areas. It allows not only development NGOs to participate, but also the police and the military. This has generated a lot of internal enriching discussions on safety and protection, leading to a significant increase of mutual understanding and new partnerships. In the end, through support for the UNSCR and intense communication with activists at grass-roots level, women in conflict situations are encouraged to organize themselves and to cooperate with their own (local) governments in peacebuilding efforts. The most interesting result is, however, the paradigm shift: it is no longer the vulnerability of women that comes first, but it is their courage, initiative and strength – even being vulnerable – that guides thinking, cooperation and policies nowadays.
- * Finally, there is the courageous programme of the Dutch government to support sexual and reproductive rights on an international level, including the right of young people to obtain relevant sexual information, the defence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights and the initiatives to address rape and mass rape in armed conflicts. The programme originated from close cooperation between a number of NGOs.

NGO policies

In terms of protecting human rights defenders, a few Dutch organizations have joined the initiative of Peace Brigades International in the Netherlands to organize a conference in 2014 with female human rights defenders from Guatemala, Colombia, Sudan, Mexico, Egypt, Afghanistan and Palestine on protection issues. Among them were the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Vrouwen voor Vrede (Women for Peace), Stichting VOND (Women's Organization Netherlands-Darfur) and Stichting NAHID (a Dutch NGO supporting women in Afghanistan).

Subsequently, some 20 other NGOs joined efforts to develop a toolkit on the protection of women human rights defenders. It became clear that there are security plans for local offices of these organizations in conflict areas, but the security plans do not cover the needs for protection of local partners, and they do not consider the specific needs of women for protection. There is increasing awareness on the importance of this kind of support, allowing women's empowerment to develop in a relatively safe environment. The editing of the toolkit is still in process.

Recommendations

From the perspectives of Peace Brigades and our partners, it is recommended that more work should be done to protect women activists against intimidation, slander, abduction, rape and murder and to promote their full participation in peace negotiations and environmental, indigenous and women's rights movements. In this context a few specific urgent steps are needed:

- * Invest in stronger and more professional cooperation between peace movements to strengthen the defence of human rights and the prevention of armed conflict through negotiations with the real influence of strong women.
- * Share the state budget for military defence with civil organizations that promote and train in non-violent defence and conflict mediation.
- * Promote awareness-raising on the relationship between the values of different religions and the rights of women to stand up in defence of human rights, including their own rights.
- * Promote the participation of police forces and the judiciary in practical training on the protection of women human rights defenders.

The case of Lorena Cabnal



Many girls in the Xinca communities in Guatemala have given birth to four or five children before their 18th birthday. They are owned by a man and fully dependent on him. According to Lorena Cabnal, "Many girls think that it is normal not to go to school, not to choose with whom they want to marry and to work and be exploited at a young age." She decided to take action and founded the Association of Indian Women in Santa Maria Xalapan (AMISMAXAJ). The organization unites 75 women in 14 Xinca communities in the mountains and denounces patriarchal oppression.

In the beginning her family did not support her, out of fear that something would happen to her. They did not believe that criticizing wrong-doings would change anything. And the community was not supportive, as they were not in favour of women speaking in public. In 2004 Lorena was threatened with death. Since then she has received various threats when she denounced cases of domestic violence and when she stood up for the right to education. She also denounced the land-grabbing practices of mining companies in the region. In 2006 her house was looted three times.

Peace Brigades International was called to provide international volunteers to give her protection, as not only she but also her family was a target of intimidation. Due to this protection she could go on with her work. The Xinca authorities take her seriously now. The women are empowered through political training, and more than 70 women learned to read and write. They are proud of their ethnic identity.

During her visit to the Netherlands in 2014, Lorena spoke with government officials about the EU guidelines to protect human rights defenders, and how embassies can help to apply these guidelines in Guatemala. She also spoke at a conference on the protection of active women on the safety measures that she learned to take to protect her work, her life and her family from continuous harassment. She is an inspiration to all human rights defenders.

Women and Poverty (Area 1)

National

Authors: Anneke van Doorne, NVR and VVAO

In cooperation with: Antia Wiersma, Atria

Proposed policy and goal

The primary aim of the Dutch government's poverty policies is to make work a more attractive option. In line with this goal, by simplifying the allowances for parents with children, the government is addressing the poverty trap for single parents, of which 95% are women. The government has also earmarked extra funds for poverty reduction: €20 million in 2013; €80 million in 2014; and €100 million a year from 2015 onwards. Individuals not receiving the full old-age pension and with little or no other income may be eligible for a supplement under the Work and Social Assistance Act.²³

Results

Although there is generally no variation in poverty rates by gender, single mothers with minor children are at much greater risk of poverty (24%) than single fathers (15%). People of foreign origin are also at greater risk of poverty, especially Dutch residents with roots in Morocco, Turkey, new EU Member States, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

The number of women at risk of poverty dropped from 873,000 in 2000 to 546,000 in 2012. However, in 2011 and 2012, the number of women with a low income grew by more than 100,000. The number of women with a long-term low income increased from 157,000 in 2010 to 182,000 in 2012.

Out of the total of more than 7 million Dutch households in 2012, 664,000 (9.4%) had to live on an income below the low-income threshold. This represents an increase in the number of low-income households of 89,000, or 1.2 percentage points. Estimates suggest a further increase in the percentage of low-income households to 9.9% in 2013, and a levelling-off of the increase in 2014 (10.1%). These projections imply that 717,000 households will be dependent on a low income in 2014, the highest figure since 2000. This means that, since 2010, the economic crisis has led to an increase in the number of low-income households of 203,000 (2.7 percentage points). The rise in the number of low-income households was by far the largest in 2011 and 2012 (+150,000 households, +2 percentage points). More than 170,000 households had already been on a low income for at least four years in 2012, 17,000 more than in 2011.

Broken down by household type, single-parent families and single persons aged under 65 are at the greatest risk of poverty. In 2012, 30% of single-parent families with minor children lived on a low income. Single-parent families were also at relatively high risk of long-term poverty in 2012. Non-Western households are over-represented among those living below the low-income threshold: at 29% this is three times the average and four times the figure for native Dutch households (6.9%).²⁴

The increasing number of persons at risk of poverty is partly caused by a rising number of people who are unemployed. The overall unemployment figure was 3.8% in 2008 and 6.4% in 2012. For women, these figures rose from 4.7% to 6.6%; for men, from 3.2% to 6.3%.

Concerns

A major concern in relation to poverty, specifically among women, is the reorganization of the care sector (where the majority of workers are women), to be carried out by 1 January 2015. See critical area 6: Women and the Economy. In general terms, these operations are framed as gender-neutral, suggesting no specific effects for women or men. But in the day-to-day reality it is to be expected that women in particular will face more severe employment effects from this reorganization. Furthermore, more women will be confronted with a heavier burden in terms of informal care. This may lead to more women deciding to reduce their working hours. In doing so, these women will be even more vulnerable to economic dependence on others (their husband or the State) and to poverty than they already are.

²³ Source: *Sixth Periodic Report of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (2008–2013)*, September 2014

²⁴ Source: SCP, *Armoedesignalement 2013*

Women and the Economy (Area 6)

National

Authors: Anneke van Doorne NVR and VWAO

In cooperation with: Antia Wiersma, Atria

Proposed goals

- * To enable all people in the Netherlands to participate in society and in the economy.
- * To utilize fully the talents of boys and girls, men and women.

Economic and financial independence

- * To increase the number of economically independent women.
- * To strengthen their financial situation and make women less dependent on the income of others (husbands or the State).

Labour force participation

- * To increase the number of working women and to raise their number of working hours per week.

Work-life balance

- * To make the division of unpaid work and care more equal between men and women.
- * To create conditions for a better balance between work and care (between paid and unpaid work).

Wage differences

- * To diminish wage differences between men and women (the 'gender pay gap').

Women on top

To get more women in high-level positions (in firms, in public and semi-public organizations, in universities). In January 2013 a target was set for at least 30% women or 30% men on management boards and supervisory councils of large private firms in the years ahead. See also area 7: Women in Power and Decision-Making.

In 2017 to have a 30% representation of women in the *Algemene Bestuursdienst* (governing body) of the central government. All high-level civil servants (scale 16–19) of the central government are included in this governing body. See also area 7: Women in Power and Decision-Making.

Transgenders

To increase the labour force participation of transgenders.

Results

Labour force participation

The net labour force participation of women (20–65 years of age) increased from 57% in 2001 to 68% in 2011. The number of working men in that age group remained stable (85%). Women with a higher level of education more often have paid jobs than women with a lower level of education (80% versus 50%). The number of working women with a lower level of education is, however, increasing. Single mothers with children up to 18 years of age are less active in the labour market than mothers with a partner (64% versus 72%). Non-Western migrant women in general participate less in the labour market than women of Dutch origin.

Full-time versus part-time

The increase in the number of working women occurred entirely in part-time jobs. Thus the percentage of women working full-time decreased from 30% in 2001 to 27% in 2011. The average number of working hours per week for women is 26.4, for men 38. The number of hours worked by women has not increased since 2006. This is despite the efforts of the Part-time Plus Taskforce (as organized and funded by the central government in 2008–2010) to persuade and encourage women to increase their working hours – specifically those women working in small jobs.

Economic independence

Between 2005 and 2008 there was a fairly substantial increase in the proportion of economically independent women: from 46% to 52%. After 2008 this percentage has not increased further. About 76% of men are economically independent.

Income differences

Income differences per working hour between men and women are rather persistent. When characteristics such as number of working hours, age, years of experience, sector and/or job characteristics are taken into account, there is still a difference of 8% in the income level between men and women. This percentage has not changed substantially since 2008.

Division of paid and unpaid work

Despite targets – as mentioned earlier – for more economically active and independent women, the so-called one-and-a-half-breadwinner model is still dominant in Dutch society. Over recent decades the division of hours spent on care at home has become a bit more equal between men and women. This is mainly because women have decreased their working hours at home over the years – not because men have extended their hours substantially.

There are, however, still rather substantial differences between women and men in time spent on paid and unpaid work. For instance, for all women between 20 and 65 years of age – including women without paid jobs – the average numbers of hours spent on paid work is 17.5 (men 34.2), household work 21.3 (men 9.7), care for children 6.7 (men 2.8) and on informal care outside their own household 4.9 (men 5.0).

When the first child is born, not many men adjust their working times; 95% of young fathers kept the same amount of working hours, 5% decreased their working hours or stopped paid work. Some 10% of women gave up their job after the birth of their first baby, 35% decreased their working hours, 54% kept the same amount of working hours (the great majority of these women already worked in part-time jobs), and 2% extended their working hours. The collective sum of all these individual choices and decisions is the rather traditional one-and-a-half-breadwinner model, which is still dominant in Dutch society.

What is going well?

There are relatively high percentages of highly educated women in professions (doctors, dentists, legal officers, judges, civil servants, junior level positions in academia). This is due to a rather impressive increase in the number of female students at universities and vocational high schools in the recent past and the possibility of working in a highly qualified professional job for three or four days per week.

There are more older employees at work. In the 1970s, 80% of all men aged 50–65 still worked. This figure decreased to 56% at the beginning of the 1990s. Now (in 2012), about 77% of the men in this age group have paid jobs. In the 1970s and 1980s only 20% of women aged 50–65 had paid jobs. In 2012 this figure was 54%.

Concerns

There is a low percentage of economically independent women, and the figure is increasing too slowly. This situation results in too many economically and socially vulnerable women, as well as too many vulnerable families in times of quite substantial unemployment (such as now).

Another effect of this situation is the relatively small number of women in high-level management positions, in decision-making positions, in high-level academic ranks etc. (see critical area 7: Women in Power and Decision-making Positions).

One of the conclusions made by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) about the Dutch labour market (the waste of talent of well-educated women because of the dominant pattern of part-time work) still holds true in 2014. This situation has negative effects on individual, societal and economic levels. This is certainly true for Europe, which claims to represent the most knowledge-intensive economies of the world.

In the Netherlands, a major reorganization of the care sector will be taking place by 1 January 2015. From 2015 onwards, central government will no longer be held responsible for the organization of home-based care and care for the elderly or chronically ill people, but local authorities will. This transfer of responsibilities and executive tasks is accompanied by severe budget cuts. This means, for instance, that a greater burden will be placed on volunteers. Instead of support paid for by the government, social networks, family members, friends and neighbours are supposed to be more active in terms of helping those people around them who are in need of help (elderly or chronically ill people). Of course, a social safety net of paid help will remain, but the conditions for entitlement to these paid provisions will be tightened.

Apart from the general logistical problems which will be caused by these substantial policy changes, women's organizations are concerned about the gender effects of these new social policies. They fear that specifically women will face a greater (moral and practical) responsibility to offer voluntary help to family members and other significant people living near them. These new care policies may hinder economic independence among women. The Netherlands Women's Council is trying to set up a project aiming to monitor the possible undesired and unintended gender effects of this reorganization, to make local civil servants and politicians more aware of these possible effects and to invite the local branches of women's organizations to follow these processes and – where possible – to take action.

Women and Poverty (Area 1)

and Women and the Economy (area 6)

International

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Proposed policy and goals

The Dutch government's approach to promoting gender equality within the critical areas of concern Women and Poverty and Women and the Economy consists of the following themes and approaches:²⁵

- * Gender integration into the priority themes Water and Food Security: Government policy aims at increased production and income by women and improved food security for women. It focuses on strengthening women's participation in decision-making in water management, women's equal share of assets, and the availability of safe and easily accessible sanitation.
- * Through stand-alone gender programming, the Dutch government aims to enhance women's economic self-reliance. The idea of the Dutch government is that women's participation in economic decision-making and their increased access to assets such as land and financial services contribute to women's self-reliance and wealth.

Particularly relevant for Women and the Economy is the government's recent policy shift towards aid, trade and investment. Its focus is on the following three objectives:

- * alleviation of extreme poverty;
- * global sustainable and inclusive growth; and
- * successful Dutch companies.

Among others, Minister Ploumen is committed to special attention for women entrepreneurs. She explicitly acknowledges that women and girls make a relatively large contribution to development and inclusive growth. The government seeks a balance of providing instruments that encourage women's entrepreneurship and the prevention of extra requirements that provide a burden to those seeking fun seeking funding.²⁶

²⁵ Relevant policy documents include 'A World to Gain' (April 2013), the gender policy letter from Ministers Rosenthal and Knapen (November 2011), and a variety of letters on the priority themes (so-called 'spearheads').

²⁶ See a number of recent letters on Aid, Trade and Investment. The letter *Ondernemen voor ontwikkeling: investeren in duurzame en inclusieve groei* (Entrepreneurship for development: investing in sustainable and inclusive growth; September 2013) pays specific attention to gender issues.

Results

A variety of government and Dutch NGO stand-alone and integrated gender programmes have successfully contributed to women's poverty alleviation and/or their meaningful participation in the economy. The majority of government and NGO programmes with a focus on poverty or the economy pay limited or no attention to gender issues.

Successful programmes contributed to areas important to Dutch government priorities such as women's increased income, women's enhanced participation in water decision-making or in cooperatives, improved access to or control over assets, and enhanced dignity through better sanitation and hygiene. The effects on longer-term sustainable economic self-reliance and women's full empowerment are not well reported yet.

Some Dutch NGOs have successfully facilitated processes that protect communities' natural resources from large-scale privatization and mining. This includes, among others, land and water rights, including women's land and water rights.

As the government has done, many Dutch NGOs have shifted much of their attention from direct poverty alleviation to inclusive growth. Over the past five years a major focus has been on value-chain development. After some time, some of the NGOs realized that value-chain development initiatives often neglect gender relations. They noticed that in agricultural value chains men may have control over the earnings, whereas women's labour in key segments of these value chains can be significant without being recognized. These women may receive little in return. Where women's labour is recognized, such as in female labour sectors such as the garment trade, work conditions may be poor.

A number of initiatives have taken place to redress these imbalances (see the Hivos case study for an example). Together with the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and external experts, the NGOs undertook a learning process on gender issues in value chains (see case study).

Government attention to gender equality within the new aid and trade agenda has been limited so far. The new funds and partnership arrangements, including 'successful Dutch companies', and the calls under the new knowledge institutes so far have hardly any criteria or incentives that promote a minimum level of gender integration into proposed activities.

Attention to corporate social responsibility programming on women's economic empowerment by Dutch companies is on the rise. Challenges for companies remain in terms of women's participation in management, the promotion of women's entrepreneurship and attention to gender issues when sharing their expertise globally.

A number of Dutch NGOs focus on women's working conditions, with a particular focus on migrant women. Migrant workers – even more than other women – may find themselves trapped in free-trade zones where national labour laws do not apply, internationally agreed labour laws may be denied, labour unions may be forbidden, and a social support system is absent (see the Mama Cash case study). Other migrant workers face similarly bad conditions as domestic workers.

Lessons learned

General lessons learned on women's poverty alleviation or their meaningful participation in the economy include:

- * Dutch government and NGO stand-alone gender programming and some targeted integrated programming demonstrate positive direct effects on women's self-reliance. Findings could be compiled and disseminated, also for use in other integrated programming.
- * International experiences demonstrate that few programmes result in structural changes that may lead to a more equal division of labour, including redistribution of paid and unpaid work, and more equal power relations between women and men. Women's time savings as a result of easily accessible water and sanitation facilities may well result in their taking up new duties as a result of, for example, male outmigration or deeply structured power dynamics. Other experiences demonstrate that patriarchal power relations and inheritance and customary law systems may prevent women from owning land even when their income levels increase. Women's decision-making in water management or their access to credit may be limited in the long run because of this lack of land ownership.

On aid, trade and investment, investing in women may be 'smart economics' for economic growth, but women themselves may not benefit adequately. An inclusive growth policy needs to be motivated by inclusive growth and human and women's rights to ensure that it results in a fair income for women and men and sustainable social and economic self-reliance. A focus on gender justice is required, as is the shift from economic empowerment to the full spectrum of women's social, economic, political and cultural empowerment. Lessons learned include:

- * Women shall not just be seen as cheap labourers in value chains. Making profit by exploiting women is a risk, and poverty alleviation is not guaranteed. Working conditions are often poor:
 - Women's contribution may go unnoticed, particularly in agricultural value chains, as more focus is given

to the segments in which men are active.

- Women tend to be underpaid or have low wages and work a lot of unpaid overtime.
 - Labour unions have limited representation and/or understanding of women's particular concerns.
 - There is no job security.
 - There are additional costs for health care or transport, for example.
 - Particular sectors present serious health risks.
 - There are high risks of sexual harassment.
- * Without explicit focus on gender justice and full women's empowerment, the underlying structures that shape gender relations within and outside the value chain are not adequately addressed. Interventions often look at 'quick wins' such as achieving gender balance during training or credit programmes for women. Even if some of these 'quick wins' can lead to positive changes for individuals, gender relations may not become more equal.
 - * Despite positive outcomes for individual women gaining greater socio-economic empowerment through economic self-reliance, many others are trapped in the 'triple burden' of household, family and work responsibilities, and working long hours to make ends meet.
 - * With the economic crisis more women than ever before have become breadwinners when male family members lost their jobs. However, women have continued to be responsible for the household even if they work full-time as the breadwinner. The World Bank reports that Ghanaian women earning the family income do 80% of the housework.²⁷

From a broader perspective:

- * Some Dutch NGOs have experienced that an agenda of a fully inclusive economy yields positive results. Such an approach may focus on long-term wealth generation instead of or in addition to growth and may pay attention to social development, human rights including women's rights, an inclusive perspective of women's and men's participation in economic decision-making at all levels and ecological sustainability.

Recommendations

Overall integrated programming needs more of a gender analysis at the start and attention to gender issues during implementation, both for Dutch government and NGO programming. Gender analysis findings require translation into gender-transformative objectives, gender-sensitive indicators, a budget for related activities and adequate monitoring and reporting.

Review of the effects on longer-term sustainable economic self-re-

²⁷ World Bank (2012) *World Development Report*, Washington, DC: World Bank

liance and women's full empowerment as a result of government and NGO programming is required. For poverty alleviation, one may wish to look into longer-term gender relations and power dynamics, particularly by looking into:

- * the rights and practices to access and control over land and other productive resources;
- * changes in decision-making at community, household and national levels as a result of enhanced women's self-reliance; and
- * changes in cultural norms and practices.

Within aid, trade and investment, the major recommendation is to work towards inclusive gender-just growth or a fully inclusive economy. This requires attention to the broader scope of gender justice and social, economic, political and cultural empowerment. Specific recommendations:

- * Transform working conditions, labour rights and practices towards fair incomes and work free from violence and with reduced health risks.
- * Apply a gender lens that looks into underlying structures that shape the gender relations within and outside the value chain instead of or in addition to looking into 'quick wins'.
- * Encourage the meaningful involvement of local women's organizations and women's groups.
- * Analyse whether direct positive effects on gender relations are sustainable in the long run and contribute to positive changes in norms and practices that restrict women's lives.
- * Address women's 'triple burden', and promote a more equal distribution of paid and unpaid work.
- * Focus on long-term wealth generation instead of or in addition to growth, women's and men's participation in economic decision-making at all levels and ecological sustainability.

NGO case studies

Hivos works in the flower, textiles and coffee value chains. The Dutch NGO realized that these are all value chains in which women undertake most of the work but men make most decisions and benefit most from the marketing. Women's working conditions are poor, and their participation may not lift them out of poverty.

To address this inequality, Hivos undertakes value-chain programmes, works on labour rights and provides advisory services to companies. It takes a broad perspective, realizing that companies, national governments and labour unions all need to look into women's conditions and facilitate a change process.

When working with companies, Hivos calls on them to invest in women, as it is profitable for these women, for the companies themselves and for the economy to do so. The organization encourages companies to prevent human rights violations and to make company training more suitable for women. It calls on companies to ensure that women benefit from sustainable production standards such as certification programmes. Hivos further promotes women's participation in company management and labour committees. To address barriers that hinder women's economic development, Hivos supports programmes for community development such as literacy programmes, marketing courses and child care.

Agri-ProFocus and some of the members (**Hivos, Cordaid, ICCO and Oxfam Novib**) undertook a learning process, facilitated by **KIT** and external experts, on gender issues in value chains. The learning process started at the beginning of 2008. The goal was defined as: 'Having value chains work for women!'

The organizations shared experiences and best practices. The learning process resulted in the publication *Challenging Chains to Change*. The publication demonstrates that it is useful for NGOs to integrate gender into their value-chain programmes and to shift towards inclusive approaches in development of the private sector. The learning process also allowed other issues of inclusion to be examined, such as the participation of youth or people living with HIV in value-chain development.

In its efforts to advance economic justice for women, girls and transgender people, one of **Mama Cash's** 2013 grantees was Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor ('Friends of Women Organization') in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Thanks to the efforts of the organization and coalition partners, electronics workers in many free-trade zones have been able to form in-house and regional unions since 2013. Unions are important to address poor health and safety conditions (many workers work with toxic materials) and labour rights violations experienced by the high percentage of migrant workers.

Despite the new opportunities for unionization, challenges remain. National unions are not allowed, and unions must be recognized by the workplace management. Since most migrant workers are hired by agencies that do not own property, it is difficult for unions to take legal action. Even when taking legal action, migrant workers may lose their work permits as soon as they lose their job. Hence, migrant workers face harassment by police when staying illegally, or they have left by the time a complaint is processed. Women in particular face sexual harassment, making them more afraid to file complaints.

To overcome some of these challenges and address gender dynamics, Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor gives leadership training to women on labour organizing, educates them about workers' rights and health and safety issues, and gives training on organizing against exploitation by agencies.

Education and Training of Women (Area 2) and the Girl Child (Area 12)

National

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In cooperation with: VHTO, Nuffic and Foundation PEP International

Proposed policy and goals

Referring to all the ongoing goals in the critical areas such as Human Rights, Children's Rights, Women's Rights, CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we want to guarantee quality of life for children and, specifically, the quality of primary and secondary education, but also tertiary education as well as ongoing training for women.

We also want to emphasize in particular the relevant goals proposed in the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Rio +20 from 19 July 2014, namely:

- * ensure that all girls and boys receive complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes; and
- * ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and an appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Some data: in 2013/2014, 1,514,887 children (aged 4–12) in the Netherlands are attending so-called 'basic school': 770,545 boys and 744,337 girls (Central Statistics Bureau). There are 1169 boards with 7360 schools and 169,900 staff. All levels in school have their own responsibility towards the children and are playing an essential role in their development.

Achievements in education and training

Some of the achievements have been addressed in the review, such as the rise in the number of female graduates, and the conclusion that female students outnumber male students in higher education, but the number of female professors is lagging behind the number of males. Women participate more often in courses and study programmes in education, the humanities and the medical fields than men.

Relevant questions such as what were the setbacks in these issues and what mitigation measures have been implemented to counter these setbacks – for example, the lack of female students in vocational education – would give the analysis more depth.

Although it is important to know about the actual achievements, it is much more important to describe the mechanisms behind

these achievements and figures. Which policies led to the above-mentioned results, and what is the relationship between the EU indicators and the data presented?

The paragraph on pre-university-level and vocational education includes descriptive remarks and related figures about the good educational results of girls in relation to boys. Boys are more represented in vocational education and lower secondary education, earn their certificates more slowly and drop out more than girls. Statistics show that in secondary education, especially in vocational schools, differences arise in the choice of studies. Boys prefer the technology sector, and girls the health care sector. Therefore, in 2013 the government established the Technology Pact to interest more young people, including girls, in technology. Its focus is also on primary schools though. Much research to investigate the different choice patterns of girls and boys has been done. Special projects by the Dutch National Expert Organization on Girls/Women and Science and Technology are now in the process of being evaluated.

A special approach for particularly talented individuals has been agreed for 2014–2018. Special gender attention within this project is to be expected. The special seminar called the 'Digitiva Code Event: girls teach girls to programme' (for girls 8–18), on Ada Lovelace Day, is also of importance, and recently a special ICT Innovation Commission was set up until September 2016. Alertness on gender awareness in primary schools is still required though.

All these achievements have helped to improve the prospect of gender equality and the empowerment of women as stated in the BPfA. However, much improvement can be obtained by implementing the recommendations listed below.

We, therefore call, on the Dutch government, educational institutes and NGOs to be mindful of the gender gap and to continue combating the issue of gender inequality in education. They should also pay attention to intercultural differences and backgrounds (PO Council) and to the statistics presented.²⁸

Main recommendations for children's education (boys and girls) – primary and secondary school

- * All (educational) data have to be gender-responsive and ensure that all indicators are disaggregated by sex. The outcome of gender mainstreaming and inclusiveness must not result in undesirable generalizations.

²⁸ See also www.ifuw.org July 2014: The International Federation of University Women (IFUW) calls for the compilation and public dissemination of gender-disaggregated data.

- * Much more involvement in and attention for the lower part of the secondary school (middle school), both general as well as technical, is needed, because it is there/then that girls throughout the world are at their most vulnerable age, both physically and psychologically. At this time many of their life choices have to be made, and school drop-out often means the end of their school career and (forced) marriage.²⁹
- * Scientific research should be undertaken on the implementation of the Technology Pact, especially on its gender impact, and in addition a Care Pact should be started to interest more boys in the care sector and to promote the private independence of men as a counterpart to the promotion of the economic independence of women.
- * Greater attention needs to be paid to the issue of gender mainstreaming in teachers' education, because gender-stereotypical thinking is easily (and often!) unwittingly conveyed to pupils. However, gender mainstreaming should be an integral part of the professional training of **all** teachers, particularly for primary-school teachers and for teachers who will later teach subjects related to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Without an integral approach in education, gender inequality will be extremely difficult to eliminate.
- * The low percentage of higher-level academic staff, in particular female professors, in all sciences at most higher educational institutes is mentioned but could be mentioned far more critically. This could have been addressed among 'persistent challenges' with an emphasis on the gender difference between technical and other universities.
- * Gender-stereotyping-free playing and learning materials, available for all children, which validate the diversity and level of talents, abilities and intelligence are of utmost importance in a child's development (boys and girls).

NGO case study: VHTO, Dutch national expert organization on women/girls and science/technology

Since the 1980s, VHTO has been developing and carrying out a wide range of projects and activities with the aim of increasing the involvement of women and girls in STEM. The small proportion of female students and professionals in STEM is primarily caused by a strong gender bias in which STEM professions are associated with stereotypical masculinity; VHTO aims to challenge this stereotypical thinking. The biased thinking associated with STEM not only leads to a loss of talent and potential for companies and national economies but is also a great injustice towards girls and women themselves.

Because of this, VHTO has been contracted by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, to carry out the *Talenten kijker* project in primary schools since 2011. In *Talenten kijker*, pupils explore a multitude of STEM professions with a series of lessons, and receive a guest lesson about STEM careers by a female STEM professional. As of mid-2014, 3500 groups have participated (over 70,000 boys and girls), and another 2500 classes will take part in 2014/2015.

Changing stereotypical thinking is not only a matter of addressing girls and women; boys and men also have a big role to play. This is why *Talenten kijker* targets both boys and girls, which is also true for our *Verbeeldingskracht* (Imaginative Power) programme. Through this short series of lessons, boys and girls around the age of 12 are stimulated to think with a growth mindset, in which the aim is to learn by trying out new things, even if that means making mistakes. Children with a growth mindset are less likely to be influenced by stereotypical ideas in their surroundings, and learn to believe in their own capacities instead of basing choices on what their surroundings might lead them to think. Stimulating this type of mindset is another way of empowering both boys and girls to think 'outside the box' in terms of gender stereotypes.

Another way in which VHTO facilitates interaction between pupils and female STEM professionals is by organizing girls-only speed dates in secondary education. During these speed date sessions, girls get to speak to several female STEM professionals about their occupation, providing them with a non-stereotypical, broader view of what working in STEM entails. These speed dates show girls that women **can** and **do** work in STEM, but, most importantly, they provide them with role models with whom they can identify.

Data as part of the VHTO case study

- * For the proportion of boys/girls in secondary education, divided by level of education (pre-VET, general secondary education, university preparatory education) and sector/subject cluster,

Main recommendations for the girl child:

- * Create the conditions for a stereotyping-free and healthy childhood:
 - by schooling and (re-)training teachers and parents;
 - by procuring non-gender-stereotyping playing and teaching materials; and
 - by offering qualified sustainable, fair and healthy accommodation (at home, at day care, at school).
- * In imitation of Girls Day (technology), find out whether a Boys Day (care) with slogans such as 'Can you clean up your mess?' or 'Can you cook an egg?' could be an effective campaign? Such initiatives should, of course, be created in consultation with youth organizations. If successful, campaigning on a larger scale is recommended.
- * Boys and girls have to learn about sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender justice, children's rights, the MDGs and the SDGs.

²⁹ See also IFUW policy position paper on post-2015 global education goals, 22 July 2014 (www.ifuw.org).

see the VHTO website: www.vhto.nl.

- * For the proportion of male/female students in tertiary education, divided by educational field (science, mathematics and computing field or engineering, manufacturing and construction), see the VHTO website: www.vhto.nl.
- * For international data on male/female students in science and technical studies, see: <http://www.vhto.nl/cijfers-trends/international.html#c1812>.
- * The proportion of male/female academic staff in Dutch universities (*Monitor Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren 2011*) shows a slight increase in the number of women, from 14.8% to 15.7%. The percentage of female professors at the three technical universities is far below this level though.

NGO case study: Nuffic gender report 2013

On behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nuffic administers capacity development programmes within post-secondary education in partner developing countries:

- * The Netherlands Fellowships Programmes (NFP: <http://www.nuffic.nl/en/capacity-building/nfp>); and
- * The Netherlands Programme for the Institutional Strengthening of Post-Secondary Education and Training Capacity (NPT, 2002–2012), followed by The Netherlands Initiative for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NICHE, 2008–2017).³⁰

In 2008 a gender review was undertaken of the NFP and NPT programmes, after which Nuffic integrated gender into all the procedures and instruments of the programmes. In 2012 an analysis was performed about the way the programmes integrated gender as a cross-cutting theme in NFP and NICHE. The findings are found in the booklet *Complexities of Gender Mainstreaming in Higher Education Capacity Development Programmes*.³¹

In NICHE, gender-disaggregated data are now being collected systematically, as a result of the gender review in 2008. As most of the NICHE projects are now well under way, the data collection in 2013 provided numerous valuable data on 121 projects in 18 NICHE countries.

Below we present a brief description of the contribution a NICHE project made to gender equality in general and to achieving equal access to tertiary education more specifically (one of the MDGs and thus part and parcel of the SDGs).³²

An example of good practice

Gulu University in Northern Uganda is committed to increasing the number of female students in science programmes such as agriculture. With support from the NICHE project, the university contacted a group of high-school students about to enter higher education. Not surprisingly, it appeared that these students had a stereotyped view of the kind of professions open and suitable to them – and in the case of the girls, if that was compatible with family duties. Most often, the students mentioned becoming a medical doctor as their favourite option, probably as a result of a lack of knowledge about career opportunities in other professions, in particular within agriculture.

Gulu University arranged an excursion for the high-school students with interviews with five successful women who were agricultural professionals: a farm manager, a researcher, an extension agent, a seed retailer and a bank employee. Through their discussions with these professionals, the students learned about the variety of career opportunities open to them within agriculture. They were also told how the lives of these women had changed due to their profession, their financial autonomy and the support of their families – in particular their mothers and their husbands. These discussions were an eye-opener for the girls as well as the boys in the group.

Back in school, the project helped the girls to summarize their findings and discuss their options. Their parents were invited to the school for a session during which the girls successfully negotiated with them their decision to study agriculture.

The project has produced a video for teaching and advocacy purposes based on this initiative, entitled: *Going for Agric Harvesting Magic; women voices in agriculture; two educational films to encourage girls to study science and agriculture – ICRA and MOOV-ON*. Gulu University shows the video at high schools in the region to stimulate girls to opt for agricultural studies. The video can be used by other projects, NGOs and schools.

30 <http://www.nuffic.nl/en/capacity-building/nfp>; <http://www.nuffic.nl/en/capacity-building/niche>

31 <http://www.nuffic.nl/en/library/complexities-of-gender-mainstreaming-in-higher-education-capacity-development-programmes.pdf/view?searchterm=Gender+mainstreaming>

32 <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Education and Training of Women (Area 2) and the Girl Child (Area 12)

International

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In the primary education sector, the last decade has seen very rapid increases in enrolment for both boys and girls with the abolition of school fees in many countries and a strong emphasis on access from the MDG and Education for All agendas. Over 46 million children enrolled in primary education in sub-Saharan Africa between 1999 and 2008, with the regional net primary enrolment rate for girls growing from 54% in 1999 to 74% in 2008. Overall female enrolment at the primary level in low-income countries has likewise grown from 87% in 1990 to 94% in 2004, considerably shrinking the gender gap. However, girls are less likely to finish school after puberty because of societal preference to invest in boys' education, early marriage and early childbirth, and the burden of domestic chores.

Proposed policy and goals

Plan's own education policy during the last 10 years has focused on three major goals:

- * improve children's access, retention and completion of education;
- * improve the quality of education; and
- * strengthen the participation of stakeholders and the accountability of the education system.

During the last five years Plan has placed more emphasis on the specific situation and barriers that girls face in entering and remaining in the education system. Through programmes and local, national and international advocacy (as part of the Because I am a Girl campaign³³) Plan has sought to increase public awareness on girls' rights to education, to increase the available funding for education and to promote effective actions against forms of violence that prohibit girls from entering or remaining in school (such as early/child marriage, FGM, violence in schools).

During the first decade of the 21st century, the Dutch government was an active supporter of the Education for All goals. One of the policy commitments entailed that 15% of the Dutch development budget should be spent on basic education (this includes primary but also secondary, vocational training, adult literacy and early childhood education). The Dutch support was meant to increase access and completion but also improve the quality of education.

In 2010 the government decided to drop education as one of the Dutch priority themes. It was now declared a 'posteriority', although it retained a supporting function towards the other priorities, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights and safety and security. In

the current policy of Minister Ploumen, there is no explicit attention to education, as the Netherlands allegedly has no comparative advantage in this sector. However, the Ministry has increased its focus on issues that directly limit girls' and young women's access to educational opportunities, such as child marriages, FGM and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Results

The main conclusions of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) evaluation on the effectiveness of Dutch support to education (1999–2009) are as follows:

- * The Netherlands has made an important contribution to the progress towards the Education for All goals and MDGs for education through its support to basic education internationally and in education partner countries. Globally, the Netherlands was the fourth largest donor during most of the evaluation period.
- * At country level, remarkable progress has been made in increasing the numbers of children that are enrolled in schools. The Netherlands has contributed to this success by providing support for investments in education, alongside donors, national governments and other local stakeholders in the sector.
- * The sectoral approach, and in particular forms of budget support, has facilitated significant and longer-term support to national education strategies. Combining sector support with general budget support, as done in Uganda and Zambia, enabled the Netherlands to discuss priorities for education at the highest policy level.
- * In all education partner countries, Dutch support to education also included support through NGOs and multilateral organizations. This 'two-pronged approach' proved complementary to the support to governments.

In 2009 Plan International conducted a 'global thematic evaluation' on all Plan's educational projects in the period 2001–2008. The main conclusions were as follows:

- * In all regions Plan's activities to primary education have increased by between about 25% (Latin America) and 100% (Asia). Plan undertakes major investments in infrastructure and materials for schools to provide access where there has been no school, particularly in Africa; the evaluation acknowledges that this is sometimes needed but considers other access issues, including those interventions that encourage retention

³³ see also <https://www.plannederland.nl/actueel/campagne/because-i-am-a-girl>

of girls and students at risk of dropping out and the enrolment and retention of all children, including the marginalized.

- * In support of quality, Plan has provided significant support to learning resources, professional development and, increasingly, improved school management by increasing responsibility and accountability to the school community (including its pupils).
- * Child-centred community development has strongly reinforced consideration of children's rights within Plan's practice, and the evaluation has identified how this area has grown (most strikingly in West Africa) and found examples of good practice across Plan. Particularly successful has been the participation of children in school, both in formal or semi-formal school management structures and, more widely, in children's clubs that have given children a forum and support to increase awareness, specifically of rights issues.

Lessons learned

Making girls' education a high priority and implementing a range of interventions – including scholarships, stipends, conditional cash transfers, female teacher recruitment, and gender-targeted provision of materials – have proved effective in increasing the enrolment of girls in school. Gender differences are now widest at the level of secondary education. This is more than just an injustice for these individual girls; it contributes to significant losses at the national level. In Tanzania, for example, the loss of productivity due to adolescent pregnancy costs the nation 18% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). And adolescent girls' dropping out of secondary school costs the nation at least 32% of GDP, according to the World Bank.

It is estimated that 1.3 billion young people will enter the global labour force over the next decade – the largest cohort of job seekers in history. Nearly 85% of them live in developing countries where youth unemployment is already at the highest rate on record. Young women and men are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than adults, and this is particularly pronounced for young women. For example, the youth unemployment rate in North Africa was 23.7% in 2012. The unemployment rate for young women was even higher, at 37%, compared with 18.3% for young men. Furthermore, estimates show that closing the gender gap in employment rates between women and men would increase the global GDP by up to 5.4%. Thus the acquisition of cognitive skills for girls and young women is crucial for national economic growth.

However, many children attending secondary school are failing to master the skills and competencies needed to succeed in today's labour market. One in three employers are having difficulties finding qualified staff. Companies do not have the time and/or experience to close the gap and, therefore, attract young people from the big cities or decide not to expand. Local young people are, therefore, forced to look for jobs in the informal sector without clear labour agreements, no training opportunities and low employment wages. This is especially true for young women, who usually have weaker social networks and access to information, so

that they are more vulnerable to exploitation and discrimination in the workplace. Plan, therefore, focuses more and more on youth economic empowerment programmes while supporting governments to improve educational systems.

Recommendations

Focus more on the quality of education

After a quarter of a century of 'Education for All' endeavours, enrolment has increased significantly, but the quality of education has not improved. In around a third of countries, less than 75% of primary school teachers are trained according to national standards. As a result of poor quality education, an estimated 250 million children worldwide are not learning the basic skills.

Hold governments accountable for good-quality education for all

At secondary level, the 2012 Global Monitoring Report estimates that 200 million adolescents, including those who complete secondary school, do not have the relevant skills needed for life and employment.

Insufficient government financing is one of the main barriers to achieving good quality education for all.

Provide funding to combine protection with economic inclusion of girls and young women

Work simultaneously on removing the barriers to education, such as violence in schools, child marriages, child labour, as well as removing the barriers for girls and young women to enter the labour market. Schools and training programs should give girls and young women the basic skills that they need to develop their full potential.

NGO case study: the girl child

The Girl Power Programme

The Girl Power Programme is an initiative of the Girl Power Alliance, consisting of Plan Nederland, Child Helpline International (CHI), Defence for Children International – ECPAT (DCI – ECPAT), Free Press Unlimited (FPU), International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI) and Women Win. The alliance came into existence in the context of the co-financing system of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for CSOs that are working on development. The programme receives government funding for the period 2011–2015.

The programme aims to achieve equal rights and opportunities for girls and young women by tackling the barriers that girls face in all sorts of areas. Educational chances, economic and political participation and the elimination of violence against girls and young women, such as FGM and early/child marriage, are at the core of the programme. The programme is carried out in cooperation with local partners in 10 countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Bolivia and Nicaragua.

Results

- * The number of men agreeing with the idea that men should beat their wives/girlfriends has declined from 30% to 12% among young men and from 56% to 13% among adult men. This is considerable and important progress in terms of achieving a decline in violence against girls and young women, as changing attitudes is a key achievement; moreover, girls and young women experience significantly less violence and abuse in the programme areas.
- * Progress has also been made on the individual and socio-cultural level, with all ages and genders valuing participation of girls and young women in decision-making bodies more today than at the start of the programme in most of the countries.
- * Girls and young women are better able to decline unwanted sexual activities and are aware of places to go to if they need protection services.
- * Government professionals in most Girl Power Programme countries indicate their support for institutional-level protection to girls and young women from violence.
- * Communities in most of the programme countries have a better understanding of the need for education for girls and young women than before.

Lessons learned

Where empowering girls took the form of positive discrimination, especially where government and/or various (I)NGO initiatives coincided, in some cases it led to undesirable effects. For instance, in Sierra Leone boys protested against sports activities for girls, notably the fact that the girls were given new soccer outfits. Boys also expressed concerns about being disadvantaged by government scholarships for girls. Sometimes they even threateningly said that they would deliberately make girls pregnant so that they could no longer go to school. These and other experiences underline the importance of the active engagement of boys and young men in ensuring more gender-transformative outcomes and sustainable changes.

Implementation of policies and legislation for girls and young women is weak in all programme countries. Especially at the local level, the gap between theory (policy) and practice is often large. In Ghana, for example, girls who decide to report a case of sexual abuse are often confronted with requests to pay for gasoline for police cars or to compensate medical doctors for income lost during their examination. These and other examples demonstrate the importance of local CSOs' capacities for lobbying and advocating for girls' rights.

The Saksham project

Saksham means 'I can do it' in Hindi. The Saksham project provides education and vocational training for 3800 young people between 18 and 25 years of age from the slums in the Indian capital, Delhi, and in poor districts in the Himalayas. About 60% of the participating youth are girls. The project is coordinated by Plan in cooperation with Accenture and Team Relocations, partners of Plan Nederland. The project runs from 1 July 2013 until 30 June 2015.

The participants learn how to start a business or they receive vocational training and job placement. They are trained to work in ICT, hospitality or sales jobs. The students are not only learning about technical skills as well as English and computer skills, but also on soft skills such as how to present themselves in job interviews, the right dress code, how to work in a team and how to incorporate the norms and values of a company. The curriculum is based on a market scan, so that the boys and girls are taught the skills that are wanted in the local economy. Local entrepreneurs are invited to provide input on the curriculum so that it becomes responsive to their needs. They also get to know the students during the training, in classes or during traineeships. The ultimate goal of the Saksham project is lasting economic independence for the participating youth. Since about 60% of the participating youth are girls, informing them about the importance of girls' empowerment is part of the project.

Results

- * So far 1896 youth have passed, and all of them have found a job.
- * Around 60% of the participants are girls.
- * Fairly soon after starting their new jobs, the girls start earning more money than their fathers; this raises the standard of living of their whole family after just two months.

Lessons learned

- * It is absolutely critical to include the families of girls upfront; the parents, brothers and even younger brothers have supervision of their lives; in showing the importance of school and work, the Saksham project gains the trust of the families to let their daughters take part in the project.
- * The location of the vocational training centres in the communities itself is crucial; if they are not within walking distance, the girls are not allowed or able to attend.
- * It is essential that employers provide a female-friendly environment and, for instance, send girls home before dark, and that girls from the same neighbourhood travel together to and from work.

Women and Health (Area 3)

National

Gender & Health Alliance

Author: M.H. Blüm, MA, WOMEN Inc.

In collaboration with: Prof. B.C.J. Fauser, University Medical Centre, Utrecht, Dr H.M.M. Vos, General Practitioner, and T.L. Filedt Kok-Weimar, NVR

To stimulate gender-sensitive health care, the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science has started the Gender & Health Alliance together with WOMEN Inc., an NGO. Members of the Gender & Health Alliance include scientists, doctors, medical teachers, psychologists and policymakers. The alliance unites different stakeholders and approaches the health care system from an overarching perspective.

Recommendations

- * If we want to change health care structurally and make it more effective and efficient for women, the government needs to take more responsibility. At the moment, most of the effort comes from individuals and organizations in the field.
- * The Gender & Health Alliance is only temporary. Financial support for a national programme concerning gender and health would be a start to making structural changes.
- * The government has to invest more money in research and education on gender-sensitive health care because this will improve Dutch health care greatly.

Heart diseases

Author: Prof. A.H.E.M. Maas, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen

Thanks to technological improvement in health care we know more about the way the heart works and how we can cure diseases. Also, thanks to these innovations, the differences between men and women when it comes to cardiovascular diseases have become more visible. Although the risk of cardiovascular diseases has increased over the years, little is known about the differences between men and women in the risks and treatment of cardiovascular disease. The amount of research on the topic is insufficient, and implementation in education is scarce. This can cause serious health problems – for example, the same type and amount of medication is often prescribed for men and women, although women may respond very differently to it than men.

Recommendations

- * More research on gender differences in cardiovascular health care is needed.
- * Differences between men and women should be acknowledged when it comes to cardiovascular diseases.
- * Recent inventions in gender-specific health care should be systematically documented (online).

Reproduction

Author: Dr A.M.E. Bos, University Medical Centre, Utrecht

The age of women giving birth has increased over the past years. Women are aware that their fertility decreases when they grow older, but over 70% of women believe that their health and physical condition are more important than age and fertility. Patients are unaware of the risks that go hand in hand with fertility treatments and the relatively low chances of success.

Menstrual complaints such as premenstrual syndrome (PMS), dysmenorrhoea and menstrual migraine have a significant impact on the psychosocial and societal functioning of a woman. There is very little awareness on these issues and other feminine health issues such as the hormonal effects of breast cancer treatment and inconveniences that come with menopause.

Recommendations

- * Provide accessible information on the matter of fertility problems related to age with campaigns in the media and implementation in the education system to inform young men and women, in particular, about age-related fertility issues.
- * More research should be done on the issues mentioned, and the information should be made public.
- * Create public awareness on women-specific health issues in the form of reliable, informative websites.

Pelvic floor problems, including female sexuality

Author: Prof. A.L.M. Lagro-Janssen, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen

In women, pelvic floor problems such as urinary incontinence and pelvic organ prolapse are very common, and prevalence increases considerably with age: from 28% at age 40–50 years to more than 40% in women over 80 years. Although pelvic floor problems are not life-threatening diseases, the consequences on quality of life may be great. It often causes embarrassment, stress, frustration, loss of dignity, depression and limitations in activities and may have a negative effect on sexual well-being. Despite existing guidelines on urinary incontinence and prolapse for the specialists involved, such as general practitioners, urologists and gynaecologists, the care offered in daily practice is sub-standard. Despite increasing knowledge gained in recent years there is still insuffi-

cient awareness among women about treatment options and also insufficient knowledge about optimal treatment.

Recommendations

- * More public campaigns are needed to enhance awareness among women.
- * More research is needed on risk factors for pelvic floor problems and subsequent preventive actions and on the best multidisciplinary approach.
- * More research is needed on the best non-surgical and surgical treatment options.

Intimate partner violence

Author: Dr S.H. Lo Fo Wong, Radboud University Medical Centre, Nijmegen

Intimate partner violence is the most prevalent form of violence against women in the Netherlands. This type of violence has negative consequences for women's health, leading to depression, anxiety and chronic pain. The World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines *Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women* for the health care sector has not received the attention of the Ministry of Health that is needed. By ignoring this, the largest group of abused women is not reached and remains deprived of appropriate assistance.

Recommendation

- * The Ministry of Health and health professionals should pay more attention to the WHO guidelines, to reach and assist the large number of abused women in the Netherlands.

Mental illness and medication

Author: Prof. M.H.J. Bekker, Tilburg University

Women are diagnosed with both depression and anxiety disorders twice as often as men. One of the most prevalent treatment is pharmacotherapy. However, very little knowledge is available when it comes to different effects of medication for mental illnesses when used by women, especially women of other ethnicities. It is very important to examine the different effects of those medicines on men and women. Although there is knowledge about gender-sensitive mental health care, there are still a lot of gaps to be filled. The existing knowledge on gender-sensitive mental illnesses and mental health care is barely implemented in education and treatment protocols.

Recommendations

- * The government and health professionals should stimulate more research on the effects of medication for mental illnesses on women, and women of other ethnicities.
- * The government should put more effort into the implementation of knowledge on gender differences in mental health in the education system and treatment protocols.

Effects of smoking

Author: Dr M.J.J. de Kleijn, General Practitioner, Utrecht

One in four women in the Netherlands is a regular smoker. More than for men, smoking is an unhealthy and lethal addiction for women. There is a lack of research on differences in smoking behaviour between men and women and the effects this has on cancer. More women in the Netherlands die these days from lung cancer than from breast cancer. By designing 'women's cigarettes' in specially designed packages, the tobacco industry seduces women into starting smoking. It is harder for women to quit smoking than for men.

Recommendations

A gender-sensitive tobacco policy is needed that:

- * prohibits specially designed, attractive packages;
- * creates anti-smoking campaigns aimed at young women;
- * develops more effective methods for women to help them quit smoking; and
- * stimulates research on gender differences in smoking behaviour and the effects on cancer.

Abortion and sexual and reproductive health

Author: Dr G. Kleiverda, Flevo Hospital Almere, Women on Waves

Abortion is legal in the Netherlands, albeit under tight restrictions from the Dutch government. For example, contrary to the advice of the WHO, Dutch women are obliged to undertake a five-day consideration period before having an abortion.

An anti-abortion organization, Siriz, in the Netherlands has become more prominent and is even supported financially by the Dutch government. In addition, early termination of the pregnancy (before 16 days overdue) is not considered to be an abortion, yet women have to go to an abortion clinic to obtain an 'abortion pill'. Finally, contraception and sexual and reproductive health care are

available for every woman in the country, yet not affordable for every woman who might need it. For example, women over 18 years of age who request an abortion often have to pay for an examination for sexually transmitted infections and contraceptives themselves. Although health insurance is willing to pay, the first €350 are at the woman's own cost, and bills are sent to their home, which can be a problem with regards to privacy.

Recommendations

- * Abolish the five-day obligatory reflection time, in accordance with the advice of the WHO and the preference of women.
- * End the financial aid to the anti-abortion NGO and promote neutral information about contraception and abortion at school.
- * Provide the abortion pill Mifepristone for early termination outside abortion clinics.
- * Abolish the financial barriers to sexual and reproductive health care.

Undocumented women

Author: Dr M. van Muijsenbergh, UGC Heyendaal

Undocumented women in the Netherlands have serious problems concerning their health, unwanted pregnancies and their safety. They have very little access to health care, despite their theoretically free access to health care. Unfortunately they are often not aware of their rights concerning health care, and still pay the bills from hospitals and pharmacies. When it comes to domestic violence, these women do not have access to regular shelters for women who have experienced domestic violence.

Recommendations

- * Inform medical care providers and undocumented migrants about their rights concerning health care.
- * Urge the National Health Care Institute to reimburse the costs for contraceptives and for abortus provocatus, and waive the €5 fee per prescription.
- * Allow undocumented women to access regular shelters and programmes for victims of domestic violence.

Maternity care

Author: Dr F. Franka Cadée, Royal Dutch Organization of Midwives (KNOV)

In a global context, care for women and infants in the Netherlands is safe and well organized. However, maternity care has undergone major changes in the last few years. Investment in better integrated team work is one of them. However, in maternal health an opposite direction seems to be taking place to the national policy of primary health care in the community. The concentration of hospitals and an increase in medicalization directly affect the choice of care and carer for (pregnant) women without a significant improvement in the outcome of birth or increased satisfaction for women.³⁴ The number of women giving birth with a community midwife is decreasing³⁵. Obstetricians are becoming less 'physiology minded'³⁶. This is happening while overwhelming evidence points towards a continuity-of-care model, and the empowering effect of a midwife for women, both physically and psychologically.³⁷ The cultivation of fear, especially through the media, has an effect on women and health care professionals. As a result the right of (pregnant) women to non-judgmental information, which enables her to give truly informed consent, is under threat.

Recommendations

Following the recommendation of the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), every woman has the right to:

- * a midwife wherever she chooses to give birth;
- * choice of place of birth³⁸ (<http://humanrightsinchildbirth.com/ternovszky-vs-hungary/>); and
- * receive information free of judgement so that she is able to give truly informed consent for her care.

³⁴ Sandel ea Cochrane review '13, de Jonge ea BJOG. '14, Brockelhurst ea '12

³⁵ ZN monitor '11-'12

³⁶ Kwee '07

³⁷ Lancet Midwifery series '14, Offerhaus Midwifery & CS trends '13, Maassen ea. '08

³⁸ Ternovszky '10

Women and Health (Area 3)

International

Author: Rineke van Dam, RutgersWPF

SRHR, women and health

The Netherlands has been a strong and persistent supporter of the realization and advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) including the fight against HIV/AIDS. Financial and political support for SRHR particularly took off after the commitments to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and has grown to become one of four key areas in Dutch development aid. Over time, through progressive national policies and the willingness to address the full spectrum of SRHR, the Netherlands has become internationally recognized for its expertise in this area.

Although the Netherlands covers many aspects of the Beijing Platform for Action, predominantly in the overlap with the ICPD Programme of Action, policy documents on SRHR do not explicitly integrate a gendered approach. Only recently, under Minister for Development Cooperation Lilianne Ploumen, has the Netherlands explicitly addressed issues where SRHR, gender equality and women's rights overlap, such as early and forced marriage and FGM.

Proposed policy and goals

Through partnerships with national governments, (international) CSOs and businesses, the Netherlands aims to contribute to MDG5 and MDG6: reducing maternal mortality, improving universal access to reproductive health, and halting the spread of HIV. To achieve that, the Netherlands in recent years has invested around €400 million per year in multilateral, bilateral and CSO programmes. Moreover, the Netherlands actively utilizes its political influence during relevant international meetings (CPD, CSW, post-2015), on boards of multilateral organizations and in partner countries to progress the international consensus on SRHR.

Building on the previous policy 'Choices and Opportunities',³⁹ a policy letter to Parliament in 2012 lays out the four current areas of interventions within Dutch foreign policy on SRHR, including HIV/AIDS⁴⁰. The Netherlands focuses on:

- * **better information and greater freedom of choice for young people about their sexuality**, including access to comprehensive sexuality education in and out of school; access to youth-friendly services and preventive measures; and opportunities for young people to make their voices heard and stand up for their rights;
- * **improved access to contraceptives and medicines**,

including a wider choice and greater availability of contraceptives; greater availability of medical resources to prevent maternal mortality and sexual health problems; and removing culturally determined and knowledge-related obstacles for women to use contraceptives;

- * **better health care during pregnancy and childbirth, including safe abortion**, consisting of better cooperation between public and private care providers; a better-integrated approach to HIV and sexual health in national health care policy in partner countries; better-quality obstetric care; and innovative ways of keeping or making sexual health care affordable and accessible; and
- * **greater respect for the sexual and reproductive rights of groups that are currently denied these rights**, including raising respect for the human rights of specific groups, such as sexual minorities, drug users and sex workers; providing these groups with access to sexual health facilities and commodities; lobbying for women's and girls' right to self-determination in matters of sexuality; and promoting a rights-based approach in policy and legislation in partner countries.

While this policy continues to guide interventions in the area of SRHR and HIV/AIDS today, the new Minister for Development Cooperation, Mrs Ploumen, who took position in the autumn of 2012, slightly reformulated the overall policy priority as "investing in equal rights for women and sexual and reproductive health and rights".⁴¹ In her analysis, the Minister highlights that the violation of women's rights as well as high maternal, newborn and child mortality continue to persist, and that international consensus around women's rights and SRHR is under considerable pressure. She thereby effectively links the Dutch activities in the area of gender equality to the SRHR policy, as well as to the human rights policy under the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Although no major shifts in investments and policy occurred, the Netherlands initiated extra and particular support to fight early and forced marriage. In addition, the Dutch government aims to firmly embed gender equality as a stand-alone goal, as well as the inclusion of SRHR goals and targets, in the post-2015 agenda.

Results

In the past, there have been two evaluations by the IOB on Dutch efforts in the area of SRHR and HIV/AIDS (for the period 2004–2006 and 2007–2012). Moreover, Parliament is informed annually on the progress in relation to each policy priority, including for SRHR. As the relevant policy documents do not include a gendered approach, there is no information available on the impact of the Netherlands'

39 *Keuzes en Kansen, Beleidsnotitie HIV/AIDS en seksuele en reproductieve gezondheid en rechten (SRGR) in het buitenlandsbeleid*, November 2008

40 Letter of 7 May 2012 from the Minister for European Affairs and International Cooperation to the House of Representatives on policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including HIV/AIDS

41 *Wat de Wereld Verdient: Een nieuwe agenda voor hulp, handel en investeringen*, 2013

activities to reduce gender inequality in relation to SRHR and HIV/AIDS.

According to the latest IOB evaluation, the Netherlands has been successful in contributing to the worldwide reduction of newborn and maternal mortality (nearly halved between 1990 and 2010); improved knowledge and availability of contraceptives; and prevention of HIV transmission, including from mother-to-child. In a letter to Parliament,⁴² the Dutch government argues that the Netherlands contributed to a reduction of 25% or more in the number of HIV infections in countries with high HIV prevalence, to reduced teenage pregnancies in all partner countries, to 8 million people living with HIV worldwide who have access to antiretrovirals, to 29 million women who are protected against unwanted pregnancies, and to an increased coverage of antenatal care. However, there are persistent inequities in relation to SRHR and HIV/AIDS within and between countries and regions, between educational levels and wealth quintiles, which have hardly been redressed through the Dutch efforts. Gender disparities are not specifically mentioned in the evaluations, but global statistics show that the burden of poor SRHR and HIV/AIDS continues to be disproportionately carried by girls and women.

In international fora, the Netherlands has been particularly successful (and recognized for that) in mobilizing like-minded governments to speak out for SRHR in relation to sensitive issues such as sexual rights, young people and adolescents, sexuality education, sexual orientation and safe abortion, cumulating in the completion of the global review of the ICPD and the continuation of its agenda beyond 2014. Many of the Dutch priorities have fed into resolutions, declarations and policies and thereby progressed the international debate on SRHR and gender equality. Since the early 2000s, financial contributions to UNFPA and UNAIDS have also been key to influence the international SRHR and HIV/AIDS debate from a rights-based approach. Contributions to multilateral organizations overall have been fluctuating around 50% of the total SRHR and HIV/AIDS budget.

In the various policy documents on SRHR and HIV/AIDS over time, the Netherlands has consistently focused on sensitive issues as mentioned above. Both IOB evaluations argue that despite this strong policy focus and influence in international debates, translation into practice and concrete initiatives generally lags behind.⁴³ Only through support to NGOs is the Netherlands able to particularly address issues such as adolescent SRHR and key populations. In addition, a slight bias can be seen in the past towards funding organizations and programmes working on HIV/AIDS in particular, while leaving too little effort for the intended integration and explicit need to invest in highly underfunded SRHR programmes.

Lessons learned

The persistent, rights-based approach to SRHR over the years has contributed to the visibility and credibility of the Dutch commitment to SRHR. Through this recognition, the Netherlands has been able to influence international debates and convince other governments

⁴² BIS 131/2013 *Voortgang Speerpunten Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*, 24 October 2013

⁴³ IOB evaluation, *Balancing ideals with practice, Policy evaluation of Dutch involvement in sexual and reproductive health and rights 2007–2012*, pp. 43 and 19

and multilateral organizations about their positions on SRHR. The political efforts, combined with staunch financial support, have contributed to improved global outcomes.

At the same time, much room for improvement remains. The IOB evaluation rightfully pinpoints that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Not enough budget is reserved for concrete initiatives to address the more sensitive issues related to SRHR nor the persistent inequalities. Related to this criticism is the imbalance between funding channels (multilateral, bilateral, civil society). The IOB evaluation found that multilateral organizations in particular are not delivering on topics such as safe abortion, equal access to services and key populations. Civil society has been found to do much better on sensitive issues and issues of inequality. There is, however, an imbalance, since about half of the funding for SRHR by the Dutch government goes through these multilateral channels, and only about 20% through civil society, leaving the more sensitive topics underfunded. Reasons to increase funding for multilateral organizations seem to be driven by economies of scale – while little is actually known about the actual impact achieved by these organizations.

The absence of a gendered approach in Dutch policy on SRHR hardly seems in line with the efforts to put gender equality and SRHR on international agendas from a human-rights perspective. Over the years, there have been separate departments for gender and SRHR, including HIV/AIDS, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Only under the leadership of the current Minister for Development Cooperation are significant attempts being made to streamline the two priorities by adding activities in the area of early and forced marriage, gender-based violence and FGM. However, the question remains whether the integration of gender in SRHR will be only in a few topics or whether it will be part of every SRHR programme funded by the Dutch government.

Recommendations

- * Ensure balance between funding channels (multilateral, bilateral, civil society), and make the link between intended policy impact and chosen channel transparent. It should be made clear why particular organizations are funded under the SRHR and HIV/AIDS budget line and how they contribute to the desired impact and objectives as formulated in the SRHR and HIV/AIDS policy.
- * Intensify efforts to address sensitive issues that remain internationally underfunded, such as safe abortion, equal access to services, including for adolescents, and key populations.

NGO case study: Dutch SRHR Alliance

The SRHR Alliance works towards a society free from poverty, in which all women and men, girls and boys, and marginalized groups enjoy the same rights, irrespective of their ethnic, cultural and religious background, age, gender identity and sexual orientation. The Alliance consists of five Dutch organizations: Rutgers WPF (lead agency), Amref Flying Doctors, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, dance4life and Simavi. The SRHR Alliance strengthens and supports

CSOs in nine countries across Africa and Asia, through the Unite for Body Rights programme, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Netherlands from 2011 until 2015.

In the Unite for Body Rights programme, three strategies are combined to improve the SRHR situation of young people, women and marginalized groups:

- * improving access to and the quality of SRHR education;
- * improving access of and the quality to sexual and reproductive health services; and
- * creating an enabling environment in support of SRHR.

The SRHR Alliance applies a gendered lens by, on the one hand, mainstreaming attention for gender structures and imbalances in curricula for comprehensive sexuality education and by training health workers on the right to access to services for all. At the same time, depending on the specific contextual SRHR situation, focused interventions are implemented addressing issues such as gender-based violence; LGBT rights; FGM and early and forced marriage.

Examples of results

In 2013 the SRHR Alliance conducted a mid-term outcome evaluation. A large number of results had already been achieved across the three strategies. A few of them are highlighted below, particularly concerning the enabling environment and in the area of early and forced marriage.

In **Pakistan** the SRHR Alliance has been particularly successful in its advocacy efforts to pass legislation that curtails early and forced marriage, and where such legislation is passed to ensure that it is being implemented. Policymakers, parliamentarians and other important stakeholders were targeted to push for laws that end early and forced marriage throughout Pakistan. In Sindh province the Alliance worked with specialists on a draft bill that increases the legal age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 (the same as boys). In 2013 the Child Marriage Restraint Bill was passed unanimously by the Provincial Assembly. Simultaneously, the SRHR Alliance has been working in other states and with the national government to pass similar bills.

In **Tanzania and Malawi** the SRHR Alliance has put a considerable amount of effort into the formulation of by-laws which have a large impact on local practices. By-laws were passed that address early marriage, early pregnancy, FGM and sexual and gender-based violence. In **Tanzania** the Alliance advocated for a re-entry policy to ensure that girls are able to return to school after giving birth. Besides setting a legal structure to reduce the occurrence of harmful

practices, by-laws are also instrumental in reaching women and girls more effectively with SRHR information – for instance, concerning the importance of giving birth at a health facility, support from men/husbands during labour, and increasing school attendance among girls and young mothers.

Lessons learned

The SRHR Alliance is committed to a broad SRHR approach, including the three pillars on which the Unite for Body Rights programme is founded, to address context-specific SRHR issues. This means that in contexts where addressing early and forced marriage is paramount, the Alliance strengthens access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and their access to appropriate health services, in addition to raising awareness and challenging socio-cultural norms among influential people such as parents, teachers, traditional and religious leaders and peers, while also advocating for an increase in the legal age of marriage, return-to-school acts and other important policies. Such a comprehensive approach leads to change at all levels: at the individual level where young people become more knowledgeable about their SRHR and able to seek appropriate services; at the socio-cultural level where the autonomy of young people and women is determined; and at the structural level where health services are able to accommodate specific needs, while governments ensure that the rights of all are protected and fulfilled.

Another crucial lesson the SRHR Alliance has learned is the importance of dialogue and capacity-building with partner organizations. SRHR and gender power relations are in many contexts sensitive and culturally laden topics, including for the staff of partner organizations. Challenging their norms and improving their knowledge and skills to analyse and address issues such as gender-based violence or discrimination against LGBT is a first and crucial step to ensure a successful programme. Therefore, the SRHR Alliance works with a process of value clarification whereby a common understanding is created through dialogue about the necessary changes and the contribution CSOs can make to such change.

Violence against Women (Area 4)

National

Author: Antia Wiersma, Atria

In collaboration with: Riekje Kok, Federatie Opvang, Tonny Filedt Kok, NVR and Petra Snelders, Movisie

Proposed policy and goals

To start on a positive note: violence against women and domestic violence are high on the agenda of the Dutch government. They require and receive government-wide attention. Another positive development is that the Dutch government will probably host and support the Third World Conference of Women's Shelters in November 2015 and support the Global Network of Women's Shelters (GNWS) to strengthen its position as a network.

The government's approach is coordinated by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport in collaboration with three other ministries (Security and Justice; Education, Culture and Science; and Social Affairs and Employment). The approach is based on three mainstays:

- * strengthening the position of (potential) victims;
- * targeting perpetrators; and
- * breaking the cycle of intergenerational transfer of violence, including forms of violence in the domestic environment.

However, Dutch policy in this critical area is gender-neutrally termed as violence in dependent relationships, including not only violence against women and intimate partner violence but also child abuse and violence against elderly people as well as human trafficking, exploitation of women and harmful practices.

Furthermore, no national action plan to end violence against women has been adopted in the Netherlands. In addition to the absence of a national action plan we are on the brink of a major decentralization operation in the Netherlands. As of January 2015 a number of responsibilities and tasks will be transferred from national government to local (municipal) governments, including tasks and responsibilities concerning the prevention and combating of domestic violence. The idea behind the decentralization is to bring the implementation of the laws involved closer to the homes of Dutch citizens. However, the purpose of this operation is primarily to manage costs and to be more cost-efficient (which in reality means significant cuts). Dutch NGOs are quite concerned about the effects of this operation on the coherence of the implementation of policy and the risk of inequality of implementation by different local governments.

Another concern is the closing of a national programme, 'Domestic violence and police responsibility', within the Dutch police force. The project's aim was to monitor how the regional police forces were taking their responsibility in a joint effort with other (regional)

social agents to stop domestic violence. The closing of the project, at about the same time the police was centralized into a national police force, makes it harder to monitor the effects of the centralization of the police on their task in combating violence against women and children and domestic violence.

The pan-European Istanbul Convention on combating violence against women and girls and domestic violence, drafted by the Council of Europe in May 2011 and so far ratified by 15 Member States, entered into force on 1 August 2014. The Netherlands is still in the process of ratification: a draft law was published and commented on in the spring of 2014. It is expected to become a national law in the Netherlands in early 2015.

The implementation of this convention will be a challenge due to the upcoming decentralization of policy on domestic violence as well as the gender-neutral way Dutch policy is formulated. This convention specifically demands gender sensitivity in policy and its implementation, including attention to the underlying inequalities between the sexes. These inequalities should be addressed and be seen in a broader perspective – not just policy to end violence against women, but gender inequality in society at large. Analysis of the proposed governmental budget for 2015 has shown that no extra budget is being allocated for the implementation of this convention in the Netherlands. Lacking is also a good national system of data collection, based on international standards and with the ability to analyse the data and activities of the multi-agency approach that exists in the Netherlands.

The Dutch coordinating ministry has ordered quite a few research studies to be conducted by independent research institutes into different subjects related to the mainstays mentioned above. The results of these studies are expected no sooner than 2015. Among these are studies on European best practices on breaking the cycle of intergenerational transfer of violence; on forced marriages; on prevalence of violence in dependent relationships; and on the abuse of elderly people. However, it is unclear to what extent the role of gender will be part of these studies.

Results

Dutch policy to end violence against women (including domestic violence and intimate partner violence) is formulated in gender-neutral terms (or 'sex-neutral', as the official Dutch government report on Beijing +20 states). Although the integrated and system-oriented Dutch approach has brought us far in the development of a government-wide approach, the gender-neutrality approach is missing an important element when it comes to gender-sensitive thinking and acting. The majority of the methodologies and inter-

ventions are missing a gender-sensitive interpretation,⁴⁴ and the effectiveness of the current policy is not yet noticeable: the number of fatal victims of domestic violence in recent years, for example, has not dropped. And there is still no adequate explanation for the fact that a significant proportion of the victims are women, and most perpetrators men.⁴⁵

A number of Dutch NGOs have repeatedly asked the responsible ministry to adopt a more gender-sensitive approach on the issue of violence against women (see also remarks made on this issue in the latest report by the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport⁴⁶): the government has taken this repeated criticism to heart and ordered a gender scan of the national policy in 2013/2014. The results of this scan (which was limited to the area of intimate partner violence) were translated into a follow-up project to look into the effects of gender-neutral policy and possible positive effects of more gender-sensitive implementation. The purpose of the project is to increase the knowledge, expertise and commitment among professionals, for a gender-specific approach against partner violence. This follow-up project started in August 2014 and will be concluded in the second half of 2015.

The government is focusing especially on domestic violence. Policy aimed at the prevention and combating of other gender-related violence – for example, in the public area (sexual violence and harassment (rape), stalking, the role played by new technologies in women's experiences of abuse and violence) – receives less attention. A coherent government vision and approach concerning different forms of violence against women – a requirement of the Istanbul Convention – is still missing.

Lessons learned

It is important to have a 'watchdog' among NGOs to critically monitor the government's performance on this subject – one that can inform Members of Parliament and is able to distinguish facts from fables.

It is important to keep repeating the message (in this case, of the effects of gender-neutrally formulated policy), even though the message is not well received. As the French say: *frappez toujours*.

Sexual violence within dependent relationships is included in the policy against domestic violence. However, other forms of sexual violence have so far no 'overarching' policy area. The approach is insufficient: there is a need for a nationwide front office function for victims and perpetrators of sexual violence; the infrastructure for

support after sexual violence needs more clarity (who is responsible for what and when); the needs of victims are diverse and range from support from other victims to specialized help with post-traumatic symptoms. At this time of decentralization in particular, extra attention is needed.

Recommendations

From an NGO perspective, violence against women is positioned as a violation of human rights. Legally binding international instruments (such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, the European Treaty on Human Rights etc.) are helpful to 'remind' States of their duties in this respect, no matter what their policy is. Collaborations with the Human Rights Institutes (European or at the national level) are useful to underline this point and to make the case for human rights.

NGO case studies

A multi-NGO project (Dutch Women's Council, FNV Vrouw and Vrouwenplatform Carree, together with the Dutch Federation of Women's Shelters) in the province of Overijssel has been successful in giving female victims of domestic violence their lives back. The core of this project has been intensive coaching for the abused women, to stimulate them to become active and participate in society (via education, volunteer work or regular work), to regain control of their life and become economically independent.⁴⁷

WE CAN Young⁴⁸ is a campaign with a specific goal: to increase the sexual and relational self-determination of girls and boys. WE CAN Young tackles stereotyped images of men and women and boys and girls, because this is seen as the root of the problem. The campaign encourages young people to think about these images and not take them for granted. WE CAN Young is active in 15 municipalities. The WE CAN Young campaign derives from the worldwide WE CAN campaign,⁴⁹ which is short for 'We can end all violence against women'. This campaign is aimed at combating the inequality between men and women locally and worldwide and to stop all violence against women. WE CAN is active in 15 countries. Both the WE CAN campaigns are working with change-makers, coalition partners and ambassadors. The Dutch campaigns are coordinated by Movisie.

In February 2014 Atria published a factsheet (in Dutch only) on the internationally binding legal obligations of States to combat violence against women. The reason behind this factsheet is the upcoming decentralization of policy (from national level to municipal level) on combating violence against women and girls

44 Database of Effective Social Interventions, Movisie (www.movisie.nl)

45 Factsheet *Huiselijk Geweld* (domestic violence), Movisie, November 2013; Factsheet Atria, Ferwerda & Hardeman (2013), 'Look... then you can see!' (Kijk... dan zie je het!).

46 <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2014/07/10/kamerbrief-over-voortgangsrapportage-gia.html>

47 In Dutch only: <http://www.nederlandsevroewenraad.nl/html/index.php?alinealD=1098>

48 <http://www.wecanyoung.nl/english>

49 <http://www.wecan.nl/english>

in the Netherlands, as well as the Dutch ratification of the Istanbul Convention (to be expected in early 2015). This factsheet has been sent to Members of Parliament, who used it in their discussions with the responsible ministers. Furthermore, Atria organized an expert meeting to inform and influence the different stakeholders in the upcoming decentralization on these legally binding obligations.⁵⁰

The Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (FRA) published its EU-wide survey on violence against women and girls in March 2014. Atria used the main findings for the Netherlands to inform all relevant policy officers in (local and national) government and representatives of Dutch NGOs. Furthermore, Atria has written an extensive review of the findings on the Dutch situation and compared those findings to relevant Dutch research on the subject. This publication has been published and distributed among participants of two national conferences (October: 40 years of Dutch women's shelters, and November: about violence against women and human rights violations, organized by the Dutch Institute on Human Rights) as well as Members of Parliament for their quarterly meeting with the responsible ministry.⁵¹

The Dutch Women's Representative to the UN in 2013, Josette Dijkhuizen, ran two pilot projects in 2013/2014 in which she empowered women in women's shelters to start their own business. This project has been evaluated by a research team from Atria, an institute on gender equality and women's history. The main findings were positive in terms of women's empowerment to overcome their low self-esteem and to restart their life after incidents of serious violence. However, the results in terms of economic independence due to women starting their own business are less clear. Atria's advice has been to build into the programme a follow-up to ensure that these women do not give up and actually start their own business. Dijkhuizen will roll out this project nationally (with help from the Soroptimists who have been asked to function as 'buddies' for the women) and export the idea internationally as a way of empowering women who have suffered violence against them.⁵²

On 14 October the Ican app was launched by Her Majesty Queen Maxima of the Netherlands. This app is the brainchild of a victim of domestic violence, and its main purpose is to help other victims. Via the app, users can gather evidence of the abuse (diary function) and contact peers and seek their advice, to build up confidence and to live their life safely.⁵³

50 In Dutch only: http://www.atr.nl/atr.nl/actueel/nieuwsoverzicht/_pid/column2_1/_rp_column2_1_elementid/1_326070

51 http://www.atr.nl/atr.nl/eng/news/publications/_pid/column2_1/_rp_column2_1_elementid/1_347424

52 In Dutch only: <http://www.krachtbedrijf.nl/>

53 In Dutch only: <https://www.blijfgroep.nl/sites/default/files/Ican-voorblad.pdf>

Violence against Women (Area 4)

International

Author: Daniela Rosche, Oxfam Novib

In 1995 in Beijing, governments agreed a solid policy framework towards the elimination of violence against women in all its forms. Many of the measures agreed upon reflect the fact that 20 years ago violence against women was already identified as a major obstacle to the realization of women's rights and the achievement of gender equality. At the same time, governments clearly identified violence against women as detrimental to development efforts and peace.

One of the major achievements of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) was the formulation of an effective definition of what violence against women is, building on the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in all its forms.⁵⁴ Moreover, governments agreed what forms violence against women encompasses, without attempting to narrow these down or limit them. This has been hugely supportive of efforts of women's rights organizations and practitioners in development organizations working to address this problem.

Proposed policy and goals

Governments committed to a number of specific policy actions and initiatives to combat violence against women. These are organized around three main pillars, so-called 'strategic objectives':

- * Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women (D1).
- * Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures (D2).
- * Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking (D3).

As a common denominator among all the objectives adopted, governments affirmed their own specific role and responsibility as primary duty bearer in the elimination of violence against women.

Results

In an effort to meet the first objective, D1, aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women, governments agreed to a long list of more or less comprehensive measures. These measures would not only be taken by governments themselves but would be supported by CSOs, the UN system, the private sector, academia and others. Governments clearly understood that eliminating and preventing violence against women requires multi-layered and cross-sectoral interventions carried forward by a diverse range of

stakeholders addressing a complex problem. Eliminating violence against women also required a comprehensive set of interventions ranging from politically condemning all forms of violence against women, adopting, enforcing and reviewing legislation on violence against women and specific forms of violence against women, and ratifying and implementing the global women's rights treaty, CEDAW. Significantly, governments also committed to refrain from encouraging in any way violence or harmful practices identified as violence against women and girls. They also agreed to provide victims with access to justice and redress and ensure compensation through specific legislation and establishing institutional mechanisms addressing violence against women and national action plans at all levels. These are just a few examples of the wealth of actions and interventions governments have agreed to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

Governments also realized that more data need to be collected about violence against women, and research undertaken with the aim of better understanding violence against women and its causes and consequences (Objective D2). Together with the UN, regional agencies, academic institutions and CSOs, they committed to making more research available about violence against women. Finally, governments agreed to tackle (sex) trafficking and, in particular, act to change the root causes of trafficking, including demand, and guarantee that women and girls are protected from trafficking and that perpetrators are punished.

Lessons learned

So, how far have we got? Have we managed to eradicate this global pandemic over the last 20 years? Violence against women and girls is today still the most widespread and persistent violation of human rights. It affects more than 1 billion women worldwide.⁵⁵ Evidence on the prevalence of violence against women has shown that the home is often the most dangerous place for women and girls. According to a 2013 study from the WHO, one in three women worldwide (35% of women) have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from men, usually an intimate partner.⁵⁶ Trafficking in women and girls for sexual exploitation is growing rapidly, with an estimated 17 million women and girls trafficked for sexual exploitation.⁵⁷ These numbers are staggering, and it is not surprising that governments at the 58th meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women this year expressed "deep concern that discrimination and violence against women and girls continue to occur in

⁵⁴ "Violence against women" is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life" (United Nations (1993) *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, New York: United Nations.

⁵⁵ Around 35% of women experience violence, on the basis of 3.43 billion women worldwide (data from 2010: http://esa.un.org/wpp/excel-data/EXCEL_FILES/1_Population/WPP2012_POP_F01_3_TOTAL_POPULATION_FEMALE.XLS).

⁵⁶ WHO et al. (2013) *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*, Geneva: WHO et al.

⁵⁷ <http://www.equalitynow.org/node/1010>

all parts of the world".⁵⁸

On the positive side, important progress has been made over the last 20 years in adopting policy and legislation aimed at eliminating violence against women at national, regional and global levels. Many of these provisions are in line with the recommendations adopted in the BPfA or expand from these. In addition, a number of governments have adopted legislation at the national, regional or global level.⁵⁹ Governments have also worked to increase awareness on violence against women through public campaigns and have promoted positive social norms. The principle of due diligence, which establishes governments' responsibility for the prevention and protection of women from violence against women, whether it happens in the bedroom or on the streets, is now firmly embedded in international norms.⁶⁰ The evidence-based research on violence against women, its causes and detrimental effects on women, their communities and even the welfare of countries has grown immensely in the past 20 years. A number of notable reports and studies by women's organizations, UN Women, the UN Secretary-General and many others have contributed to this. We now know much more about violence against women, including aspects that are hard to quantify, such as prevalence or the economic cost.⁶¹ The 2012 *World Development Report on Gender and Development* made a major contribution to an improved understanding of violence against women as a gateway issue and its repercussions for the realization of women's rights and gender equality as a prerequisite of sustainable development.⁶²

It is unacceptable then that still today at least one in three women will experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. Despite the many positive developments, we still have a long way to go to see real change and violence in whatever form eliminated from women's and girls' lives. There is a huge gap in the implementation of Beijing agreements and all others that have followed since then, which is illustrated by the high number of women and girls exposed to violence. Oxfam is very concerned that while governments have invested in better norms and policies, this has not been matched with adequate funding and accountability systems to deliver on these norms and policies in practice. In her 2013 report to the Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Rashida Manjoo, concluded "violence is endemic and the lack of accountability for violations experienced by women is the rule, rather than the exception".⁶³

More and better implementation of existing policies and norms

58 Quoted from paragraph 30, *Agreed Conclusions of the UN Commission on the Status of Women*, 58th meeting, March 2014: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/58/csw58-agreedconclusions-advanceduneditedversion.ashx>.

59 For a full overview, see *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, EGM/PP/2012/Report, September 2012: <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

60 See UN General Assembly 3rd Committee resolutions

61 For prevalence data, see WHO 2005 and 2013; for economic costs, see various studies – for example, *European Added Value Assessment*, Draft Report with Recommendations to the Commission on combating Violence against Women, European Parliament, Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, 31 October 2013 or <http://www.el-karama.org/arabic/content/economic-cost-of-violence-against-women-in-egypt-exceeds-3-billion-le-since-2009>.

62 World Bank (2012) *World Development Report 2012: Gender equality and development*, Washington, DC: World Bank: <http://go.worldbank.org/COCTMSFI40>. See also the World Bank's follow-up report of 2014, *Agency and Voice*.

63 United Nations (2013) *State responsibility for eliminating violence against women, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences*, A/HRC/23/49, New York: United Nations

aimed at eradicating violence against women is needed to achieve real change. Violence against women is a complex problem. Among its root causes are gender inequality and discrimination against women, stereotypical social norms and attitudes. These factors in real life condone violence against women and are hard to tackle. Measuring and monitoring progress is, therefore, critical. At the moment, there is no effective monitoring mechanism or an operational agenda that provides vigilance for the implementation of agreed policies and norms in place.⁶⁴ As a result, progress on eliminating violence against women is far too slow. Governments and the international community are failing women on this issue.

Recommendations

Oxfam is calling for a comprehensive international action plan to eliminate violence against women, aimed at fast-tracking policy implementation that is time-bound and has strong accountability mechanisms.⁶⁵ This proposal is driven by a sense of urgency to step up existing responses and renew commitment to the elimination of violence against women. Without an accountability mechanism and plan to eliminate violence against women as a fundamental human rights and development issue that needs to be addressed to achieve transformative change for gender equality, it is highly unlikely that violence against women can be curbed and eliminated. As we are nearing a critical moment for the achievement of women's rights and gender equality in 2015, governments and the international community must step up their efforts and political commitment to eradicating this human rights atrocity.

NGO case study

Author: Reem Judeh, Hivos

Breaking taboos: Beyond Africa: FGM in the Middle East – Hivos project in partnership with WADI

Among the grave forms of gender-based violence including domestic violence, child and forced marriage and honour killings, FGM is the most neglected issue. FGM is recognized internationally as a serious human rights violation and was mainly regarded as an 'African problem', but growing evidence indicates that it is also a common problem in some communities in the Middle East and a number of Asian countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

In the Middle East, FGM is an extremely sensitive and taboo issue, which touches the core of cultural, religious and traditional aspects of societies and communities. For a long time the topic was taboo, but slowly this veil of silence is starting to lift, and it is being discussed even by a number of religious leaders in the region.

64 See also *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, EGM/PP/2012/Report, September 2012: <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>.

65 Oxfam International (2013) *Ending violence against women: The case for a comprehensive international action plan*, Oxford: Oxfam International: <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bn-ending-violence-against-women-action-plan-220213-en.pdf>; Oxfam International (2014) *Close the gap: How to eliminate violence against women beyond 2015*, Oxford: Oxfam International: http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/bn-close-gap-violence-women-2015-110314-en_0_0.pdf

Besides Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women (FLOW), other Mutual Fund System funding was used for the same goal. With these other funds, Hivos started to cover countries beyond the traditional African countries, reaching out to many girls and women living in the Middle East who continue to face the immense harm of this practice. Since 2011 the Dutch Mutual Fund System funding has been contributing to the only campaign in Asia⁶⁶ yielding significantly higher success rates in reducing the practice of FGM.

WADI, the Iraqi-German association with local office and staff in Kurdistan, has become a strategic partner to Hivos in fighting FGM in the Middle East. The first work by Hivos in this area was supporting WADI's FGM programme in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Approach

To address FGM, Hivos and WADI committed to a holistic, rights-based approach that regards the work against FGM as an element of general human, social and economic development in the Middle East. The interventions are built on the understanding that FGM is a cultural and social practice. They aim to facilitate community empowerment and create ownership by the targeted community to end FGM.

Activities

- * Research and data collection: for systematic and reliable documentation and designing evidenced-based lobbying and programmes
- * Direct interventions with the communities: to facilitate their empowerment through awareness-raising, capacity-building of community leaders and facilitating access to services and information, focusing on engaging men as agents for change
- * Lobbying and advocacy: to adopt laws to criminalize the practice of FGM and to ensure the implementation of existing laws
- * In Northern Iraq, WADI's campaign against FGM has a holistic approach including research, media and civil society campaigns, legislation, lobbying for law enforcement, awareness-raising in villages and schools and trainings for professionals.
- * After the first studies conducted by WADI proved a high prevalence of FGM in Northern Iraq, WADI founded a coalition with women's and human rights groups. A broad discussion in the Iraqi Kurdish region including media articles, petitions, demonstrations and film screenings was initiated. Members of Parliament were supported in drafting a law against domestic

violence, including FGM, passed in 2011. Local clerics were approached to support the aim.

- * Since then, WADI has been working hand in hand with the Kurdish Regional Government – for example, training police officers and midwives. While there was resistance to banning FGM from the government before 2011, leading politicians have now made stopping FGM a key cause.
- * A core tool for awareness-raising are WADI's mobile teams:⁶⁷ well-trained social workers visit villages, show an educational film and hold discussions with women and men separately. The aim is to convince a whole village to become FGM-free, which includes signing a declaration and putting up a sign at a central spot in the village. Now seven villages in Iraqi Kurdistan are FGM-free.

Examples of success

- * The comprehensive approach has proven very successful. A study last year⁶⁸ showed that rates of FGM practice had dropped in some communities in Kurdistan, ranging from 100% to 40%, to almost 0% in some regions, and even in the region with the highest prevalence of 99% to just 48% among girls aged 6–10.
- * Only 10 years ago, FGM in Iraq was a non-topic. Outside Iraq hardly anybody had heard of it, and in the country itself it was well hidden within communities. Today the vast majority of people know of the harmful effects of FGM, and 70% oppose the practice in Iraqi Kurdistan, as a new study shows. Acceptance of FGM, which was not contested just 10 years ago, is very low today, with only 9.7% of women supporting it, 72.3% of all respondents (men and women) saying they do not support it, and 67.5% stating that it should be eradicated.⁶⁹
- * The anti-FGM campaign in Northern Iraq created a region-wide movement. In Iran, with its highly restrictive environment, besides the initial work supported by Hivos there are currently newly commissioned researchers funded to conduct further studies and work on a film project there. An initial mapping study of the practice has been conducted in Oman. The results of the study were shared with key actors including the UN and contributed to the inclusion of questions on FGM in the UNICEF-designed Multi-Cluster Surveys in Oman for the first time this year.

⁶⁷ http://wadi-online.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2270:projekt-bericht-four-fgm-mobile-teams-201&catid=53:projektberichte&Itemid=175

⁶⁸ http://en.wadi-online.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1094:significant-decrease-in-fgm-in-kurdistan-new-survey-data-shows&catid=15:presseerklaerungen&Itemid=109

⁶⁹ A Knowledge and practices (KAP) survey was conducted in the Kurdistan region of Iraq by Heartland Alliance, commissioned by UNICEF, September 2014.

⁶⁶ Covering countries in the Middle East and South East Asia, including Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabi, Malaysia and Indonesia

- * Hivos and WADI organized a conference about FGM in the Middle East and Asia⁷⁰ in Istanbul in May 2014, bringing together local activists and researchers from eight countries in the region and representatives from UNICEF, Orchid and other international actors. At this conference two networks were formed in which activists agreed to support each other in their local campaigns and organize joint actions towards ending FGM.

Lessons learned

A crucial lesson from this work is the importance of engaging men in addressing this issue. FGM is a taboo issue and has never been discussed with men. WADI holds different discussion groups with men only, to talk about FGM and its negative impact on their private and sexual life. This approach has created open discussion and an opportunity to influence key male actors and gain their support.

The second important lesson is how crucial is to gain the trust and support of the village major and clerics as an entry point to the community. Their support opens doors to allow NGOs to work freely inside the villages with men and women and gain access to schools, health centres and other community gatherings.

The challenge remains how to sustain these results in a context of a rapid increase in political instability and threats of more violence.

Why the Dutch government should continue supporting the programme to stop FGM in the Middle East

- * **Momentum: the UN and other OECD DAC countries have launched large anti-FGM campaigns:** The UK is providing up to GBP35 million over a period of five years from March 2013, focusing mainly on Africa. Complementary and relevant steps towards ending the practice in the Middle East and Asia would be crucial.
- * **Leading the way: this programme could stand at the forefront of European anti-FGM campaigns:** The Netherlands is already one of few countries highlighted as main donors in the UNICEF assessment report in 2011 on the funding situation for ending FGM. The Middle East programme can lead the way for others: in relatively new territory, new approaches can be developed while learning from campaigns in Africa. Dutch funding will send a clear message and leverage attention, commitment and funding from other international actors including European countries, the USA and UN institutions.
- * **Ending child abuse and improving women's role in society:** Ending FGM will substantially improve women's and

girls' physical and psychological health and enable them to live their lives without pain. Breaking the taboo has a high impact on gender relations: when men and women start talking about intimate issues, the respect for the other gender's position grows immensely. Ending FGM is connected to respecting a woman's body and integrity, and this change in attitude entails tackling all forms of gender-based violence and respecting women as individuals.

- * **Progress on MDGs:** Ending FGM is directly in line with the Netherlands' commitment to the MDGs and the SRHR policy of Minister Ploumen, which focuses on a combination of sexual health education, preventing FGM, and women's empowerment, as highlighted recently in her letter to the Dutch Parliament.
- * **In a number of countries there are laws banning the practice:** There are laws in Egypt and northern Iraq banning FGM; in Yemen there are also legal restrictions, though their effect remains questionable. There are no laws criminalizing the practice in the rest of the Middle East. This presents an opportunity to promote the law in other countries and work with the communities to ensure implementation of the law and create ownership in combating the practice.

⁷⁰ <http://www.stopfgmmideast.org/second-middle-east-asia-conference-on-fgm-shows-that-new-strategies-are-needed/>

Women in Power and Decision-Making (Area 7)

National

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In cooperation with: Antia Wiersma, Atria

Proposed policy and goals

The Dutch government recognizes the phenomenon of restricted representation of women in power and decision-making functions. It regrets this situation, framing it as an inadequate use of valuable human capital by firms and organizations and as a loss for women themselves. The government assumes that organizations led by mixed-gender teams will perform better than organizations led by all-male teams.

Yet the Dutch government has not set any quotas concerning the representation of women at senior levels. Also within the European Union, the Netherlands is not in favour of imposing such quotas on firms to get more female leaders. This is primarily seen as a responsibility of the management of firms and organizations themselves.

The Emancipation Policy Letter 2013–2016 mentions two initiatives concerning women in decision-making positions. First, financial support for the Talent to the Top Charter will continue until the end of 2014. Through this project, firms and organizations are encouraged to join in by setting out clear targets concerning women in decision-making positions within their organizations, by announcing the measures they will take to meet these targets and by showing the results of their efforts each year. More than 200 public and private organizations so far have signed the Charter. Results are monitored and made public each year, and examples of good practice are presented. In its Emancipation Policy Letter 2013–2016, the Dutch government suggests that the Talent to the Top Charter will continue after 2014, but does not make clear how this could be achieved without its financial support.

The second initiative was established in the *Bestuur en Toezicht* (Government and Supervision) Act. It states that from 1 January 2013 onwards a target will be set concerning the representation of women and men on the management boards and supervisory councils of large firms. These bodies should consist of at least 30% women and 30% men. It must be noted, however, that if organizations do not meet the targets, there will be no other sanctions than making public which ones succeed and which fail. This gender balance initiative is based on the principle of 'comply or explain'. If companies fail to meet the targets, they should explain in their Annual Social Reports why they were not successful in attracting more women. In August 2014 a review was published on the state of gender balance on boards and supervisory councils. By the end of 2015 the Act will be evaluated, and results will be presented to Parliament.

Women in the senior civil service

The senior civil service (*Algemene Bestuursdienst – ABD*) consists of approximately 550 senior civil servants of the Dutch government. Since 2007 the percentage of women in the ABD has risen from 18% to 27% in 2013. The government's goal is for at least 30% of the ABD to be women by 2017. By the end of 2013, the Minister for Public Service sent an action plan to Parliament. Three kinds of measures will be taken: talent development; retention of female managers and talent; and special attention for women in recruitment and promotion in the ABD.

Women in political parties

Since the start of the emancipation policy in the Netherlands, in 1975, the importance of power-sharing or increasing the number of women participating in politics and public life has been acknowledged by government, political parties and women's organizations. Women's participation grew fastest up to the mid-1990s, in the period before the Netherlands became a State Party to CEDAW and took part in the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The over-representation of men in decision-making bodies was identified as one of three most persistent impediments for progress in all areas of the emancipation policy. In 1992 the government launched a comprehensive project with some 20 measures, provisions and target figures for increasing the number of elected and appointed women at each subsequent election. Progress slowed down a bit in the 1990s, and the goal of equal representation in 2010 was not reached.

In the 1990s the government's involvement in the issue of women's under-representation was based, first, on democracy – members of the political system must be able to exert equal influence on political decision-making – and, second, on progress of the policy: increased participation by women in politics and public administration could contribute to achieving the objectives of the emancipation policy in general. In addition the aspect of quality was stressed: in other words, the inefficiency of not making use of the vast managerial potential of women.

In its Beijing +20 report the government explains why it does not use target figures or quotas, or does not use these in this context any more. On the one hand, this behaviour may be understandable, because what results can be expected from a target strategy without sanctions? However, if no significant progress is possible, the situation might have to be characterized as one of discrimination, to be eliminated by the State Party according to CEDAW Article 2.

NGOs suggest examining what factors are hindering further progress towards equal participation, if and how these can be eliminated or what other ways can improve the situation. The exercise might bring to light unintentional instances of discrimination. The freedom or autonomy of political parties can, but does not necessarily stand in the way of ensuring women's substantive equal voting rights on the same terms as men. Likewise the statement on the 'freedom' of political parties to choose their own policy to promote a representative proportion of women and men (and male and female members of minority groups) is not unequivocal and the idea that this 'freedom' is unlimited, might be based on misunderstandings.

NGOs suggest that the government creates opportunities for newly elected representatives and appointed public office holders to acquire knowledge and insight they need to champion the implementation of CEDAW. The report on women in power and decision-making focuses primarily on access to power; Article 7 (a) is the lever for equal participation. Article 7 (b) is its accompaniment. An increase in the numbers of women in an elected or appointed position is relevant for the exertion of influence. But more factors are relevant for the evaluation of women's integration on equal terms with men, and for that reason the report could be enriched by answers to questions such as: Did women contribute to the formulation of a government coalition agreement? Or the local budget? Or do political parties indicate in their manifestoes or election programmes their priorities in relation to the implementation of CEDAW? Is the information (easily) available for women and men equally sufficient to bring out an informed vote? NGOs suggest exchanging good practices.

Results

The 2013 *Bedrijvenmonitor*⁷¹ (*Review of Results in Gender Balance within Firms*), published in August 2014, commissioned by the Dutch government, gives a first insight into the state of gender balance within firms. The results are not overwhelming. Since the beginning of 2013 (the start of the Government and Supervision Act), the percentage of women on management boards of large firms has risen by 1.5 percentage points to an average of 8.9%. The situation for supervisory councils is slightly better: an increase of 1.4 percentage points to 11.2%. The increase in the proportion of women in top positions turns out to have been achieved by just 10% of the firms.

If we look at the progress made against the 30% gender target, results show that in 2013, 13.5% of the firms achieved a 30% gender balance in their management board, and 16.6% of the firms in their supervisory council. Expectations about the future are moderate: only 5.5% of the firms think that a gender balance in management boards will be possible by the end of 2015. More optimism is shown regarding supervisory councils: 18.5% consider it feasible to reach a gender balance by the end of 2015.

The report shows that opportunities to appoint women to top positions are rarely taken. Only 20% of the firms used vacancies and new appointments to achieve a better gender balance. This shows that there is little sense of urgency concerning gender balance. The majority of firms (55%) have no policies to achieve a gender balance. Explicit explanations about the current gender imbalance in Annual Social Reports are scarce. Firms turn out not to be well informed about what is expected of them in terms of gender balance. A lot of work on the issue of gender balance needs to be done!

⁷¹ http://www.talentnaardetop.nl/uploaded_files/mediaitem/1Bedrijvenmonitor_2013.pdf

Women and Armed Conflict (Area 5) and Women in Power and Decision-making (Area 7)

International

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In cooperation with: Women Peacemakers Programme, Dewi Suralaga, Cordaid, Jetteke van der Schatte Olivier, Hivos, Ted Strop-Von Meijenfeldt, VDV

Introduction

Since the activities of Dutch CSOs and the policy of the Dutch government on 'Women and Armed Conflict' and 'Women in Power and Decision-making' are strongly intertwined, these two topics will both be addressed in this chapter.

Two general remarks can be made with regard to the developments in this field over the last five years. The first is that the adoption of the landmark UNSCR 1325 in 2000 has put women, peace and security high on the international agenda. Over the years the nature of implementing the Beijing strategic objectives has shifted from a focus on structural transformation of overall power structures to an approach that mainly focuses on including women in existing peace and security structures and mechanisms.

The second remark is related to the increasing amount of counter-terrorism and public-security measures that have been taken since 9/11. These measures have had a significant impact on the enabling environment of the work of CSOs in the field of gender and security. Increased difficulties in obtaining travel visas for women peace activists, tightened financial regulations for monetary transfers to CSOs in conflict-affected areas and increased administrative regulations for establishing a CSO are just a few examples of how these measures in practice affect the CSO sector in general and women's organizations in particular.⁷² In addition, these dynamics have also influenced public opinion and political will to invest in international cooperation.

Proposed policy and goals

'Women and Armed Conflict' and 'Women in Power and Decision-making' have been two of the top priorities of Dutch foreign policy over the past five years. In practice this has resulted in political and financial support as well as capacity-building.

For the second national action plan on UNSCR 1325 the Dutch government is providing €6 million of funding for projects in the six focus countries (Afghanistan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Sudan and Colombia) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As successor to the MDG3 fund, the Dutch government has made €80 million available for the FLOW fund for the period 2012–2015. FLOW finances 34 projects focusing on security, economic self-reliance and political partic-

ipation in more than 100 countries.⁷³ Until now, the budgetary earmarking of this fund has been relatively unclear. To be able to hold the Netherlands accountable for its actions concerning women in conflict, conflict prevention and post-conflict situations, earmarking should be more specific.⁷⁴ Based on General Recommendation 30 of CEDAW, the Netherlands, as a State Party, is bound to apply the Convention when being active in a conflict-affected country. Part of the obligation is to report comprehensively on activities related to UNSCR 1325.⁷⁵

The establishment of the second Dutch national action plan on UNSCR 1325 in 2012 is one of the results of the willingness of the Dutch government to cooperate with civil society to strengthen this agenda. The main focus of the activities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CSOs that signed this national action plan is political participation on both the local and national level. Connecting the grass-roots level with women's rights organizations that work on the national level and with diplomatic influence is a great benefit of this cooperation between CSOs and the Dutch government.

Recommendations

The Netherlands has been actively supporting the engagement of women in peace processes. There are successful examples, such as the support for engaging Syrian women in the peace process. However, these efforts would be even more effective if they did not exist as isolated cases. Apart from the ad hoc efforts in peace negotiations and projects from the national action plan, it would be more constructive to make the engagement of women in peace negotiations a priority in all policies. A focus on addressing the underlying gendered structures and injustices that feed and sustain armed conflict should also be included. To create a greater impact there is a need to go beyond the projects in the national action plan and carry out a deeper assessment, with accompanying monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and transparency of information. The next national action plan should include consultation and validation from local stakeholders, especially women's groups in the focus countries.

⁷² This statement is specifically reinforced by Women's Peacemakers Programme, through its experience with its international partner organizations.

⁷³ <http://www.flowprogramme.nl/Public/HomePage.aspx>

⁷⁴ Accountability on the basis of CEDAW General Recommendation 30

⁷⁵ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/GC/30) – General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations

A recurring area of improvement is the cooperation between embassies, the ministries in The Hague and CSOs. Although gender is a top priority, it is not automatically incorporated in all areas of foreign policy, such as peacebuilding and humanitarian aid. There are examples in which this has resulted in a lack of synergy and coherence that impede the potential impacts that could be achieved by Dutch stakeholders.

Activities of Dutch CSOs

Over the past five years Dutch CSOs have continued to develop a strong track record on 'Women and Armed Conflict' and 'Women in Power and Decision-making'.

With the emphasis on Dutch activities abroad, Dutch CSOs pay less attention to critically assessing the Dutch government's decisions which affect activities under UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and, similarly, the effects of Dutch internal decisions on the global peace and security agenda. Examples are the purchase of the Joint Strike Fighter during times of economic crisis; counter-terrorism legislation hindering progressive civil society organizing; and the arms industry. Women's rights groups could benefit from being more political and influencing decision-making within the Netherlands as well.

It remains a challenge for Dutch CSOs to position themselves in the fast-changing global political processes, and to move beyond the traditional development approach, with the assumption that the 'North' helps the 'South'. A recurring observation is that local needs and circumstances should be the basis for developing new activities and evaluating ongoing programmes.

Activities on conflict or peace and security should be based on a baseline analysis. CSOs are constantly developing strategies to respond to this. In 2013 Cordaid introduced the barometer on women, peace and security. The barometer currently reflects on the daily reality of peace and security issues of local women in India, Afghanistan, Colombia and the DRC.⁷⁶ The data collected are used to inform and influence policymakers, governments and donors.

To create cultures of peace, women not only need to be empowered, they also need men as allies to achieve sustainable change. Gender-sensitive peacebuilding requires the involvement of both women and men. By incorporating the concept of **masculinities** into its gender analysis of peace and armed conflict, and involving both women and men peace activists in its capacity-building programmes, the Women Peacemakers Programme has been able to increase men's understanding of and involvement in gender-sensitive peacebuilding.

Dutch CSOs invest in capacity-building and training of local, grassroots women's rights organizations, such as the Women on the Frontline programme by Hivos.⁷⁷ This programme aims to build capacity among local women's rights organizations and strengthen them to contribute to the full and equal participation of women in transforming societies in the MENA region. They also jointly advocate to bring about change – for example, Hivos supports certain local CSOs' work concerning UNSCR 1325 in Iraq, and works with the Dutch government to put pressure on the newly established Iraqi government to really implement the Iraq national action plan, instead of paying lip service. This kind of cooperation is deemed essential and effective to ensure that the small interventions of women peace groups have a lasting impact. Hence a partnership between the Dutch government, Dutch CSOs and local CSOs is needed.

⁷⁶ <https://www.cordaid.org/en/publications/womens-peace-security-barometer/>

⁷⁷ <https://westasia.hivos.org/focal-area/women-frontline?snid=22389>

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women (Area 8)

National

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Proposed policy and goals

The Minister for Education, Culture and Science is responsible for coordinating emancipation policy in the Netherlands. Her five roles are:

- * agenda-setting in establishing the general framework for emancipation policy;
- * supporting other ministries in achieving the emancipation objectives;
- * supporting the emancipation process by means of a good knowledge infrastructure and goal-oriented subsidies;
- * coordinating the implementation of UN agreements on gender; and
- * monitoring and verifying progress in the area of emancipation, by way of the bi-annual emancipation review.

Although the Minister has a coordinating role, the Emancipation Directorate no longer has the term 'coordination' in its name, since the Cabinet change of 2007. At that same time, the Directorate moved from a high level in the departmental structure to an intermediate level in another department. Additionally, the number of staff assigned to gender equality was reduced from 28 person years in 2005⁷⁸ to 20 in 2014.⁷⁹

An interdepartmental committee, aiming at coordinating policies and integrating a gender perspective into mainstream policies, ceased to exist in 2011. Instead, according to the Netherlands' 2015 BPfA review, interministerial steering committees will be set up for the main themes of emancipation policy, and interministerial consultation will take place in the areas of work and care, human rights and transgender people.

Results

Capacity of the national machinery

The Emancipation Directorate has 20 full-time equivalent staff, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a Task Force of five full-time equivalent staff, and some other ministries have gender experts.⁸⁰ In 2012 the number of staff per capita was considerably less than in most EU Member States.⁸¹ Regular gender training for government staff is provided only for some employees of other departments, whereas some other EU Member States provide regular training to **all** government employees or at the **highest** political level.⁸² The budget for (women's) emancipation was reduced by 10% in 2012.⁸³

Reporting to Parliament

As the BPfA requires, once every one or two years a review is sent to Parliament, to inform its Members about the progress of the emancipation policy.

Capacity of the knowledge infrastructure

Even larger budget cuts (10% in 2010,⁸⁴ and 25% in 2012)⁸⁵ took place in the knowledge infrastructure, forcing two institutes to merge into one – Atria – and reducing the number of staff. The current knowledge infrastructure consists of: Atria, a centre of expertise on gender equality and women's history; Women Inc., a platform with emphasis on regional and local levels; and Nederlandse Vrouwenraad (NVR – the Netherlands Women's Council), which works as an international representative and national agenda-setter to advocate and influence within and outside Dutch social and economic policy in terms of women's rights and gender equality, women's empowerment and strengthening their position in society.

80 http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/Netherlands_2015_Review_BPfA_Report_of_the_Netherlands_Government.pdf

81 EIGE (2014) *Effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of Gender Equality. Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*. Vilnius: EIGE.

82 *ibid*, p. 139.

83 *Rijksbegroting 2012*, ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)

84 <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-30420-121.html>

85 *Rijksbegroting 2012*, ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science)

78 EIGE, (2014) *Effectiveness of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of Gender Equality. Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*. Vilnius: EIGE.

79 http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/publication/Netherlands_2015_Review_BPfA_Report_of_the_Netherlands_Government.pdf

Implementation of gender mainstreaming tools

The Emancipation Council (Emancipatieraad) was abolished in 1997. Subsequently, a temporary committee (Visitatiecommissie Emancipatie) was introduced in 2002, which assessed progress in gender mainstreaming in all ministries and concluded that a lot of work still needed to be done. However, in recent years hardly any methods or tools for gender mainstreaming have been implemented at the national level in the Netherlands. The use of Gender Impact assessments (GIA), for example, has been limited to some simplified scanning tools applied to local – municipal – policies, commissioned by the local governments. There is one exception: the gender scan on domestic violence. This assessment was commissioned by the Emancipation Directorate, after several requests by the CEDAW Committee to introduce a gender-sensitive approach to this subject. A follow-up to the scan is currently in progress, with the aim of developing a training programme for professionals working with victims (and perpetrators) of domestic violence and several tools for local-government policymakers.

The current policy entails the bi-annual collection and publishing of statistical data on gender, by means of the emancipation monitor (*Emancipatiemonitor*), by the Social and Cultural Planning Agency (SCP) and the Central Statistics Bureau (CBS). No other qualitative or quantitative research on gender equality has been commissioned by the national government lately.

Lessons learned

The current Minister is quite dedicated to gender equality and has a clear vision on the matter. However, being the Minister for Education, Culture and Science, her responsibilities in other fields limit the time available for emancipation policy. The diminished budgets and number of staff at government level and within the knowledge infrastructure on emancipation unavoidably reduce their impact.

Recommendations

First of all, it is very important for the budgets and the number of staff for the national machinery and the knowledge infrastructure not to be reduced any further. Additionally, the Emancipation Directorate should be placed at a higher level within the departmental structure, and its coordinating role should be made explicit.

Gender budgeting, as a specific tool for gender mainstreaming, could be introduced as a core instrument and promoted by way of the interministerial steering committees. If proper gender budgeting is regarded as too elaborate and complicated to implement on a regular basis, a simplified tool could be developed. To ensure that staff of the various departments use gender mainstreaming tools in the most effective way, their gender expertise should be improved.

And finally, the organizations in the knowledge infrastructure – and other women's organizations – could be invited to join in these steering committees or regularly consulted by the committees.

NGO case study

Every year, Atria, an institute on gender equality and women's history, publishes a gender analysis of the budgets of the national administration for the following year, *Begrotingsscan*.⁸⁶ This is a simplified version of a gender budget analysis, aimed at raising awareness among policymakers and NGOs on gender issues in the financial plans for several policy areas. For example, this year the budget for economic affairs shows a strong and increasing focus on sectors with very low numbers of female employees and entrepreneurs – the *Topsectoren* (top sectors). And several (financial) shifts in policy are discussed which have implications for the position of women – for instance, in the labour market.

⁸⁶ http://www.atria.nl/atria/nl/actueel/publicaties_en_aanwinsten/_pid/column2_1/_rp_column2_1_elementId/1_346264

Women and the Media (Area 10)

National

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Proposed policy and goals

The relationship between women and the media is crucial for the achievement of equal opportunities for women and men in society.⁸⁷ It is, therefore, positive that in 2013 the theme of women and the media was mentioned in the *Memorandum Outlining Points on Women's Equality 2013–2016* in which Dutch emancipation policy has been written down. It was also put on the agenda by request of the Gender Equality Committee of the Council of Europe, chaired by the Netherlands.⁸⁸ Women and the media is a so-called exploratory theme: the Minister will examine over the period 2013–2016 to what extent the theme could translate into national policy (measures).

However, it is not the first time this theme has been mentioned in Dutch emancipation policy. In the past, policy and activities were employed in regard to the second strategic objective of the BPfA – tackling the gender-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media. The former emancipation policy for 2008–2011⁸⁹ addressed the issue of 'sexualization' in the media and the way girls and women were portrayed as objects of lust and unrealistic ideals of beauty were presented, as well as the increasing commercialization of the female body in the media. One of the intentions by the Minister was to explore the possibility of rules and codes of conduct for schools and audiovisual media. Going even further back in time, in 1996 a congress entitled 'Women and Media', with image-forming of women and men in the media as an important topic, was financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.⁹⁰ Image-forming, including in the media, was a definite focal topic of Dutch emancipation policy between 1978 and 2000.⁹¹

Results

As announced in the *Memorandum Outlining Points on Women's Equality 2013–2016* an international conference entitled 'Media and the image of women'⁹² was organized in Amsterdam on 4–5 July 2013 by the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Dutch

Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.⁹³ On the last day of the conference a series of intended measures were announced, which included the intention to facilitate the establishment of an alliance of media and women's organizations, aiming to work on improving the visibility of women in the media and tackling gender stereotyping of women in the media.⁹⁴

The government report mentions that recommendations formulated during the conference were "passed on to a platform of journalists and media organizations, and the platform is actually elaborating subsequent steps to take to improve the image of women in the media".⁹⁵ Following the recommendations of the conference, the Ministry of Education Culture and Science organized an interactive follow-up meeting for stakeholders in February 2014. However, the platform/alliance has not yet been set up and is not operational. At the time of writing (October 2014), a working session planned for the beginning of 2015 had just been announced. Various stakeholders in this field showed their commitment and willingness to being involved in the topic of women and media by voluntarily donating their time and effort without financial compensation during the conference and during the meeting in February 2014. There is a real risk of the Ministry giving the impression of window-dressing if further steps are not taken quickly, accompanied by appropriate (financial) resources. There is also a risk of eventually losing the stakeholders' goodwill and confidence.

According to the *Memorandum Outlining Points on Women's Equality 2013–2016*, the Minister is waiting for recommendations from the Council of Europe before taking the next step, yet the conclusions and recommendations from the international conference were published in November 2013. The mid-term review of the emancipation policy for 2013–2016 planned at the end of 2014⁹⁶ is a good opportunity for the Minister to communicate whether (and which) measures will be taken with regard to women and the media.

87 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/media.htm>

88 Hoofddlijnenbrief Emancipatiebeleid 2013–2016, pp. 11, 13, May 2013

89 Emancipatienota 2008–2011, pp. 61, 63: <http://www.emancipatie.nl/home/focus/e-nota-2008-2011/>

90 Emancipatienota 1998–2002, p. 10: <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2005/12/22/een-kristal-van-kansen-emancipatienota-1998-2002.html>

91 <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties>

92 Council of Europe (2013) *Media and the image of women. Report of the 1st conference of the Council of Europe Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality*, Amsterdam, 4–5 July 2013. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/women_media/Media%20and%20the%20Image%20of%20Women,%20Amsterdam%202013%20-%20Abridged%20Report.pdf

93 The focus of the conference was to increase the visibility of women in the media – on screen as well as behind the scenes – and to end gender stereotyping. Participants from more than 40 countries (public authorities, advertising agencies, researchers, journalists, women's NGOs and other interested parties) exchanged good practices and effective strategies on women in decision-making positions in the media, stereotyping and the role of social media.

94 Email dated February 2014 from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science: "...Marjan Hammersma, DG Media en Cultuur ... Zij kondigde aan het slot van de conferentie aan een alliantie te willen faciliteren van media- en vrouwenorganisaties die werk willen maken van het verbeteren van de zichtbaarheid en het tegengaan van genderstereotypering van vrouwen in de media. De vervolgbijeenkomst waar wij u nu voor uitnodigen, is bedoeld als eerste stap om te komen tot die alliantie."

95 Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2014) *Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Netherlands Review Report*, The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

96 Hoofddlijnenbrief Emancipatiebeleid 2013–2016, p. 1

In the 2015 budget memorandum presented on Budget Day (Prince's Day) in September 2014 there is no mention of measures on women in the media.⁹⁷ This is not an encouraging sign. It is not clear what will happen, especially regarding financial support for the platform on women and the media.

Lessons learned

A review of emancipation policy documents over the years shows an evolution in the vocabulary used to describe similar issues: image-forming, gender stereotypes, sexualization, women in the media. To ensure continuity of policy and avoid reinventing the wheel, it might be useful to be aware of the possible different formulation of the same issue. Furthermore, the fact that past measures in emancipation policy seem to have been 'forgotten' shows the importance of continuity in policy and the need for the development of sustainable ongoing policy measures on women and the media, in addition to supporting ad hoc temporary projects.

Furthermore, the EU indicators chosen as starting points for the government report are especially useful for one aspect of the topic of women in the media: the proportion of women in the media. Unfortunately, focusing solely on those indicators might create a blind spot in policymaking for the other strategic objective: tackling gender stereotypes in the portrayal of women in the media. To avoid such shortcomings in policy and measures and to ensure that the gender-stereotyped representation of women in the media is addressed adequately, it is recommended to use the objectives of the BPfA as a starting point for (setting and reviewing) policy and to involve gender experts in measures and alliances regarding women and the media.

In February 2014 it was announced that RTL News female anchor Margreet Spijker had to leave after 16 years, as apparently the management wanted to do something different with the news. This announcement triggered a massive protest on social media from both men and women, as it was suspected that she was being replaced because of her age. People protested against the fact that men of the same age or older kept their positions, while women were asked to leave. This is an interesting case. First, it shows that society (men and women) seems ready for change with regard to gender and the media, so now is a good time for action. Second, it shows that both objectives (higher visibility of women and tackling gender stereotypes) are entwined and support each other. When the sexist norm of looking young for women disappears, there will be more room for more and diverse women on screen.

Recommendations

Mid-term review of emancipation policy in late 2014

The Minister for Gender Equality can use the mid-term review of the emancipation policy for 2013–2016 planned at the end of 2014 to communicate whether (and which) measures will be taken with regard to women and the media. NGOs can use the review to mobilize Members of Parliament and have them ask the Minister what the plans are. In the mid-term review, attention should also be paid to the EIGE report on advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organizations, published in 2013. Which lessons can the Minister draw from the report for the Dutch context?

Make gender and the media a priority in policy and budget

The role of the Dutch government has changed in recent years and moved to a more facilitating role. However, as a result of the commitment of the Netherlands to the BPfA, the Dutch government (i.e. the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, as the coordinating ministry) has a responsibility to play an active role in the implementation of the BPfA's strategic objectives. The government can set a good example in the public media sector by both increasing the proportion of women in decision-making and on screen and tackling gender stereotypes. For inspiration, see the good practice in Austria.⁹⁸ The government can facilitate and support civil society initiatives with sufficient (financial) resources: think of the proposed platform on women and the media.

Take the diversity of women into account when setting and reviewing policy

'The' Dutch woman does not exist. Women are not a homogeneous group with exactly the same experience. Grasp the complexity of the challenges women face in the media by considering women in all their diversity (age, class, sexual orientation, ethnic background, physical and other disabilities)⁹⁹ in policymaking. Involve women's NGOs.

⁹⁸ EIGE (2013) *Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Members States: Women and the Media – Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organizations*. Vilnius: EIGE

⁹⁹ Council of Europe (2013) *Media and the image of women. Report of the 1st conference of the Council of Europe Network of National Focal Points on Gender Equality*, Amsterdam, 4–5 July 2013. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union: http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/women_media/Media%20and%20the%20Image%20of%20Women,%20Amsterdam%202013%20-%20Abridged%20Report.pdf

⁹⁷ Atria (2014) *Zorgen voor Morgen. Scan Rijksbegroting 2015*. Amsterdam: Atria, p. 3

Tackle dominant male organizational culture in media organizations

Women in the 28 EU Member States^{100,101} are still significantly under-represented at the decision-making level¹⁰² and on screen. Even though women have outnumbered men at university level and in practice-based journalism programmes, and the employment of women in the media is increasing, the organizational culture in the media remains largely masculine.

Analysis and policy measures should be developed at both individual and organizational levels. At the individual level they should focus on whether women have the required skills and empowerment. At the organizational level they should address male-biased workplace structures and cultures. This is even more crucial in the present context of economic crisis. The fear of losing one's job makes it less likely for individual (female) employees to fight the existing culture on their own. Address both horizontal and vertical segregation in media organizations: ensure that there are more women in decision-making and more women in technical positions.

Self-regulation of media organizations

Strengthen accountable journalism. Promote existing standards, such as the ones already developed by the Council of Europe. Use such standards to keep media stakeholders accountable.

Social media and other new communication technologies

Special attention is needed for both the opportunities and challenges related to social media and new communication technologies. Monitor and promote the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making (think of female bloggers, digital activists, online entrepreneurs). Tackle the increasing hostility and harassment met by women who write on the Internet and participate in social media, on blogs and other online forums.

NGO case studies

Monitoring organizations with a focus on gender and the media

The Woman & Media Foundation (Stichting Vrouw en Media, www.vrouw-en-media.nl) is an independent organization, with no financing from the government, providing a platform for women in journalism. The Foundation organizes meetings and monitors the public debate. More than 1000 women involved in the media subscribe to its newsletter.

¹⁰⁰ Croatia became the 28th Member State in 2014.

¹⁰¹ EIGE (2013) *Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States: Women and the Media – Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organizations*. Vilnius: EIGE

¹⁰² In the public media sector, women occupy only 22% of strategic decision-making positions. In the private sector, 12%.

Eye-openers to tackle stereotypes and increase awareness

VIDM collected and analysed how men and women were portrayed in the media and came to the following conclusions: women are mainly portrayed as image fillers (posing and smiling), and men in situations of action and in their profession. When confronted with examples and learning about gender stereotypes, both men and women active in the media expressed their intention to change this behaviour. Such good practice demonstrates the importance of increasing awareness and teaching people how to recognize and tackle gender stereotyping¹⁰³.

Women in the media can be found if there is a will to find them

Several similar initiatives have been developed to improve match-making between female experts and media management:

- * VIDM Mediaplatform (www.vidm.nl), founded by Janneke van Heugten, offers a platform where journalists can search for free for female specialists in specific domains. For instance, the editor of *Debat op 2* (a debating programme on national television) regularly uses the system, which has resulted in a balanced participation of men and women in debates on this show. In addition to the online system, the matching and meeting of journalists and female experts can also occur face to face. There are five meetings organized per year. In plenary a group of about 25 female experts and a group of journalists learn about working in the media and how to effectively approach the media and journalists. This is followed by individual speed dating sessions.
- * Zij spreekt (<http://www.zijspreekt.nl>), founded by Marga Miltenburg, publishes a list of 500 female speakers and media training organizations for women.

¹⁰³ See also <http://youcantbewhatyoucantsee.com/>

Women and the Environment (Area 11)

National

Authors: Alice Bouman, Women for Water Partnership, Toos van Oers, Vrouwenennetwerk Wageningse Ingenieurs, Emmy Galama, Zeeuws Vrouwen Platform, Kitty van Bentvelsen and Anneke van Veen, NVR

The focus for this area is on the participation of women in debates on climate change and sustainability in the national, international and EU context. The objective is to enable better decision-making for our future.

Results

Participation of women in decision-making bodies in the Netherlands, Europe and internationally

At national level the presence of two women in key positions in the Netherlands – as Minister for Infrastructure and Environment and as Secretary of State – is remarkable. The number one on the list of most influential persons on sustainable development, as assessed by *Trouw* newspaper, for the last three years has been a woman. But contrary to the acceptable numbers of women in European and national decision-making bodies, the proportion of women in municipal, provincial and water boards is still too low: 28%, 35% and 21%, respectively.

Examples of the contribution of women's organizations

The Netherlands Women's Council (NVR, an umbrella organization reaching out to 1 million women) makes a huge effort to ensure that each year a women's representative is part of the Dutch delegation to UN conferences (such as Rio+20 and the Copenhagen COP 15). The women's representative enters into dialogue with women in the Netherlands through the organization of special events. The NVR thus contributes to raising awareness at national level and discussions at international level. The NVR has also been active at exhibitions that draw large numbers of visitors, such as the 'Floriade' and the 'Huishoudbeurs'. The financial means for these activities have been reduced.

Water in search of Women/Women's Vote

In 2008 the campaign 'Water in search of Women' took place, aiming to recruit and coach women as candidates for the Dutch water board elections. In 2014 the 'Women's Vote' programme was developed to increase the number of women on elected municipal councils. The NVR has insufficient budget to continue campaigning for the recruitment and coaching of female candidates.

Participation of women in technical and natural sciences

There is no evidence of any increased participation of women in the knowledge sector. This objective is still being pursued though – for example, through a VHTO programme to promote an interest in beta subjects among girls and women and through input from Vrouwenennetwerk Wageningse Ingenieurs (VWI – Women Engineers from Wageningen University). The development of school programmes focused on sustainable development is imperative. Existing facilities, such as petting zoos and *Natuur en Milieu* (Nature and Environment) centres can be easily adapted to address sustainability issues among young people.

Examples of achievements of women's organizations

Under the theme 'Grasp Your Chance', VWI organized a series of activities and meetings in 2013 and 2014 to raise more awareness of gender equality at Wageningen University and Research Centre (URC) and to stimulate the university and its employees (male and female) to create better career opportunities for female talent. VWI challenged Wageningen URC to show that it really cares about quality of life.

With less than 10% of the professors being female, yet women representing more than 50% of the student population, the unequal representation of men and women in top positions at Wageningen University may be obvious. It is important for young women to be able to look up to inspiring role models that encourage them to pursue a career in science. This is just as important for Wageningen University, which can no longer afford to waste its female talent.

New strategy: joining initiatives on women as agents of change

National-level programmes that were initiated by the Dutch government and focused on increasing women's participation through awareness-raising and action were discontinued in 2008. All current initiatives are bottom-up. This approach is hard to implement successfully, especially with the difficult economic situation and the limited availability of (volunteers') time and financial means. Moreover, any dialogue on climate change and sustainable development at government level has come to a standstill, except for the launch of a government programme addressing water management in view of climate change.

Examples of women as agents of change

Vrouwen van Nu (a women's organization with 50,000 members) is active in reducing food waste by promoting the 'Food Battle', a kind of contest to reduce the discarding of food as waste. This is a starting point in raising awareness regarding wider food-related issues and on identifying further actions women can take themselves. Vrouwen van Nu aims to continue this project.

Women for Water

In the Women for Water Partnership (WfWP), 25 women's civil society networks with subsidiaries in close to 100 predominantly low- and middle-income countries have joined forces to address the gender-water-development nexus. One of the strengths of the WfWP is its diversity: its members range from rural women, academia, women water professionals and businesswomen to service organizations and special interest groups. It has contributed to global agenda-setting on integrated water resources management, gender mainstreaming and the human right to water and sanitation as well as the MDG and SDG processes.

The Soroptimists started the Ceres project to create awareness on the role of women in food production and consumption. This project has grown into an active network with a large number of women implementing many activities.

Lessons learned

What is working?

When women are informed, it often leads to accelerated action. Activities and campaigns are well received, and gradually the relationships between women's organizations and Dutch ministries improve, especially with the Ministry of Economic Affairs on food-related issues.

What needs to be improved?

Activities are often ad hoc, with limited (financial) support.

What are the gaps?

Coordination and a more structured approach, possibly linked to others' activities, with adequate input (paid and voluntary) is required to inform all women on their role as agents of change. This is essential for the (future) quality of our environment. Citizens should work together with government to ensure a sustainable environment (energy, water, biodiversity, waste/recycling). Existing women's networks are a great instrument to promote learning and action for a sustainable future.

Recommendations

Earmarked financial means need to be allocated to structurally and substantially raise awareness among women on their role to ensure more sustainable development and to teach them to practise 'earth-keeping' instead of housekeeping (Dutch contribution to COP 15). This should entail awareness-raising in all segments of society, combined with encouraging women to take up positions in the public and knowledge sectors. Women's organizations and the government will be able to focus more and triple results by jointly developing annual plans.

Role of Men and Boys

International

Author: Mark-Pieter van den Heuvel, RutgersWPF

Dutch NGO review of Beijing+20: engaging men and boys

Since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, there have been tremendous advances in the rights and well-being of women and girls. We are still far from achieving equality between women and men, but by many measures – including health, education, political participation and income – we are closer to it than we were 20 years ago. As envisioned in the BPfA, one critical way to advance the gender equality agenda is to engage men and boys. Beyond just the nominal or symbolic involvement of men, the Beijing framework envisions male engagement as a necessary means to challenge the structures, beliefs, practices and institutions that sustain men's aggregate privileges, as well as to address inequalities between women and men.

The Netherlands has been a strong and persistent supporter of engaging men and boys for the realization and advancement of gender equality and SRHR. In November 2012, through the so-called SRHR Fund, RutgersWPF received funding for implementing the three-year programme MenCare+: Engaging Men as Caregiving Partners in SRHR and MCH. This clearly showed the financial and political support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for engaging men and boys in SRHR and gender equality.

Proposed policy and goals

Through partnerships with national governments, (international) CSOs and businesses, the Netherlands aims to contribute to MDG5 and MDG6: reducing maternal mortality, improving universal access to reproductive health, and halting the spread of HIV. However, improving the SRHR of girls and women is seriously hindered by prevailing socio-cultural notions of masculinities, reinforced by various conservative religions. Girls and women suffer from poor SRHR outcomes, the feminization of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. The Dutch government realized that engaging boys and (young) men is a crucial strategy for improving SRHR for all, reducing domestic violence and promoting more equal relationships.

The SRHR Fund specifically mentions the need for a focus on addressing the gender and socio-cultural aspects of SRHR, with particular attention to the role of boys and men. This focus is reflected in the central objective of the MenCare+ programme, which is to address harmful social and cultural norms and behaviours that have a negative impact on SRHR and maternal and child health (MCH) outcomes, by engaging young adult men as caregiving partners.

Addressing these harmful social and cultural norms and behaviours is being increasingly acknowledged as a precondition to really get to the heart of the matter – to tackle the root causes of gender inequalities. As envisioned in the BPfA and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, Cairo, 1994), engaging men and boys is a core part of transforming gender norms and the underlying power relations, structures and systems that maintain inequalities between and among women and men. While some of the work with men and boys has applied this transformative framework, not all of it has, and even that which has, has not done so enough. We need to engage men and boys more actively in interrogating and challenging power dynamics in their own lives as well as in their communities and societies more broadly. We need to engage them in change at the individual level, in their relationships with partners, children and friends, as well as at more structural levels, in their roles and capacities as teachers, corporate executives, union leaders, policymakers etc. The Netherlands, by funding the MenCare+ programme, which focuses on change at all levels, acknowledges and promotes the need for systemic and multi-level change.

Results

The results determined by the Netherlands and prescribed in the SRHR Fund were the following:

- * **Result Area 1:** Young men and caregivers are better informed and better able to make healthier choices regarding their sexuality, relationships, maternal health and caregiving.
- * **Result Area 2:** Young men/couples have better access to contraceptives, including male and female condoms, to promote good health.
- * **Result Area 3:** Public and private clinics provide better sexual and reproductive health care services, including domestic violence services, which more people are using.
- * **Result Area 4:** There is greater respect for the sexual and reproductive health rights of people to whom these rights are denied.

Within the MenCare+ programme, results within these areas have been very promising. Within all interventions gender, roles, notions of masculinities and women's rights are receiving full attention. Men are offered the opportunity to reflect safely and respectfully on their own role, society's expectations, their (potential) role as a father, their relationships and their childhood. It is quite remarkable to notice the changes occurring in men's views, attitudes and behaviour, including their more active role in household chores and childcare, a reduction of violence, and more meaningful, respectful relationships. The stories and testimonies from men, women and couples underline these observations.

MenCare+ opts for a so-called 'positive masculinities' approach. (Young) men are being offered a safe platform for reflection in a non-judgemental and normative way, creating space for them to re-examine issues related to manhood in a non-violent, equitable and caring way. The approach in itself seems to be beneficial and creating a positive and inductive environment for transformation. The remaining period of the MenCare+ programme will give participants an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of what triggers change among men, and what are the contributing factors that motivate men to become less violent, more open to caring roles, supportive to women's rights etc. The experiences of MenCare+ will contribute to more in-depth understanding of engaging men in gender equality, from which men, women, children and societies will benefit.

In this context it is interesting to mention that, for instance, in Rwanda the very participatory approach of involving key stakeholders and trainers/facilitators, in particular, in the process of training and adaptation of interventions is paying off. People get the opportunity to become fully familiar with key concepts and to reflect on how they relate to themselves and their own lives. It results in a strong internationalization of topics such as gender, respect for diversity, manhood etc. The effect of such a participatory process is reflected in the quality of the training, the committed attitude of facilitators and the impact among the participants.

With regard to advocacy for engaging men and boys to achieve gender equality, the Dutch government delegation and MenCare+ had a strong presence at the 2014 Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations in New York. They jointly hosted the panel 'MenCare+: Men Caring for Gender Equality', and the panel was attended by the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Mrs. Ploumen. As holder of ECOSOC status, Rutgers WPF was also able to make an oral statement during the plenary of the conference, asking for increased attention to involving men in SRHR, in preventing and ending gender-based violence and in committing to take up an equal share of caregiving and household work. These three areas in which men and boys should be engaged have also become our main asks to advocate for, under the gender equality stand-alone goal within the proposed SDGs:

- * Engage men and boys in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

- * Commit men and boys to an equal share of caregiving and household work.
- * Engage men as supportive partners, clients and positive agents of change in SRHR and maternal, newborn and child health.

Our plea, therefore, is that the Netherlands will strongly advocate and partner with us in bringing up these asks in post-2015 Member State negotiations.

Lessons learned and recommendations

On recruitment strategies

Motivating men to actively participate in group sessions (fatherhood groups and seeking support in cases of violence) is problematic in the various cultural settings, and the appropriate strategy depends on local context and circumstances. Rwanda turns out to be a different case; men of pregnant partners are requested by government officials to join the fatherhood groups, and school-boys and girls are eager to join MenCare+ workshops. As some pressure is being applied, it is interesting to find out more about the motivation of these (young) men. The recruitment of young men through schools and sports clubs (in other projects) is turning out to be successful in Brazil. In South Africa there are attempts to link fatherhood groups to community activism to ensure a stronger embedding of these groups within the community. South African men who went for counselling continued to meet their peers (other men with similar experiences) in support groups, and some of them opted to become role models in their respective communities. Although recruitment represents a challenge, it is expected that the added value of MenCare+ as a comprehensive programme (implementing various interventions at different levels in the same communities) will influence men's motivation to join one or more interventions. More efforts will be made to develop current monitoring and evaluation tools to better capture the interconnectivity between the various interventions.

On men, couples and women

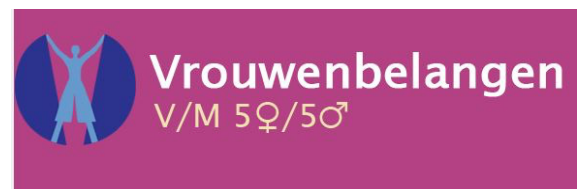
Young men and fathers are the key target groups for MenCare+, while the campaigns are reaching communities as a whole. In situations where hardly any SRHR programmes were focusing on women, as was the case in Rwanda and partially in Indonesia, special educational sessions for women have also been implemented. Similar adjustments have taken place where it comes to the fatherhood groups; a number of couple sessions are included. With regard to counselling for men to stop violence, it is pivotal to align with the partner for safety, monitoring reasons and to maximize the impact. Overall, when dealing with improving relationships and SRHR, including engaged fatherhood, it is important to work with both men and women. In the course of the MenCare+ programme it is interesting to obtain clearer insights into the right combination of separate and mixed sessions.

ANNEX 1. List of contributing organizations

Atria	Institute on Gender Equality and Women's History
Cordaid	
Federatie Opvang Federation	Shelter for Women
Femconsult	
Hivos	Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
Mama Cash	
Movisie	
NVR	Netherlands Council of Women
Nuffic	Netherlands Organization for International Collaboration in Higher Education
Oxfam Novib	
PBI	Peace Brigades International
Foundation PEP International	
Plan Nederland	
RutgersWPF	Rutgers World Population Fund
Simavi	
UMC	University Medical Centre of Utrecht
VDV	Women for Sustainable Peace
VHTO	National Expert Office for Girls/Women and Beta/Technical Subjects
VVAO	Society for Women with Higher Education
VWI	Network for Wageningen University Alumni Women Engineers
Vrouwenbelangen	Women's Interests
WfWP	Water for Women Partnership
WOMEN Inc.	
WO=MEN	Dutch Gender Platform
WPP	Women Peacemakers Program
ZVP	Zeeuws Women's Platform



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