



# Achieving Gender Equality in Development

NATIONAL  
POLICY  
FORUM



As Labour's Shadow International Development Secretary, I am determined to lead a team that seeks to embed a rights-based approach across our work. As a fundamental part of that, we will consider and seek to achieve gender equality by challenging the impacts and structural drivers of gender inequality. In turn, this will play a role in reducing poverty, hunger and conflict.

As a government-in-waiting and a movement for change, we will work with civil society groups and other governments, as partners, to deliver long-term sustainable development and relationships to overcome both the symptoms of a gender unequal society and the underlying causes.

Labour will collaborate with likeminded groups in both the Global North and Global South to learn, broaden and maximise the reach and scope of our impact.

Along with Shadow Minister Yasmin Qureshi, who will lead on much of this work, I am launching this consultation as the first of many steps to develop these relationships and exchange ideas to build our policy moving forward.

Thank you for taking the time to respond and I look forward to your contributions.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Preet Kaur Gill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Preet Kaur Gill MP**  
**Shadow Secretary of State for International Development**

## ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

The Labour Party is an inclusive member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of the consultation documents please email us at **[policydevelopment@labour.org.uk](mailto:policydevelopment@labour.org.uk)** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements

## Background

There is a global 'epidemic' of gender inequality which results in 19 per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner within the last 12 months, at least 200 million women and girls in 30 countries having undergone FGM, 131 million girls missing out on school and less than a quarter of national parliamentarians being women.

The Coronavirus pandemic has exposed and reinforced many of the inequalities that exist in the UK and around the world. The Conservative government, at a time when it needed to step up and collaborate with other countries to limit the damage of the virus, has retreated from the world stage.

Even before the pandemic, globally, women were at a higher risk of poverty due to lack of social protections. The importance of Sustainable Development Goal 5, to achieve gender equality, in being able to meet Goal 1, to end poverty, cannot be understated.

In many cases this is because of the disproportionate unpaid work that women and girls carry out. Women perform between two and ten times more unpaid care work than men and this persists throughout a woman's life with older women doing more than double the amount of unpaid care than older men.

Extreme weather events such as droughts and floods exacerbated by the climate crisis are disproportionately affecting women and girls. Addressing gender inequality will support those women and girls and help societies adapt more quickly to the impacts of changing climate.

A gender-focused analysis has been endorsed by the OECD as a way to evaluate the impact of policies and ensure they reduce as opposed to heighten inequities.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, 66% of DFID's total bilateral spending on programmes had a gender equality focus but the NAO found that 33% of the UK's total bilateral spending for that year was classified incorrectly.

An NAO report from April 2020 found that the government's approach towards tackling gender inequality through its 2018 Strategic Vision for Gender Equality was too short term and might "impair its ability to achieve its long-term goals around addressing social norms". Indeed, it was found to have pursued low hanging fruit rather than trying to address "longer-term goals, such as many relating to changing social norms."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Improving-the-lives-of-women-and-girls-overseas.pdf>

## The Challenge for Labour

Labour must engage with views across different characteristics, understanding that context and factors such as sexuality, race, class, and religion will play a role and that there is no one-size fits all approach to solutions.

For example, while some countries, such as Sweden, Mexico, France and Canada have announced Feminist Foreign and Development Policies, many others have opted for thematic ambassador roles focused specifically on gender.

In September 2020, a programme to reduce teen pregnancy and sexual violence and support 200,000 young people in Rwanda complete secondary school was scrapped by the government. In November 2020, the government announced that they would be cutting the UK's aid budget by more than a third: from £15.2bn in 2019, to £10bn in 2021. The process by which cuts will fall remains opaque and there is a risk that achieving gender equality is not pursued.

The challenge for Labour in opposition is to build a policy platform that is capable of working through the complex range of options to reach an outcome that takes as a starting point the needs of the girl or woman to support gender equality, and then ensure resources are matched to the right support.

For instance, local women's rights organisations, with an understanding of the local context and how to champion gender equality receive only around 1.5% of aid money committed for gender equality. Yet investing in them has been found to be one of the single most effective factor in creating progressive policies to end violence against women and girls.

This consultation is intended to be the starting point in this process.

## Questions:

1. What defining features should a transformative policy to tackle gender inequality have?
2. How can challenging the structural causes of gender inequality be articulated and practically implemented in international development policy?
3. What challenges exist in defining and implementing a strategy to tackle the root causes of gender inequality?
4. What should the FCDO, as an organisation, do to facilitate the delivery of policies to overcome gender inequality?
5. Which stakeholders should Labour be working with to develop policy recommendations to tackle gender inequality?
6. How should we measure progress on tackling gender inequality?
7. What have been the successes and challenges for those countries who have implemented feminist foreign/development policies?

## How to respond

Thank you for taking part in this Labour Party Consultation. Through this, and the wider policy making process, we want to work with our members, supporters to discuss issues which impact on people's everyday lives to help shape our policy platform.

You do not need to answer every question, nor is there a specific way to answer them. We suggest using the questions to stimulate and develop your thoughts on what you think are the main issues in the consultation's policy area.

Once you have written up your response, you can submit it to us through Labour Policy Forum:

**<https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/gender-inequality>**

If you have an idea or issue you would like to talk about that is not covered in this consultation, you can submit these to us too. Whether you are a Labour Party member, supporter or stakeholder, we want to hear your views on the issues which impact on people's everyday lives.