Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken

Order of the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs dated October 7, 2025 no. BZ2519842 laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Grant Programme: *FemFocus*)

The State Secretary of Foreign Affairs,

Having regard to Articles 6 and 7 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Decree;

Having regard to Article 4.2, paragraph 1 (d), (e) and (f) and Article 4.3, paragraph 1 (d), (e) and (f) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006;

Orders as follows:

Article 1

For the award of grants pursuant to Article 4.2, paragraph 1 (d), (e) and (f) and Article 4.3, paragraph 1 (d), (e) and (f) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 for activities aimed at capacity strengthening of, service provision by, and dialogue conducted by civil society organisations in or for low- and middle-income countries, on the themes (i) encouraging women's entrepreneurship, (ii) combating violence against women and supporting women human rights defenders, and (iii) strengthening the role of women in peace and security processes, the policy rules annexed to this decision shall apply for the period from the entry into force of this decision up to and including 31 December 2030.

Article 2

1. A ceiling of €209,370,000 applies for the period referred to in Article 1, allocated as follows across the themes:

a) €54,835,000 for applications relating to the theme of encouraging women's entrepreneurship;
b) €114,655,000 for applications relating to the theme of combating violence against women and supporting women human rights defenders;
c) €39,880,000 for applications relating to the theme of strengthening the role of women in peace and security processes.

2. Multi-year grants may be granted under the condition, referred to in Article 4:34, paragraph 1, of the General Administrative Law Act, that sufficient funds are made available for this purpose in the relevant budgets.

Article 3

Applications for grants under the *FemFocus framework* must be submitted between October 16 at 12.00 hour CEST and January 7 2026 at 23.59 hour CEST, using the model application form as stipulated by the Minister and accompanied by the documents stipulated in that form.[1]

[1]The application form will be published on https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/.

Article 4

The allocation of the funds under each of the grant ceilings referred to in Article 2 shall be made on the basis of an assessment in accordance with the criteria set out in the annexe to this Order, on the understanding that, out of all applications that satisfy the criteria, the applications that best meet them shall be given priority for a grant.

Article 5.

This Order enters into force on the day after the publication date of the Government Gazette in which it appears and lapses with effect from January 1, 2031, with the proviso that it continues to apply to grants awarded prior to that date.

Article 6

This order shall be cited as: *FemFocus* Order.

This Order and its accompanying annexe, excluding the appendices, will be published in the Government Gazette. Appendices to the annexe will be published on the Internet.[2]

The State Secretary of Foreign Affairs,

on their behalf,

the Director-General for International Cooperation,

P. Grotenhuis

[2] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/.

FemFocus

Grant policy framework

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Grant policy framework *FemFocus*

0. Definitions

For purposes of this grant policy framework (GPF), the following definitions apply:

Terms (in alphabetical order)	Definition
Capacity strengthening	Activities aimed at reinforcing the skills and knowledge of local civil society organisations (referred to in the GPF as in-country partners) with a view to their role as service providers and in conducting (critical) dialogue. Capacity strengthening may include training, coaching, technical assistance, mentoring, knowledge sharing or the provision of resources to strengthen internal systems and processes.
Civil society organisation	A not-for-profit organisation not connected to a public authority either de facto or under its constitution, which serves a public interest and possesses legal personality under civil law, and which either was not established by a public authority or has become fully autonomous from the public authority that established it.
Conflict-related sexual violence	Rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict. The term also encompasses trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual violence or exploitation, when committed in situations of conflict.
Dialogue	Purposeful conversations and interaction with governments, multilateral institutions (such as the UN), informal leaders, religious leaders and/or the private sector, carried out by in-country partners with the aim of raising awareness and promoting policy change.
Financing activities	The provision of financial resources by the support partner to in-country partners, enabling them to carry out activities that contribute to the objectives of the relevant grant instrument. The activities to be financed may involve both service provision and dialogue.
Gender equality	The equal status and equal treatment of people irrespective of sex, gender identity or sexual orientation, both in society and under the law.
In-country partners	Civil society organisations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as listed by the OECD DAC List[3] which, with the support of a support partner, carry out activities relevant to the policy objectives within the instruments of this GPF, or whose capacities are strengthened by support partners.
Individual applicant	A civil society organisation that independently submits a grant application and is responsible for the full implementation of the programme proposed in the application, within the parameters of this grant policy framework and in compliance with the obligations attached to

[3] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf

	the grant. In this GPF, they are referred to as support partners.
Local Civil Society Organisation	A civil society organisation that: • is legally established in a low- or middle-income country as listed by the OECD DAC List, and is thus subject to the applicable (sub-)national laws and regulations; • operates at (sub-)national or regional level; • and whose actions/activities address (sub-)national issues.
Locally led development	Development in which civil society organisations and communities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as listed by the OECD DAC List[4] set priorities, identify solutions and implement activities.
Minister	State Secretary for Foreign Trade and Development
Participatory financing	Participatory financing is demand-driven, based on the needs of and for the benefit of local communities. In practice, this means that local communities are central to financing, by giving them greater power to decide who and what is funded.
Service provision	Activities carried out by in-country partners that directly aim to improve the welfare or living conditions of individuals or communities in the target countries (referred to in this GPF as ‘target communities’). Examples include healthcare, education, training, psychosocial support, protection or information.
Support partner	A civil society organisation that receives a grant to set up and implement its own programme aimed at selecting, financing and otherwise strengthening in-country partners in low- or middle-income countries (LMICs) as listed by the OECD DAC List within the objectives of this grant policy framework.
Urgent funding	The rapid and flexible provision of financial resources to individual activists, organisations and movements, with minimal administrative burden, enabling them to respond swiftly and adequately to urgent situations and emergencies.
Women Human Rights Defenders	All women and girls engaged in a human rights issue, and people of all genders engaged in the promotion of women’s rights and rights relating to gender equality. (Abbreviated as WHRDs)

[4] https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/topics/policy-sub-issues/oda-eligibility-and-conditions/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf

1. Introduction, policy background and principles, roles and responsibilities

This *FemFocus* grant policy framework contains policy rules governing the award of grants under Article 4.2 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (hereinafter: MFA Grant Regulations 2006)[5]. It is part of the broader Focus policy framework for cooperation with civil society organisations in the field of development cooperation in the period 2026–2030, which encompasses eight instruments in total. This annexe sets out the policy rules for grant funding for three of those instruments, brought together in the *FemFocus* grant policy framework. A total of €210 million has been made available for implementation, spread over a five-year period. 0.3% of this amount is reserved for a centrally commissioned external evaluation, leaving a maximum of €209,370,000 available for grant awards. This chapter describes the policy background and principles, as well as the roles and responsibilities of support partners and in-country partners.

1.1 Policy background

The framework is aimed at supporting local civil society organisations (hereinafter: in-country partners), financially and through capacity strengthening, so that they are better able to provide the services and engage in the dialogue needed to achieve a range of thematic policy objectives. The grant policy framework contains three grant instruments, each tailored to a specific policy objective, with its own thematic focus, target group and geographical scope. The three instruments are:

- Encouraging women's entrepreneurship;
- Combating violence against women and supporting women human rights defenders;
- Women, Peace and Security.

Chapters 1 to 7 of this grant policy framework apply to all three instruments. The instrument-specific policy context, objectives, geographical focus, eligible activities, grant ceiling, allocation system and assessment criteria are elaborated in the chapters dedicated to each instrument (Chapters 8, 9 and 10).

1.2 Policy principles

The *FemFocus* grant policy framework (GPF) is part of Focus, a policy framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for cooperation with civil society organisations in development cooperation[6]. Within Focus, certain policy principles apply to all instruments, serving as the frame of reference for the assessment and selection of applications, as well as for the design of the activities to be developed and implemented by applicants.

Capacity strengthening

Enhancing the skills and knowledge of in-country partners helps improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of development initiatives and is therefore a key element of this GPF. Capacity strengthening can take place in various domains, such as programme management, financial management, or thematic work in the field of dialogue or service provision, for example protection of vulnerable groups. It may be achieved through training, coaching or knowledge exchange, with existing local capacity serving as the starting point where possible. This approach is essential to fostering local ownership.

Locally led development

A guiding principle of the new Focus framework (of which *FemFocus* forms part) is to promote and enhance local ownership within development cooperation. In the OECD DAC understanding, this

[5] See Foreign Minister's Regulation of 14 July 2025, no. BZ2518248, amending the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 on subsidising capacity strengthening of civil society organisations in developing countries (Government Gazette. 2025, no. 25027).

[6] The main elements of this policy framework have been set out in several parliamentary letters, including those of 11 November 2024 (Parliamentary Papers II 2024/25, 36 600 XVII, no. 13), 21 January 2025 (Parliamentary Papers II 2024/25, 36 600 XVII, no. 55), 20 February 2025 (Parliamentary Papers II 2019/2020, 34 952, no. 87) and 27 June 2025 (Parliamentary Papers II 2024/25, 36 180, no. 133).

means that local actors themselves decide on the design and implementation of development initiatives, while international donors and external partners, including Dutch civil society organisations, play a supportive role in addressing the societal challenges faced by local communities. Such support may include financial contributions, capacity strengthening related to the work of in-country partners, facilitating knowledge exchange among in-country partners, or providing access to technological innovations and scientific insights.

Gender equality
Through the instruments under this GPF, the Minister aims to contribute to gender equality with a view to enhancing the social and economic resilience of communities and strengthening the effectiveness and relevance of development cooperation. In order to qualify for a grant under this GPF, project proposals must score a 2 on the OECD DAC gender marker (i.e. gender equality is the principal objective of the project/programme and a fundamental principle in its design and intended results)[7].

Climate
Applicants are invited to include in their project proposal a description and analysis of the climate change context, including an assessment of climate risks and vulnerabilities relevant to the programme.

Conflict sensitivity
It is a key concern of the Minister that activities funded under this GPF do not contribute to the escalation of conflict. All programmes must therefore take account of the context in which they are implemented. Activities should be designed to avoid or minimise negative impacts and unintended effects, while actively seeking to positively impact conflict dynamics and foster opportunities for peace, inclusion and social cohesion. Risks relating to conflict dynamics must be identified as part of the contextual analysis. This requires the ability to: (i) analyse and understand the operational environment in which activities take place; (ii) translate this understanding into practical implications for implementation and interaction with local actors; and (iii) integrate conflict sensitivity throughout the entire activity cycle and update it as circumstances change. Given the importance the Minister attaches to mental health and psychosocial support in fragile states and conflict-affected areas, conflict sensitivity also encompasses diligent analysis of mental health and psychosocial dimensions and dynamics of the work.

Do no harm
The do no harm principle is closely linked to conflict sensitivity: activities financed under this GPF must not have adverse effects on local populations, social relations or broader development goals. Grant recipients are therefore required to identify potential risks at an early stage and take appropriate measures to prevent or mitigate any harmful consequences.

1.3 Roles and responsibilities of support partners and in-country partners

This grant policy framework operates through an intermediary structure consisting of "support partners" and "in-country partners". The nature of this structure and the respective roles and responsibilities of both types of partner are set out below.

1.3.1 Roles and responsibilities of support partners

A support partner is a civil society organisation that receives a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) under one of the *FemFocus* instruments. It serves as an intermediary between the MFA and the in-country partners. The support partner operates independently, not under any mandate or instruction from the Ministry, and draws on its own expertise. The support partner bears full responsibility for the lawful and effective implementation of the funded activities. It does not itself provide services or carry out dialogue work, but is responsible for identifying, selecting, financing and otherwise supporting in-country partners within the thematic scope of the relevant instrument. All activities must be implemented within the duration of this grant policy framework, and the support partner must ensure timely completion so that all reporting obligations can be met when applying for the final determination of the grant.

[7] https://canwach.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Handbook-OECD-DAC-Gender-Equality-Policy-Marker.pdf

In practical terms, these responsibilities include:

- **Recruitment, selection and contracting:** The support partner must establish a transparent and objective selection process in line with the policy objectives of the instrument under which it applies for funding. Within this process, in-country partners submit project proposals requesting support (financing and demand-driven capacity strengthening) from the support partner. The support partner uses this process to assess and select in-country partners, including an appraisal of each in-country partner's organisational capacity, which must be of sufficient quality to qualify for support from the support partner.

- **Financing:** The support partner provides financial support to selected in-country partners for the implementation of their project proposals. This financing is provided independently and under the support partner's own responsibility.

- **Capacity strengthening:** The support partner provides capacity strengthening support to its selected in-country partner, either directly, through third parties, or by financing support procured by the in-country partner itself (see section 2.2). The form of support must be determined in consultation with the in-country partner and be aligned with its specific needs.

- **Monitoring and accountability:** The support partner is responsible for monitoring the progress and results of its financing and capacity strengthening work, fostering mutual accountability, and reporting to the MFA on the implementation of the funded activities, the expenditure of grant funds, and compliance with grant conditions.
  The support partner bears overall responsibility for the execution of the funded activities and compliance with all grant obligations, including accountability to the Minister for the use of funds and the delivery of results.

Funds received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must be used exclusively for financing and capacity strengthening activities benefiting in-country partners. These two main activity categories are described in greater detail in Chapter 2. Examples of the types of projects that in-country partners may carry out using financing received from support partners are included in the instrument-specific chapters (8, 9 and 10).

Financial Management Costs
The costs incurred by support partners for the financial management of the support provided may not exceed 20% of the total direct and indirect costs incurred by in-country partners (see also Annex 4.1 "Model Budget Guidelines").

Indirect Costs for Support Partner
Indirect costs may not exceed 15% of the total direct and indirect costs incurred by the applicant (support partner).

1.3.2 Roles and responsibilities of in-country partners

In-country partners are local civil society organisations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) with relevant thematic expertise and context-specific experience. They are selected by support partners through an established selection mechanism and receive financial and/or capacity support based on their own identified needs.

In-country partners are primarily responsible for designing and implementing the project proposals for which they request support. The support partner ensures, through its selection mechanism, that funded projects are relevant to the objectives of this grant policy framework. The thematic and geographical focus within which support partners may provide assistance to in-country partners is detailed in the instrument-specific chapters (8, 9 and 10).

In-country partners are also responsible for managing the funds provided by the support partner, contributing to monitoring and learning processes, and promoting transparency and mutual accountability.

They are the final actors responsible for delivering services and conducting dialogue activities, and may not pass funds on to other organisations. The support partner must therefore design its selection process to prevent any further re-granting of funds to a third layer.

Indirect costs for in-country partners
Indirect costs may not exceed 15% of the total direct and indirect costs of the in-country partner.

1.4 Structure of this grant policy framework and underlying instruments

This grant policy framework consists of two sections:

- General section (Chapters 1 to 7, 11 and 12): This section applies to all three instruments of the framework and sets out the overarching principles, obligations and procedures.
- Instrument-specific chapters (Chapters 8 to 10): Each of these chapters elaborates the particular policy objectives, sub-objectives, activities, criteria and timelines for the relevant instrument.

2 Grant activities

Under this grant policy framework, two main types of activity are eligible for funding:

1. **Financing activities**: providing financial support to in-country partners for the implementation of activities relevant to the objectives of the instrument; and
2. **Capacity-strengthening activities**: supporting in-country partners in strengthening their organisational and professional capacity in order to enhance their role in service provision and in conducting informed and constructive dialogue.

These two categories apply across all three instruments of this framework. In Chapters 8 through 10 the specific focus of each instrument is set out, including examples of activities that in-country partners could implement with financial support of the support partner.

2.1 Financing activities

The support partner provides financial support to in-country partners for the implementation of activities relevant to the objectives and thematic priorities of the instrument under which the grant is awarded to the support partner.

FemFocus grants may be used to financially support two types of in-country partner activities:

- **Service provision**
  Activities that directly aim to improve the welfare or living conditions of individuals or communities in the target countries (referred to in this Grant Policy Framework as 'target communities'). Examples include:
    - Healthcare;
    - Education and training;
    - Psychosocial support;
    - Protection or information.
- **Dialogue**
    - Activities centred on policy dialogue with governments, multilateral institutions (such as the UN), religious or informal leaders and/or the private sector,
    - with the objective of raising awareness and promoting policy change to improve conditions for women and girls.
    - Dialogue activities centred on influencing policy within the Netherlands are not funded under the instruments of the Focus policy framework and therefore do not qualify for grant funding, nor may grants awarded under Focus be used to fund such activities.

Support partners must establish selection mechanisms consistent with this framework. These mechanisms should set out clear parameters and direction, while leaving in-country partners sufficient scope to make their own choices in line with local context and needs.

Minimum expenditure requirement for service provision
At least 30% of the total funds requested for financing activities by in-country partners must be used to support service provision by in-country partners. This requirement does not apply to funds used for capacity-strengthening activities (see section 2.2).

The precise form of service and dialogue activities may vary between instruments. Further details and examples are provided in the instrument-specific chapters (8–10).

2.2 Capacity-strengthening activities

Support partners provide assistance to in-country partners in strengthening their capacity as a service provider and critical dialogue partner, in close consultation with in-country partners and line with their specific needs. This support contributes to the overall effectiveness, autonomy and sustainability of the in-country partners and their programmes. Capacity strengthening may focus on:

- **General management**: for example, human resources, financial and operational management;
- **Technical or thematic expertise**: skills and knowledge directly related to service provision relevant to the theme of the specific instrument;
- **Dialogue capacity**: the ability of organisations to participate effectively in, or lead, policy dialogue at local, regional and international levels (as defined in section 2.1).

Such support may be provided:

- **Directly** by the support partner;
- **Indirectly** through third parties engaged by the support partner;
- **by in-country partners themselves**, using funds provided by the support partner.

Capacity strengthening can take place at several levels:

- **Individual level:** developing the knowledge and skills of staff;
- **Team level:** improving cooperation and internal processes;
- **Organisational level:** strengthening the organisation's structure, leadership, strategy and systems.

2.3 Ineligible activities:

The following activities are not eligible for a grant under this framework:

- Activities that involve or contribute to proselytism;
- Activities that involve racism, stigmatising expressions, antisemitism, or any other form of religious persecution or discrimination that is punishable and/or prohibited under Dutch or European law;
- Commercial activities;
- Activities that, either directly or indirectly, already receive funding or a contribution from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from the budget for Foreign Trade and Development;
- Activities aimed at influencing policy within the Netherlands;
- Activities that support or facilitate any of the above.

2.4 Specific scope of activities by instrument

The instrument-specific Chapters 8, 9 and 10 set out the particular requirements for each instrument, including examples of service and dialogue activities for which support partners may provide financial assistance to in-country partners using grant funds and capacity-strengthening activities that are eligible for grant funding. Grant applications must meet both the general requirements described in Chapters 1 through 7 and the instrument-specific requirements in

Chapters 8 through 10.

2.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

Within the instruments of the Focus policy framework, the aim of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) is to systematically track the progress, quality and results of the funded activities. This enables continuous learning, strategic adjustment where necessary (while remaining within the requirements of this grant policy framework), and transparent reporting on the outcomes achieved.

For all instruments covered by this framework, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) is responsible for commissioning an external, overarching baseline study and a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE). The support partner is responsible for monitoring and learning for the entire duration of the grant period. Throughout implementation, support partners must meet the reporting requirements that will be laid down in the grant award decisions. The Ministry requires output-level monitoring but encourages support partners to use additional tools that capture results at higher outcome levels.

Applicants must submit an initial outline of their MEL system as part of the grant application, as well as explaining how this outline will be further developed during the inception phase in collaboration with in-country partners. During this phase, the Ministry will facilitate coordination among the various support partners working under the same instrument, in order to create synergies and, where possible, harmonise indicators.

The MEL system must meet the following criteria (which will be included as an obligation in the grant award decisions):

- The system must be consistent with both the overarching Focus policy framework and the specific instrument concerned.
- Results must be clearly formulated at both the output and outcome level, including the underlying assumptions. Wherever possible, these assumptions should be substantiated with scientific evidence and/or practical experience.
- Appropriate indicators must be defined for the intended results at both the output and outcome level. These must in any case include the following overarching Focus indicators:
    - the number of in-country partners reached through capacity-strengthening activities;
    - the total amount of MFA funding (in EUR) provided directly or through a maximum of one intermediary layer to local organisations;
    - Qualitative: the extent to which the target group has been involved in developing the programme, reviewing progress and planning activities;
    - Qualitative: the extent to which gender considerations were incorporated in the design, implementation and monitoring of the programme.

  The Ministry will provide methodological guidance on these indicators after the grant has been awarded, prior to or during the inception phase.

- The MEL system must also set out clearly how in-country partners and target groups are actively involved in the MEL process, while recognising that the Ministry itself will commission the baseline study and MTE externally.

- The MEL approach fosters a learning and adaptive mindset, with regular reflection on progress achieved and the systematic identification of lessons learned for further implementation.

2.6 Inception phase

After the grant has been awarded, all applicants go through an inception phase of (a maximum of) six months, starting from the start date of the grant period as stated in the grant award decision. An inception report must be prepared on this phase, which should be submitted as an annex to the first annual plan.

Purpose of the inception phase

During the inception phase, the support partner selects (at least a portion of) the in-country partners it will support, whether through a full selection process at the start of the programme (see Chapter 8.3) or through a phased approach, allowing additional partners to apply for support later during the implementation period (see Chapters 9.3 and 10.3).

With the in-country partners already selected during the inception phase, the support partner develops the programme of activities, in line with the policy objectives and thematic scope of the relevant instrument. The support partner plays a facilitating role in this process, with the nature and form of support defined in consultation with the in-country partners.

Identifying the capacity-strengthening needs of the selected in-country partners is a key part of the inception phase, and based on this assessment, the most suitable form of support is jointly determined. This could be direct assistance by the support partner, indirect assistance through external expertise, or by providing funding that allows the in-country partner to procure its own support.

During this phase, the MEL system (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning) and risk analysis are also refined and finalised. Where relevant, the Ministry facilitates coordination among support partners operating under the same instrument, with a view to creating synergy and harmonising indicators.

Support partners operating in the same country must coordinate their programming during the inception phase to prevent duplicate financing, overlapping capacity-strengthening activities or thematic overlap between programmes.

Outcome of the inception phase

The inception phase concludes with an inception report, setting out the detailed programme design, the selection of in-country partners to be supported, the MEL system and a comprehensive risk analysis. The Ministry will provide a standard format for this report.

After the inception phase has been completed, the inception report must be submitted to the Ministry no later than six months after the start of the grant period, as stated in the grant award decision. The report should be included as an annex to the annual plan for the following implementation year. After the grant is awarded, the Ministry will provide further details on the inception phase, the reporting requirements for the applicant, and the associated timeline.

3 Who and what may qualify?

Grant applications are first assessed against the threshold criteria set out in this chapter. Only applications that pass this first assessment proceed to the assessment described in Chapter 7.

3.1 Threshold criteria

An application will be considered for funding only if all of the following threshold criteria are met. Applications that fail to satisfy one or more of the threshold criteria will be rejected and will not be assessed any further.

Threshold criteria relating to the applicant organisation (support partner):

D.1 Type of organisation
a) The applicant is a civil society organization submitting a grant application independently.

b) For the instruments *Encouraging Women's Entrepreneurship* (see Chapter 8) and *Women, Peace and Security* (see Chapter 10): the applicant is legally established in the Netherlands or in a low- or middle-income country on the OECD-DAC list.

D.2 Financial independence
In the 2022-2024 period, an average of at least 25% of the applicant's total annual income came from sources other than the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This criterion does not apply to specialist organisations and small southern organisations as referred to in section 3.2. (See section 3.2 for a detailed explanation of criterion D.2).

D.3 Track record
a) The applicant has at least five years of demonstrable experience in capacity strengthening of in-country partners in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and in providing financing to in-country partners for independently developed and implemented activities. This experience must have been acquired within the ten years preceding 1 October 2025.

b) The applicant has at least five years of proven experience in the policy themes and objectives of the instrument for which it is applying, in the countries included in its project proposal.

D.4 System for selection, monitoring and risk management of in-country partners
The applicant has a policy and system in place (applied in the five years preceding 1 October 2025) for selecting and monitoring the in-country partners it supports. This system must include procedures for managing risks relating to finance, governance and integrity in connection with the implementation of activities and the use of (financial) support provided to those partners.

D.5 Maximum remuneration
As of the start of the grant period, the gross remuneration of each individual member of the applicant's management and governing bodies does not exceed the following annual maxima:

> **a) Applicants legally established in the Netherlands or other EU Member States**
> A maximum of EUR 226,000 per calendar year.
> For EU Member States outside the euro area, conversion to euros will be based on the current corporate exchange rates (see Appendix 7) as set by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
>
> **b) Applicants legally established in the United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland, Japan, the United States or Canada**
> Maximum annual gross remuneration per country:
>
> - United Kingdom: GBP 245,536
> - Norway: NOK 3,323,529
> - Switzerland: CHF 371,194
> - Japan: JPY 37,569,305

- United States / Canada: USD 348,469

c) Applicants established in other countries
The maximum annual gross remuneration is the amount determined for the relevant country of establishment, as set out in Annex 8 of this grant policy framework.

Threshold criteria relating to the activities proposed by the support partner

D.6 Thematic focus:

a) The activities proposed for funding align with the overarching aim of *FemFocus*: to provide financial and capacity support to in-country partners so that they can deliver services and engage in dialogue directly relevant to the objectives of the instrument concerned (see b).

b) The proposed activities address the policy objectives and themes of the relevant instrument, as described in the instrument-specific chapters (sections 8.1, 9.1 or 10.1).

c) The proposed activities meet the OECD DAC gender marker 2 standard (gender equality as the principal objective) (see section 1.2).

D.7 Geographical focus and number of countries
Activities may only take place in, or relate to, the number of countries and the geographical focus specified in the relevant instrument-specific chapters, see sections 8.2, 9.2 or 10.2.

D.8 Duration of activities
Proposed activities have a duration of no more than 60 months, commence no earlier than the day after submission of the grant application, and not before 1 January 2026.[8]

D.9 Grant amount
a) The total grant amount requested falls within the minimum and maximum amounts specified in the relevant instrument-specific chapters (see sections 8.4, 9.4 or 10.4).

b) The annual grant amount requested does not exceed the applicant's average annual 'non-MFA income' during 2022–2024, and the total grant amount requested does not exceed five times this average. This criterion does not apply to specialist organisations and small southern organisations as referred to in section 3.2.[9] (See section 3.2 for a detailed explanation of criterion D.9b).

c) At least 30% of the total grant funds that the applicant (support partner) intends to allocate to financing activities of in-country partners will be used to support service provision by in-country partners.

D.10 Number of applications per applicant
Individual applicants may be awarded a maximum of one grant under this framework. If multiple applications are submitted, only the first application received will be considered and all later applications will be rejected.

D.11 Ineligible activities
The application does not include:

- Activities that involve or contribute to proselytism;
- Activities that involve racism, stigmatising expressions, antisemitism, or any other form of religious persecution or discrimination that is punishable and/or prohibited under Dutch or European law;
- Commercial activities;
- Activities that, either directly or indirectly, already receive funding or a contribution from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation;
- Activities aimed at influencing policy within the Netherlands;

[8] Important: Applicants commencing activities before a final decision is made regarding their grant proposal for those activities do so at their own risk.
[9] No grant can be awarded if doing so would exceed the relevant grant ceiling (see sections 8.4, 9.4, 10.4).

- Activities that support or facilitate any of the above.

In addition to these threshold criteria, applicants must also meet the requirements concerning organisational capacity and integrity policy. These requirements, as well as further explanation of criteria D.2 (financial independence) and D.9b (grant size), are set out in the following sections.

3.2 Financial independence of applicants and size of applications

Threshold criterion D.2 requires that each applicant must demonstrate that, on average, at least 25% of its total annual income during the period 2022–2024 was derived from sources **other** than the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to qualify for grant funding under the instruments of this grant policy framework.

'Income from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' includes:

a) All direct grants and/or contributions[10] received from the budget of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or from the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, including funds obtained via organisations mandated by the Ministry such as the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) or Nuffic (Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education).

Note: Organisations acting as the lead organisation of an alliance or consortium that have received a grant or contribution on behalf of that alliance or consortium may deduct from their MFA income the portion of those MFA funds that was passed[11] directly to other organisations within the alliance or consortium.

b) All funds received by an organisation as a member of an alliance or consortium from the lead organisation that received a grant or contribution from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the budget for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, for activities financed from that grant or contribution.

Applicants that meet this minimum percentage of 25% 'non-MFA income' may receive, per year, a grant or contribution not exceeding the average annual amount of 'non-MFA income' received in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Over the total programme period, this amounts to five times that figure, since grants are awarded for five years. Naturally, no grants will be awarded that exceed the ceiling available for the instrument under which the grant is requested.

To demonstrate compliance with the financial independence requirement, applicants must submit audited annual accounts for 2022, 2023 and 2024. Where this is not possible, the applicant must provide a justification for the absence of audited accounts. Note: A positive assessment of the threshold test is provisional. Applicants who receive a positive threshold assessment (see section 3.1) will subsequently be required to submit an auditor's statement confirming that the information in Table 1 of Annex 2 is correct. This statement need not be included with the initial application.

Note: Further information on the documentation required for this criterion can be found in Annex 2.

Applicants that **do not** meet the minimum threshold of 25% 'non-MFA income' (i.e. those that derive more than 75% of their income from MFA grants and contributions) are *not* eligible for a grant under the instruments of this framework. Only organisations eligible for the customised approach (see below) are exempt from this requirement. These organisations may also be eligible for a grant exceeding five times their average 'non-MFA income' in 2022, 2023 and 2024.

Customised approach

Regarding the financial independence requirements described above exceptions are made for specialist organisations and for small southern organisations. For both categories, the requirement that at least 25% of their total income in 2022, 2023 and 2024 must have come from sources other than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the budget for Foreign Trade and Development does

[10] This does not include income from commissioned work.

[11] 'Passing on' funds means transferring funds so that they are deposited in an alliance partner's bank account.

not apply. Moreover, they may be eligible to receive a grant that on an annual basis exceeds the average of their non-MFA income over the past three years.

1) In the context of this grant policy framework, a specialist organisation is defined as a civil society organisation that, compared with other organisations working in the same policy area, distinguishes itself in terms of the focus, nature, and scope of its expertise and experience. In order to qualify as a specialist organisations an applicant must meet the following two requirements:
    a. The organisation has been active for at least 15 consecutive years (reference date 1 October 2025), working on the core theme of the instrument under which it is applying for a grant; and
    b. The organisation has specialised in that core theme. This must be demonstrated by audited statements showing that at least 80% of the organisation's annual programme funding in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 was spent on activities or interventions related to this core theme.

    Annex 2 provides instructions for demonstrating compliance with the requirements in (a) and (b).

2) Within the context of this grant policy framework, a small southern organisation is defined as an organisation that (i) has been established and is legally registered in a country included on the OECD-DAC list of low- and middle-income countries, and (ii) has an annual staff budget[12] not exceeding EUR 500,000. This must be substantiated by the organisation's deed of incorporation or articles of association, and by its most recent audited financial report.

   Applicants claiming eligibility for the customised approach on the basis of being either a specialist organisation or a small southern organisation must submit the information specified in Annex 2 in support of this claim.

3.3 Organisational capacity and integrity policy

To be eligible for a grant under the instruments of this grant policy framework, applicants that have passed the threshold test must also meet the following two requirements, which form part of the subsequent assessment.

1. The applicant is in a position to ensure adequate financial management and can guarantee the effective and efficient implementation of the activities through experience and expertise in relation to activities of the kind for which grant funding is sought.
2. The applicant demonstrates that it has adopted an integrity policy and has introduced procedures to give effect to that policy. This integrity policy should include pre-employment screening and the necessary procedures to apply the policy. This integrity policy and the corresponding procedures must be designed to prevent, as far as possible, serious forms of inappropriate conduct, including sexual misconduct and racism, towards staff members and others involved in carrying out the proposed activities, whether by the applicant or by other parties engaged in their implementation. In cases where such conduct does occur, the procedures must ensure that it is promptly investigated, that appropriate measures are taken to bring it to an end as quickly as possible, and that the consequences are mitigated. The procedures must be designed to ensure the timely reporting of incidents to the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development.

These two requirements operate in the same way as the criteria of the threshold test: applicants that fail to meet them are not eligible for a grant.

For this purpose, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs applies the Organisational Risk and Integrity Assessment (ORIA). Only applicants that have received a positive assessment of the threshold criteria will be invited separately by the Ministry to submit an ORIA. The ORIA **therefore need not be included with the initial grant application.** Applicants must submit a fully completed ORIA (including attachments) and receive a positive assessment of its mandatory components in

[12] Expenditure on salaried employees.

order to qualify for a grant. Organisations that already hold a valid, positively assessed ORIA or a valid Partos certificate must submit this document instead.

3.4 Entities not eligible for grant funding

Ineligible entities:

- For-profit organisations;
- Government bodies and organisations in which the government is the sole or majority shareholder;
- Intergovernmental organisations;
- Organisations submitting an application as or on behalf of a partnership (alliance or consortium).

4 Available resources and their allocation across the instruments

For the award of grants under the instruments of this grant policy framework, the Minister of Foreign Affairs has made available a total amount of **EUR 209,370,000**[13] for the period from 1 January 2026 up to and including 31 December 2030.

The total amount available for grant funding over this five-year period is distributed across the instruments of this framework as follows:

Grant instrument	Total grant ceiling per instrument	Further details of allocation system in
Encouraging women's entrepreneurship	€ 54,835,000	Chapter 8, section 8.5
Combating violence against women and supporting women human rights defenders;	€ 114,655,000	Chapter 9, section 9.5
Women, Peace and Security	€ 39,880,000	Chapter 10, section 10.5

The available resources are allocated per instrument through a grant tender procedure. Applications are ranked according to the results of their qualitative assessment, based on the criteria set out in this grant policy framework (see sections 8.6, 9.6 and 10.6). Only applications that are submitted on time and that pass the threshold test will undergo this qualitative assessment. The assessment will be based solely on the information received before the closing date and time for submission.

Chapter 7 contains general provisions regarding assessment and selection. The allocation method for each instrument is further elaborated in sections 8.5, 9.5 and 10.5 respectively.

5 Eligible costs

Only costs that are necessary for carrying out the activities for which a grant is requested, and which cannot reasonably be covered from the applicant's own resources or from other sources, are eligible for funding.[14]

Activities that have already started before the date on which the grant application was submitted are not eligible for funding, and the costs associated with such activities are therefore also ineligible[15]. Eligible costs are listed and explained in the mandatory budget template to be submitted with the application (see Annex 4.2 to this grant policy framework).

[13] A total of €210 million has been made available for implementation, spread over a five-year period. 0.3% of this amount is reserved for a centrally commissioned external evaluation, leaving a maximum of €209,370,000 available for grant awards.
[14] Article 14 (1), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree.
[15] Article 9 Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Decree.

6 Application procedure

6.1 Process and timelines

- Applications may be submitted during the application period: **October 16 2025 – January 7 2026** closing at 23.59 hour CEST.
    - Applications submitted after the date and time stated above will be rejected. The time at which the application is *received* at the Ministry will be considered the time of submission. The applicant bears full responsibility for ensuring that the application is complete and submitted on time.

- A decision on the threshold assessment will be issued by **February 18, 2026.**
- If the threshold assessment is positive, the applicant will be requested to submit:
    1) ORIA documents; or a valid Partos certificate;
    2) an auditor's statement confirming that the information concerning threshold criterion D.2, as included in Table 1 of Annex 2, is correct.

  Applicants will have **four weeks** from the date of this request to submit the required documents. Both documents will be assessed concurrently with the substantive evaluation of the application.
- Applicants that do not pass the threshold test will receive a formal order of rejection.
- The decision on whether or not a grant will be awarded will follow by **May 6 2026** at the latest.

With regard to the application procedure, particular attention is drawn to article 7, paragraph 3 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grants Decree. If an application does not comply with the formal requirements set out in this grant policy framework, the Minister may request a supplement. *In this case, the date and time of receipt of the application will be the date and time on which the supplemented application is received.* The shorter the time remaining between submission of the application and the deadline, the greater the risk that, if the application is incomplete, the Minister will not use their discretionary powers to request a supplement because of the time required to check all applications are complete. In this case, no supplement will be requested and the application will be assessed as originally submitted, which may lead to a lower ranking or even rejection.

Applications must be submitted in full and without reservation, legally signed by the person authorised to do so on behalf of the applicant organisation, stating their name and position. Applicants may not submit preliminary applications.

When drawing up the grant application, it is not sufficient to refer for the sake of brevity to other parts of the application or annexes, unless the application form explicitly states that this is wholly or partly acceptable. Incomplete applications – including applications lacking annexes – may be rejected.

Applications should be submitted in English. Any annexes prepared in another language must be accompanied by an English translation. Additional materials (such as USB sticks) will not be taken into account in the assessment.

*Applications should preferably be submitted by email in .pdf format, with the **budget in Excel format.** Applications should be sent to DSO-MM@minbuza.nl, stating "**application FemFocus (+name of instrument)".***

The time that the email is received on the servers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be considered the time of submission. Please note that the email server will reject files larger than 14MB. Emails exceeding this size must be divided into smaller parts. In this case, the time at which the last email is received will be considered the time the application is submitted. If an application is split into several files which are each sent separately by email, the emails must be *numbered, with both the email number and the total number of emails clearly indicated in the subject line.*[16]

Any technical or other issues relating to submission are at the applicant's own cost and risk.

Submission of applications by mail is discouraged. If you nevertheless choose this option, or if you submit in person or by courier, please contact the Ministry *in a timely manner* via the email address: **DSO-MM@minbuza.nl** stating the application "**application FemFocus [+ name of instrument]".** Please take into account postal processing times and the fact that the date of receipt is determined based on the time of registration by BZ, and that BZ does not register mail in the evening or on Saturdays and Sundays.

Questions arising from this document or other matters can only be addressed by email and no later than **October 29, 2025**, to **DSO-MM@minbuza.nl.** Where necessary, combined with other questions, anonymized answers will be provided through a Q&A and on this website.

6.2 Required documents to be submitted with the application

Applications must be submitted using the prescribed formats. The list below specifies the mandatory documents and appendices for every application.

I Mandatory documents and appendices

To submit a grant application, the following documents and appendices must be provided:

A. A fully completed **application form**, using the mandatory format in Annex 1.

B. The applicant's **articles of association**, demonstrating that it is a civil society organisation, and clearly stating the date and place of establishment as well as the registered office.

C. A fully **completed Table 1 in Annex 2**, demonstrating compliance with the threshold criterion on financial independence (see Annex 2, section 2.A). Note: A positive assessment of the threshold test is provisional. Applicants who receive a positive threshold assessment (see section 3) will subsequently be required to submit an auditor's statement confirming that the information in Table 1 of Annex 2 is correct. This statement therefore need not be included with the initial grant application.

D. **Audited financial statements** for the financial years 2022, 2023 and 2024. For each annual statement, applicants must indicate the page number and section where the information relevant to the financial independence requirement can be found. Where audited financial statements cannot be submitted, the applicant must provide a written justification explaining why they have not been audited.

E. The organisation's **track record**, using the mandatory format in Annex 5.

F. **A project proposal, including the policy principles,** prepared using the mandatory format (see Annex 3.1 Encouraging women's entrepreneurship, Annex 3.2 Combating violence against women, and Annex 3.3 Women, Peace and Security).

G. **A budget in Excel,** prepared in the prescribed format (Annex 4.2). This must include: a detailed budget for the first twelve months, a multi-annual projection for the remainder of the project period, a narrative explanation of how the budget figures were calculated (no fixed format), and all underlying P×Q calculations (no fixed format).

H. **A description of the applicant's selection process for in-country partners, including:**

[16] *For example: email 1 of 5, email of 2 of 5, etc.*

(i) Procedures and formats (no more than 1 or 2 examples)

(ii) Proof of application: Anonymised example of a risk analysis or due diligence investigation of an in-country partner.

II. Mandatory appendices for applicants claiming eligibility for the customised approach in relation to threshold criterion D.2

The following appendices must be submitted only by applicants who claim eligibility the customised approach in relation to threshold criterion D.2 (financial independence), as explained in section 3.2. Such applicants must include the following information with their application (see also the form to be completed in Annex 2):

Specialist organisations:

I. In addition to the track record mentioned under item E above (to be completed in Annex 5), the applicant must submit an **additional track record** of at least five and no more than ten projects or programmes that focused on the core theme of the instrument for which the organisation is applying for a grant. At least one project must date back more than ten years (reference date 1 October 2025). Further details can be found in Annex 2.

J. **Audited financial statements** for the financial years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. Where audited financial statements cannot be submitted, the applicant must provide a written justification explaining why they have not been audited. The applicant must clearly indicate on which page and in which section of the annual report the requested information can be found.

K. **Table 2 in Annex 2,** duly completed, must demonstrate that at least 80% of the organisation's annual programme funding during these five years was spent on activities and interventions related to this core theme. Applicants will later be asked to submit an auditor's statement confirming the accuracy of the information provided in Table 2 of Annex 2. Note: This statement will be requested only after the threshold assessment, together with the ORIA or Partos documentation. Applicants will be informed accordingly and given four weeks to submit the required materials. This statement therefore does **not** need to be included with the initial application.

For small, southern organisations:

L. The organisation's **articles of association** (see section B above) must show that it is established and legally registered in a country listed as a low- or middle-income country according to the OECD DAC list. If the articles of association do not provide sufficient evidence, a deed of incorporation may be attached to the application as supplementary evidence.

M. The applicant must also submit its **most recent annual financial report**, demonstrating that its total staff expenditure for salaried employees of the organisation does not exceed EUR 500,000.

7 Assessment and selection procedure

The provisions of the General Administrative Law Act, the Grant Decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Grant Regulations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2006 apply in full to the assessment of applications under this grant policy framework. Applications will be assessed in accordance with the above legislation and pursuant to the criteria set out in this grant policy framework.

Assessment of threshold criteria
Applications received on time are processed according to the following assessment and selection procedure. The applicant and the activities for which a grant is requested must first satisfy all the threshold criteria listed in section 3.1 of this grant policy framework. Applications that fail to satisfy one or more of the threshold criteria will be rejected and will not be assessed any further.

ORIA assessment:
Applicants whose applications meet all threshold criteria will be notified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This notification will always be provisional, pending the stipulations concerning the submission of the auditor's statement referred to in section 3.2. Within four weeks of receiving this notification, applicants must submit the this auditor's statement, as well as the required documentation for the Organisational Risk and Integrity Assessment (ORIA), or a valid Partos certificate, so that they can be assessed against the criteria on organisational capacity and integrity policy (see section 3.3). The notification will specify exactly which documents must be provided.
A positive assessment of the mandatory components of the ORIA is required in order to be able to qualify for a grant. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will carry out the ORIA assessment concurrently with the substantive assessment that follows the threshold test.

Substantive assessment:
For the substantive assessment, the MFA uses qualitative assessment criteria, which are set out in the instrument-specific chapters (8.6, 9.6 and 10.6). These criteria concern the track record, the project proposal (including budget), and the policy principles. The scoring system is as follows:

Component	**Maximum possible score**	**Minimum score per component**
Track record	35	20
Project proposal including budget	65	40
Policy principles	10	6
Total	110	-

To be eligible for a grant, the overall quality of the application must be assessed as more than satisfactory, meaning a minimum total score of **75 points out of 110.** Each individual component must also be assessed as more than satisfactory, meeting at least the minimum scores listed above. Note: merely achieving the minimum score on each component will not result in a total score of 75 points. Applications that do not meet these minimum quality standards will be rejected.

The allocation method of the available means for each instrument is further elaborated in sections 8.5, 9.5 and 10.5 respectively.

The decision-making will take place with an eye to account Article 10 of the Grant Decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[17] The minister may refuse to award a grant if awarding the grant would be incompatible with his policy on foreign relations and development aid; this must concern publicly accessible policy, for example from the explanatory memorandum to the Ministry's budget, from parliamentary documents, or from policy rules pursuant to Article 6, first paragraph, of the Grant Decree of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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[17] wetten.nl - Regeling - Subsidiebesluit Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken - BWBR0018039

8 Instrument 1: Encouraging Women's Entrepreneurship

8.1 Policy context and objective

Women's entrepreneurship is a powerful driver of socio-economic growth and sustainable development. Women often reinvest their profits in their families and communities, thereby contributing to local employment and a stronger investment climate.[18] Nevertheless, women entrepreneurs in many developing countries face significant barriers, such as limited access to formal markets and finance, and socio-cultural norms that restrict their participation in the formal economy. Small-scale entrepreneurs in the informal sector are particularly vulnerable in times of crisis, with negative consequences for national economies and stability.

In its Policy Letter on Development Cooperation of 20 February 2025,[19] the government emphasises the importance of women's entrepreneurship as part of a sustainable economic agenda. The Netherlands also has important trade and economic relations with Africa, where the share of women entrepreneurs is relatively high. Supporting women entrepreneurs more effectively helps realise their economic potential and promotes broader socio-economic development and a stronger investment climate in these countries.

Research[20] shows that effective programmes encouraging women's entrepreneurship often follow a two-track approach, combining:

- strengthening business skills and improving access to markets, networks, products and services at the individual level; and
- reducing socio-cultural and institutional barriers at the societal level, so that women can develop their businesses and strengthen their role in the formal economy.

On the basis of these insights, this instrument pursues the following policy objectives:

1. to strengthen women's entrepreneurship at the individual level;
2. to remove socio-cultural and institutional barriers at the societal level.

Women running small-scale businesses often have limited access to existing sources of finance, such as donor funding, private investment or development banks. Local civil society organisations are better positioned to reach and support these entrepreneurs. Through this grant policy framework, the Ministry therefore aims to provide financial and capacity-strengthening support to such organisations. Successful participation in the formal economy generally requires a phased approach. This instrument focuses on the initial phase, strengthening individual women entrepreneurs and their immediate environment. To ensure sustainable results, this instrument also seeks to create linkages between its programmes and other Dutch, national and international initiatives that focus on subsequent phases, such as improving access to finance. This will help ensure that women entrepreneurs are able to take the next steps in growing their businesses.

For other general policy principles, such as capacity strengthening of civil society organisations and locally led development, reference is made to section 1.2.

8.2 Geographical focus

The geographical focus of this instrument is on the African continent, a part of the world in which the Netherlands has significant trade and economic interests and where the share of women entrepreneurs in the informal sector is relatively high. To qualify for a grant under the Encouraging

[18] https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm + AFAWA (2019 act no 4000003081)
[19] Parliamentary Letter on Development Aid, 20 February 2025 (Parliamentary Document 36180-133), available via:Tweede Kamer.
[20] We-Fi_Evidence-Paper-Oct2022.pdf, CAREs-Women-Mean-Business-Global-Report.pdf, Theory of Change WEMAN.pdf, publication4_guidelines_v2_revas_cc12dic_0.pdf

Women's Entrepreneurship instrument, the proposed activities must therefore take place in or focus on countries in which the Netherlands has trade and economic interests.

Applications should therefore target at least two of the following countries:

> Egypt, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Benin, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Uganda, Tunisia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

8.3 Specific scope of eligible activities

Under this instrument, eligible activities include both financing and capacity-strengthening activities, as described in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Activities must contribute to the policy objectives of this instrument as outlined in section 8.1.

At the start of the grant period, the support partner selects all in-country partners that will be involved for the full five-year duration. During the inception phase, the support partner works with the selected in-country partners to further elaborate the programme proposal.

Financing activities
The support partner provides financial support to in-country partners for the implementation of activities that contribute to the policy objectives of this instrument (see section 2.1). The in-country partners are responsible for developing and implementing these activities, facilitated by the support partner through a transparent application and selection process for financing and supervision.

Under this instrument, support partners may provide financial support to in-country partners for activities including but not limited to:

- Strengthening women's entrepreneurship through training, coaching and facilitating access to markets, networks, products, finance and services.
- Reducing socio-cultural and institutional barriers through local and national policy dialogue, awareness campaigns and advocacy directed towards relevant stakeholders.

Capacity-strengthening activities
The support partner assists in-country partners in strengthening their capacity, in line with the general principles described in section 2.2. This support is aimed at increasing the effectiveness, autonomy and sustainability of in-country partners and is not directly targeted at the target group.

The form of support is tailored to the needs of the in-country partner and is in principle agreed during the inception phase. Specific examples of capacity strengthening within this instrument include but are not limited to:

- Training and mentoring in-country partners in setting up and implementing programmes to strengthen women's entrepreneurship, including, where relevant, strengthening their financial management systems.

- Advising and supporting in-country partners in developing and delivering training courses on financial literacy, market access and networking for women's entrepreneurs.

- Supporting in-country partners in developing and implementing activities to reduce socio-cultural and institutional barriers, such as engaging in critical dialogue and policy advocacy in selected countries.

- Facilitating the creation of networks and knowledge exchange among in-country partners active in the field of women's entrepreneurship.

Applicants must distinguish clearly between financing activities and capacity-strengthening activities in their budget. Financing activities may relate to both service provision and dialogue (see Chapter 2). At least 30% of the total amount requested for financing activities must be used to support service provision.

8.4 Grant ceiling and application size

The grant ceiling for this instrument is EUR 54,835,000 for the period 2026–2030 (five years).

The size of each application must be at least 33.3% and no more than 50% of the total budget available for this instrument (Encouraging women's entrepreneurship). This means that a single application must amount to a minimum of EUR 18,260,055 and a maximum of EUR 27,417,500.

8.5 Allocation of available resources within the instrument

In addition to Chapters 4 and 7, the following applies:

Funds are allocated through a grant tender, i.e. on the basis of quality, as described in Chapter 4. The quality of applications is assessed using the qualitative criteria set out in section 8.6. The results of this assessment lead to a quality ranking of applications. Applications that do not meet the minimum qualitative standard (i.e. 'more than satisfactory') are not included in the ranking.

The Minister awards grants in accordance with this quality-based ranking until the grant ceiling is reached. Applications that best meet the qualitative criteria will be awarded first, provided that they meet the minimum quality standard.

If the remaining budget is insufficient to fully fund the next application in the ranking, that application will be **partially** awarded, using the remainder of the budget.
Each applicant will receive a formal decision indicating whether the grant has been fully awarded, partially awarded/partially rejected, or fully rejected. Partial or full rejection will occur if the quality of an application is below the required level, or if the available funds for this instrument are insufficient to award grants to all qualifying applications.

8.6 Qualitative criteria

Following a positive outcome of the threshold assessment (see section 3.1), each application is assessed on the basis of the following qualitative criteria. See also the application form in Annex 1.

Part I: Track Record (maximum 35 points)

1. Track record in capacity strengthening (maximum 10 points)
a) The extent to which the applicant has demonstrably experience in strengthening the capacity of in-country partners in ways tailored to their needs, using either internal or external expertise.

b) The extent to which the capacity-strengthening measures implemented by the applicant have led to positive change among in-country partners, and the extent to which lessons have been learned from these experiences.

2. Track record in financing mechanisms (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the applicant has experience in designing and managing systems for the disbursement and accountability of funds to in-country partners, in a manner that allows for transparency, mutual trust and an appropriate degree of ownership and responsibility by those partners.

3. Access to a relevant and diverse network (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the applicant has a relevant and diverse network of in-country partners in the selected countries which is relevant to the policy objectives of the instrument, demonstrating strong embeddedness in the local context.

4. Experience with programming on women's entrepreneurship (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the applicant has demonstrable successful experience in developing and implementing programmes aimed at the policy objectives of the encouraging women's entrepreneurship instrument (see section 8.1), or in (financially) supporting organisations that implement such programmes.

Part II: Proposal (maximum 65 points)

5. Context, stakeholder and problem analysis, and proposal including country selection (maximum 25 points)
a) The extent to which the application presents a sound and relevant analysis of the context, stakeholders and problem.

b) The extent to which the proposed activities logically follow from, and respond to, this analysis.

c) The extent to which the selected countries follow logically from the context, stakeholder and problem analysis and are well substantiated.

d) The extent to which the proposal convincingly explains how the intervention contributes to sustainable outcomes and includes a realistic exit strategy.

6. Vision on locally led development maximum 8 points)
The extent to which the applicant presents a clear vision and approach for fostering local ownership, with a transparent division of roles between the applicant and in-country partners in programme decision-making.

7. Selection and assessment process of in-country partners (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the process for selecting in-country partners is careful, objective and inclusive. It is important that clear procedures are in place for selecting new partners and for reassessing existing ones whose organisational capacity has previously been deemed sufficient to qualify for support.

8. Capacity strengthening of in-country partners (maximum 7 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed approach to capacity strengthening is demand-driven, taking account of the local context and the capacity needs (to be defined) of in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the proposed approach is based on a clear and coherent vision on capacity strengthening.

9. Risk management (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the proposal identifies and analyses the risks associated with the programme and provides suitable mitigation measures.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) (maximum 5 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed MEL approach is developed in cooperation with in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the MEL system is designed to track programme progress, enable transparent reporting, and serve as a basis for timely adaptation of activities within the requirements of this grant policy framework.

11. Budget (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the requested resources and their allocation in the budget submitted with the application are proportionate to the context, stakeholder and problem analysis, the proposed activities and the intended results.

Part III: Policy principles (maximum 10 points)

12. Gender (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal actively takes gender relations into account in the relevant context.

b) The extent to which the proposal promotes gender equality through its proposed implementation, in a way that is appropriate to the local context and target group.

13. Conflict sensitivity (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal demonstrates understanding of conflict dynamics in the context of the countries concerned and translates this understanding into a conflict-sensitive programme design and implementation.

b) The measures taken to ensure that implementation adheres to the Do No Harm principle.

9 Instrument 2: Combating Violence against Women & Supporting Women's Rights & Women Human Rights Defenders (CVAW-WHRDs)

9.1 Policy context and objective

One in three women and girls worldwide experiences sexual or gender-based violence. The causes of violence against women and girls are complex and context-specific, but its psychological and physical impact on victims, families and communities is profound. Such violence reduces women's participation in public life, increases healthcare costs for both women and society overall, and heightens the risk of future violence. Worldwide, the human-rights movement, and women's rights in particular, is under mounting pressure. More anti-rights organisations are active, better funded and better organised, and an increasing number of governments sometimes cooperate directly with them. As a result, women's-rights defenders are facing growing pressure, both offline and online, with direct implications for their safety, their ability to act and for progress on women's rights.

Through this instrument, Combating Violence against Women and Supporting Women's Rights and Women Human-Rights Defenders (CVAW-WHRDs), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports in-country partners in West Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through support partners. The policy objectives of this instrument are:

1. combating violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence;
2. providing treatment and support to women and girls who are victims of such violence; and
3. supporting women's-rights defenders and women human-rights defenders.

These objectives are translated into the following sub-objectives/result areas:

1. prevention of violence against women;
2. improved assistance and access to support services for victims;
3. improved legislation and implementation of laws for the protection of victims;
4. direct support for women human-rights defenders in precarious situations.

For other general policy principles, such as capacity strengthening of civil society organisations and locally led development, reference is made to section 1.2.

9.2 Geographical focus

To qualify for a grant under this instrument, applications must relate to countries in the regions of West Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), as listed in Annex 6.

Each application may cover **one or two regions, with a minimum of two implementation countries per region** in which the activities will be carried out or to which they will relate[21]. These countries must align with the objectives of this instrument and must remain the implementation countries for the full duration of the grant.

9.3 Specific scope of eligible activities

Under this instrument, eligible activities include both financing and capacity-strengthening activities, as described in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Activities must contribute to the policy objectives of this instrument as outlined in section 9.1.

This instrument applies a phased approach. During the inception phase, the programme proposal is elaborated on the basis of input from a selection of relevant local organisations. The programme may consist of several distinct components of varying duration, tailored to the country context and the aims of this instrument. Local organisations involved in the inception phase are not

[21] Activities may be implemented from a neighbouring country, provided that this is properly substantiated.

automatically guaranteed support under the programme. Throughout the programme's runtime, local partners may submit applications to the support partner.

Financing activities
The support partner provides financial support to in-country partners for the implementation of activities that contribute to combating violence against women and supporting women human rights defenders (see also paragraph 2.1). The in-country partners are responsible for developing and implementing these activities, facilitated by the support partner through a transparent application and selection process for financing and supervision.

Under this instrument, support partners may provide financial support to in-country partners for activities including but not limited to:

- establishing and maintaining support services, such as SOS hotlines, shelters and rape crisis centres;
- providing legal assistance and psychosocial care for victims of gender-based violence;
- implementing behaviour change and awareness-raising programmes, including initiatives that engage men and boys;
- offering cybersecurity training, psychological support and relocation assistance for WHRDs;
- engaging in dialogue and advocacy at (sub-)national, regional and international levels to improve laws and law enforcement for the protection of victims.

Capacity-strengthening activities
The support partner assists in-country partners in strengthening their capacity, in line with the general principles described in section 2.2. This support is aimed at increasing the effectiveness, autonomy and sustainability of in-country partners and is not directly targeted at the target group.

The form of support is based on the needs of the in-country partner and is in principle agreed during the inception phase, though it may be adjusted later if new partners apply at a later stage. Examples of capacity strengthening under this instrument include but are not limited to:

- training and advising in-country partners on the design and implementation of activities that support and protect victims of gender-based violence;
- supporting partners in developing internal procedures, such as quality assurance in shelters, safe working environments for WHRDs, and trauma care protocols;
- contracting technical experts or research institutions to support these processes;
- providing training and mentoring on establishing internal processes, such as transparent financial management, monitoring and reporting.

Applicants must distinguish clearly between financing activities and capacity-strengthening activities in their budget. Financing activities include both service provision and dialogue (see chapter 2). At least 30% of the total amount requested for financing activities must be used to support service provision.

9.4 Grant ceiling and application size

The grant ceiling for this instrument is EUR 114,655,000 for the period 2026–2030 (five years).

Each application within this instrument may cover one or two regions, with applications relating to two regions being considered as a single application consisting of two sub-applications.

Per region, the size of each application/sub-application must be 33.3% of the total budget available for this instrument (CVAW-WHRDs) of €114,655,000. This means that a single application/sub-application must amount to EUR 38,180,115.

Applications submitted for two regions must therefore be 66.66% of the total budget available for this instrument (CVAW-WHRDs) of €114,655,000, which amounts to €76,360,230.

9.5 Allocation of available resources within the instrument

In addition to Chapters 4 and 7, the following applies:

Funds are allocated through a grant tender, i.e. on the basis of quality, as described in Chapter 4. The quality of applications is assessed using the qualitative criteria set out in section 9.6.

The qualitative assessment of applications takes place on a region by region basis (see section 9.2). For each application/sub-application for a region, a single final score is given on the basis of the established assessment criteria. In applications covering two regions, each sub-application is given a separate final score. All applications/sub-applications are then ranked per region according to quality. Applications that do not meet the minimum qualitative standard (i.e. 'more than satisfactory') are not included in the ranking.

The Minister awards grants per region in accordance with this quality-based ranking, granting the highest-scoring application/sub-application per region, provided it meets the minimum quality standard of "more than satisfactory."

If no applications/sub-applications of more than satisfactory quality are received for a given region, no grant will be awarded for activities in that region. In such cases, the available funds for that region may instead be used for awarding grants for activities in other regions.

If, after awarding grants to the highest-scoring application/sub-application per region, funds remain, the other applications/sub-applications that achieved at least a "more than satisfactory" rating will be ranked in order of quality, after which any remaining funds will be distributed in accordance with this ranking.

Each applicant will receive a formal decision indicating whether the grant has been fully awarded, partially awarded/partially rejected, or fully rejected. Applications will be rejected partially or fully if:

- the quality of an application does not meet the minimum quality standard and/or
- in the case of an application covering two regions, the sub-application for only one region is approved, and/or
- the funds available under this instrument are insufficient to award all qualifying applications/sub-applications.

9.6 Qualitative criteria

Following a positive outcome of the threshold assessment (see section 3.1), each application is assessed on the basis of the following qualitative criteria. See also the application form in Annex 1.

Part I: Track Record (maximum 35 points)

1. Track record in capacity strengthening (maximum 5 points)
a) The extent to which the applicant has demonstrably experience in strengthening the capacity of in-country partners in ways tailored to their needs, using either internal or external expertise.

b) The extent to which the capacity-strengthening measures implemented by the applicant have led to positive change among in-country partners, and the extent to which lessons have been learned from these experiences.

2. Track record in financing mechanisms (maximum 10 points)
a) The extent to which the applicant has experience in designing and managing systems for the disbursement and accountability of funds to partners, in a manner that allows for transparency, mutual trust and an appropriate degree of ownership and responsibility by those partners.

b) The extent to which the applicant has experience with fair, transparent and inclusive forms of financing (e.g. participatory financing) and/or with urgent funding, adapted to the context and needs of in-country partners.

3. Access to relevant local network (maximum 10 points) The extent to which the applicant has a relevant and diverse network of in-country partners in the selected countries which is relevant to the policy objectives of the instrument, demonstrating strong embeddedness in the local context.

4. Experience with programming on Combating Violence Against Women & Supporting Women's Rights and Women Human Rights Defenders (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the applicant has demonstrably successful experience in developing and implementing programmes aimed at the policy objectives of the Combating Violence Against Women & Supporting Women's Rights and Women Human Rights Defenders instrument (see section 9.1), or in (financially) supporting organisations that implement such programmes.

Part II: Proposal (maximum 65 points)

5. Context, stakeholder and problem analysis, and proposal including country selection (maximum 25 points)
a) The extent to which the application presents a sound and relevant analysis of the context, stakeholders and problem.

b) The extent to which the proposed activities logically follow from, and respond to, this analysis.

c) The extent to which the selected countries within the specified region/regions follow logically from the context, stakeholder and problem analysis and are well substantiated.

d) The extent to which the proposal convincingly explains how the intervention contributes to sustainable outcomes and includes a realistic exit strategy.

6. 6. Vision on locally led development (maximum 8 points)
The extent to which the applicant presents a clear vision and approach for fostering local ownership, with a transparent division of roles between the applicant and in-country partners in programme decision-making.

7. Selection and assessment process of in-country partners (maximum 10 points) The extent to which the selection process of in-country partners is carefully, objectively and inclusively designed. It is important that clear procedures are in place for selecting new partners and for reassessing existing ones whose organisational capacity has previously been deemed sufficient to qualify for support.

8. Capacity strengthening of in-country partners (maximum 7 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed approach to capacity strengthening is demand-driven, taking account of the local context and the capacity needs (to be defined) of in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the proposed approach is based on a clear and coherent vision on capacity strengthening.

9. Risk management (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the proposal identifies and analyses the risks associated with the programme and provides suitable mitigation measures.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) (maximum 5 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed MEL approach is developed in cooperation with in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the MEL system is designed to track programme progress, enable transparent reporting, and serve as a basis for timely adaptation of activities within the requirements of this grant policy framework.

11. Budget (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the requested resources and their allocation in the budget submitted with the

application are proportionate to the context, stakeholder and problem analysis, the proposed activities and the intended results.

Part III: Policy principles (maximum 10 points)

12. Gender (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal actively takes gender relations into account in the relevant context.

b) The extent to which the proposal promotes gender equality through its proposed implementation, in a way that is appropriate to the local context and target group.

13.Conflict sensitivity (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal demonstrates understanding of conflict dynamics in the context of the countries concerned and translates this understanding into a conflict-sensitive programme design and implementation.

b) The measures taken to ensure that implementation adheres to the Do No Harm principle.

10 Instrument 3: Women, Peace and Security

10.1 Policy context and objective

The world is witnessing a rise in conflicts, wars and violent extremism, with women and girls disproportionately affected, including through conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). In 2024, the number of cases of CRSV increased by 25% compared with the previous year, with women and girls accounting for 92% of the victims.[22] Survivors face stigma, exclusion and limited access to care and justice.

At the same time, women play a crucial role in conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding. They serve as mediators, provide first aid to victims of CRSV and contribute to sustainable peace and security. Peace is more likely to succeed when women are involved.

Internationally, the role of women in peace and security processes is recognised through UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions.[23]The Netherlands is committed to implementing these resolutions through its fourth National Action Plan 1325 (NAP 1325-IV). Despite these international agreements and policy frameworks, women worldwide remain underrepresented in formal peace negotiations and decision-making processes relating to peace and security. In 2023, only 10% of negotiators, 14% of mediators and 27% of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements were women.[24] [25]In addition, women's- and women's rights organisations in conflict-affected areas often lack the structural support and funding needed to carry out their work effectively.[26]

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) instrument contributes to the implementation of Resolution 1325, NAP 1325-IV and the Policy Letter on Development Cooperation of 20 February 2025.

It aims to strengthen the leadership of women young and old in peace and security processes. This leadership includes their roles as mediators, first responders and peace negotiators. Through support partners, the Ministry supports in-country partners in three regions: the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) by means of financing and capacity-strengthening activities provided by the support partner to in-country partners active in the field of Women, Peace and Security.

The instrument contributes to three sub-objectives:

- strengthening women's leadership in conflict prevention and mediation;
- ensuring meaningful participation and influence of women in formal and informal discussions and decision-making on peace and security at various stages;
- supporting survivors and victims of CRSV.

These sub-objectives correspond in particular with the following pillars of Resolution 1325 and NAP 1325-IV:

- **Participation:** strengthening women's leadership in conflict prevention, mediation and decision-making on peace and security;
- **Protection:** supporting survivors and victims of CRSV.

For other general policy principles, such as capacity strengthening of civil society organisations and locally led development, reference is made to section 1.2.

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[22] Secretary General of the UN, Report on Conflict-related sexual violence (2025).
[23] UNSCR Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), 2242 (2015), 2467 (2019), 2493 (2019) and 2538 (2020).
[24] Secretary General of the UN, Report on Women, Peace and Security (2024), page 9.
[25] Traditional roles in society, stereotypes and discrimination contribute to the exclusion of women from these processes. Moreover, women who are involved in peace processes or conflict mediation face violence and hate speech both offline and online (source: NAP1325-IV).
[26] Secretary General of the UN, Report on Conflict-related sexual violence (2025).

10.2 Geographical focus

To qualify for a grant under the WPS instrument, applications must relate to countries in the regions of West Africa, the Horn of Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), as listed in Annex 6.

Each application may cover **one or two regions, with a minimum of two countries per region** in which the activities will be carried out or to which they will relate.[27] These countries must align with the objectives of this instrument and must remain the implementation countries for the full duration of the grant.

If it is no longer possible for an in-country partner to implement activities in a particular country for security reasons, implementation from a neighbouring country may be permitted, provided that this is properly substantiated and remains consistent with the requirements of this grant policy framework.

10.3 Specific scope of eligible activities

Under this instrument, eligible activities include both financing and capacity-strengthening activities, as described in sections 2.1 and 2.2. Activities must contribute to the policy objectives of this instrument as outlined in section 10.1.

This instrument applies a phased approach. During the inception phase, the programme proposal is elaborated on the basis of input from a selection of relevant local organisations. The programme may consist of several distinct components of varying duration, tailored to the country context and the aims of this instrument. Local organisations involved in the inception phase are not automatically guaranteed support under the programme. Throughout the programme's runtime, local partners may submit applications to the support partner.

Financing activities

The support partner provides financial support to in-country partners for the implementation of activities that contribute to the policy objectives of this instrument (see section 2.1). The in-country partners are responsible for developing and implementing these activities, facilitated by the support partner through a transparent application and selection process for financing and supervision.

Under this instrument, support partners may provide financial support to in-country partners for activities including but not limited to:

- training women in (1) conflict prevention and mediation, (2) local and national peace initiatives and negotiations, and (3) implementation of peace agreements;
- establishing and strengthening networks, for example of women active in conflict prevention and mediation or of survivors of CSRV;
- engaging in dialogue with relevant authorities, international organisations and institutions, for example on National Action Plans 1325 or the strengthening of legislation and enforcement against CSRV;
- providing services that create enabling conditions for participation, such as (digital) security measures, community centres and mental health support;
- providing services for CRSV survivors, such as medical, psychosocial and legal assistance, safe spaces and shelters, referral services and reintegration;
- setting up savings and loan groups for the target group;

[27] Activities may be implemented from a neighbouring country, provided that this is properly substantiated.

- engaging in dialogue with men, boys and traditional actors, such as community and religious leaders.

Capacity-strengthening activities
The support partner assists in-country partners in strengthening their capacity, in line with the general principles described in section 2.2. This support is aimed at increasing the effectiveness, autonomy and sustainability of in-country partners and is not directly targeted at the target group.

The form of support is based on the needs of the in-country partner and is typically agreed during the inception phase. Specific examples of capacity strengthening under this instrument include but are not limited to:

- Specific support for strategy development of in-country partners in the field of participation and protection;
- providing training and mentoring on establishing internal processes, such as transparent financial management, monitoring and reporting.
- Promoting leadership development in in-country partners, focusing on conflict sensitivity and security;
- Strengthening partnerships and knowledge sharing between in-country partners to increase their impact;
- Training, mentoring and advising in-country partners on the design and implementation of activities that support and protect survivors of CRSV;
- Training, mentoring and advising on conflict prevention, conflict mediation and peace and security decision-making.

Applicants must distinguish clearly between financing activities and capacity-strengthening activities in their budget. Financing activities include both service provision and dialogue (see chapter 2). At least 30% of the total amount requested for financing activities must be used to support service provision.

10.4 Grant ceiling and size of applications

The grant ceiling for this instrument is EUR 39,880,000 for the period 2026–2030 (five years).

Each application within this instrument may cover one or two regions, with applications relating to two regions being considered as a single application consisting of two sub-applications.

The size of each application/sub-application must be 33.3% of the total budget available for this instrument (WPS) of €39,880,000. This means that a single application/sub-application must amount to EUR 13,280,040.

Applications submitted for two regions must therefore be 66.66% of the total budget available for this instrument (WPS) of €39,880,000, which amounts to €26,560,080.

10.5 Allocation of available resources within the instrument

In addition to Chapters 4 and 7, the following applies:

Funds are allocated through a grant tender, i.e. on the basis of quality, as described in Chapter 4. The quality of applications is assessed using the qualitative criteria set out in section 10.6.

The qualitative assessment of applications takes place on a region by region basis (see section 10.2). For each application/sub-application for a region, a single final score is given on the basis of the established assessment criteria. In applications covering two regions, each sub-application is given a separate final score. All applications/sub-applications are then ranked per region according to quality. Applications that do not meet the minimum qualitative standard (i.e. 'more than satisfactory') are not included in the ranking.

The Minister awards grants per region in accordance with this quality-based ranking, granting the highest-scoring application/sub-application per region, provided it meets the minimum quality standard of "more than satisfactory."

If no applications/sub-applications of more than satisfactory quality are received for a given region, no grant will be awarded for activities in that region. In such cases, the available funds for that region may instead be used for awarding grants for activities in other regions.

If, after awarding grants to the highest-scoring application/sub-application per region, funds remain, the other applications/sub-applications that achieved at least a "more than satisfactory" rating will be ranked in order of quality, after which any remaining funds will be distributed in accordance with this ranking.

Each applicant will receive a formal decision indicating whether the grant has been fully awarded, partially awarded/partially rejected, or fully rejected. Applications will be rejected partially or fully if:

- the quality of an application does not meet the minimum quality standard and/or
- in the case of an application covering two regions, the sub-application for only one region is approved, and/or
- the funds available under this instrument are insufficient to award all qualifying applications/sub-applications.

10.6 Qualitative criteria

Following a positive outcome of the threshold assessment (see section 3.1), each application is assessed on the basis of the following qualitative criteria. See also the application form in Annex 1.

Part I: Track Record (maximum 35 points)

1. Track record in capacity strengthening (maximum 5 points)
1.A The extent to which the applicant has demonstrably experience in strengthening the capacity of in-country partners in ways tailored to their needs, using either internal or external expertise.

1.B The extent to which the capacity-strengthening measures implemented by the applicant have led to positive change among in-country partners, and the extent to which lessons have been learned from these experiences.

2. Track record in financing mechanisms (maximum 10 points)
a) The extent to which the applicant has experience in designing and managing systems for the disbursement and accountability of funds to partners, in a manner that allows for transparency, mutual trust and an appropriate degree of ownership and responsibility by those partners.

b) The extent to which the applicant has experience with fair, transparent and inclusive forms of financing (e.g. participatory financing) and/or urgent funding, adapted to the context and needs of in-country partners.

3. Access to a relevant local network (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the applicant has a relevant and diverse network of in-country partners in the selected countries which is relevant to the policy objectives of the instrument, demonstrating strong embeddedness in the local context.

4. Experience with programming on Women, Peace and Security (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the applicant has demonstrably successful experience in developing and implementing programmes aimed at the policy objectives of the Women, Peace and Security instrument (see section 10.1), or in (financially) supporting organisations that implement such programmes.

Part II: Proposal (maximum 65 points)

5. Context, stakeholder and problem analysis, and proposal including country selection (maximum 25 points)
a) The extent to which the application presents a sound and relevant analysis of the context, stakeholders and problem.

b) The extent to which the proposed activities logically follow from, and respond to, this analysis.

c) The extent to which the selected countries within the specified region/regions follow logically from the context, stakeholder and problem analysis and are well substantiated.

d) The extent to which the proposal convincingly explains how the intervention contributes to sustainable outcomes and includes a realistic exit strategy.

6. 6. Vision on locally led development (maximum 8 points)
The extent to which the applicant presents a clear vision and approach for fostering local ownership, with a transparent division of roles between the applicant and in-country partners in programme decision-making.

7. Selection and assessment process of in-country partners (maximum 10 points)
The extent to which the process for selecting in-country partners is careful, objective and inclusive. It is important that clear procedures are in place for selecting new partners and for reassessing existing ones whose organisational capacity has previously been deemed sufficient to qualify for support.

8. Capacity strengthening of in-country partners (maximum 7 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed approach to capacity strengthening is demand-driven, taking account of the local context and the capacity needs (to be defined) of in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the proposed approach is based on a clear and coherent vision on capacity strengthening.

9. Risk management (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the proposal identifies and analyses the risks associated with the programme and provides suitable mitigation measures.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) (maximum 5 points)
a) The extent to which the proposed MEL approach is developed in cooperation with in-country partners.

b) The extent to which the MEL system is designed to track programme progress, enable transparent reporting, and serve as a basis for timely adaptation of activities within the requirements of this grant policy framework.

11. Budget (maximum 5 points)
The extent to which the requested resources and their allocation in the budget submitted with the application are proportionate to the context, stakeholder and problem analysis, the proposed activities and the intended results.

Part III: Policy principles (maximum 10 points)

12. Gender (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal actively takes gender relations into account in the relevant context.

b) The extent to which the proposal promotes gender equality through its proposed implementation, in a way that is appropriate to the local context and target group.

13.Conflict sensitivity (maximum 5 points):

a) The extent to which the proposal demonstrates understanding of conflict dynamics in the context of the countries concerned and translates this understanding into a conflict-sensitive programme design and implementation.

b) The measures taken to ensure that implementation adheres to the Do No Harm principle.

11 Reporting and other grant obligations

The grant decision will set out obligations tied to the grant, including an obligation to notify the Minister of facts and circumstances that may have a significant impact on the grant award, such as the applicant's inability to implement the activities for which a grant is awarded in time or in full, or to fulfil its reporting obligations, including the submission of interim and final narrative and financial reports.

Any funds remaining after the grant period has come to an end shall be returned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, unless the grant period is extended. An obligation to this effect will be included in the grant award decision.

12 Administrative burden

The administrative burden of implementing this grant policy framework is €75,000 for the total grant period. The administrative burden consists of work associated with the obligations to provide information as part of the application process and, if a grant is awarded the work involved in meeting the reporting obligations under the grant. Based on the estimate that a maximum of 125 organisations will submit an application eligible for funding, the total is 125 × EUR 75,000, which represents approximately 4.5% of the total grant budget.

In drafting the grant policy framework, critical attention has been paid, first, to ensuring that the criteria for grant applicants and the intended results are clearly formulated, and second, to providing clarity about how the grants awarded will be funded and accounted for. This enables applicants to assess in advance whether submitting an application is worthwhile. In this way, the Ministry aims to keep the administrative burden for applicants to an absolute minimum.

13 Appendices

Appendices[28] accompanying this grant policy framework:

Annex 1: Application form

Annex 2: Financial independence form (incl. explanatory notes)

Annex 3.1: Project proposal format, including policy principles of "Encouraging women's entrepreneurship"

Annex 3.2: Project proposal format, including policy principles of "Combating violence against women"

Annex 3.3: Project proposal format, including policy principles of "Women, Peace and Security"

Annex 4.1: Model Budget Guidelines

Annex 4.2: Budget model format Excel

Annex 5: Track record format

Annex 6: Country list

Annex 7: Corporate rates

Annex 8: Max. remuneration amounts

[28] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-buitenlandse-zaken/documenten/.