



Gibt Kindern eine Chance

PLAN INTERNATIONAL GERMANY

# GIRLS REPORT 2018

## STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

### Summary

Girls and young women,<sup>1</sup> particularly in developing countries, face countless challenges and have limited ability to influence the social norms and the political climate that govern their lives. While some advancements have been made to reach the goal of gender equality – one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all member states of the United Nations – progress for girls and younger cohorts of women in particular remains scant. As a result, girls and young women continue to remain the single most discriminated against and excluded group today.

One of the most effective ways to empower girls and young women is to enable them to have a voice. When they actively participate in social and political life, they become drivers for change in their own lives and in their communities. Early experiences in political participation build their confidence, allow them to take action on issues that matter to them, and empower them to stand up for their own rights.

### Key questions and methods of analysis

The Girls Report 2018 seeks to shed light on what the international donor community, and the German government in particular, is doing to support the political participation<sup>2</sup> of girls and young women. It focuses on **two questions**:

1. What are **best practices in the international donor community** for strengthening the political participation of girls and young women in developing countries?
2. **What does the German government do** to empower girls and young women in developing countries, and how does Germany perform in comparison to other donors?

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the present report, “girl” refers to every human being of female gender and below the age of 18 years, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, organizations often use different definitions. “Young woman” refers to everyone of female gender aged 18-25. This definition is used by Plan International, however, there is no uniform definition which is endorsed by all actors.

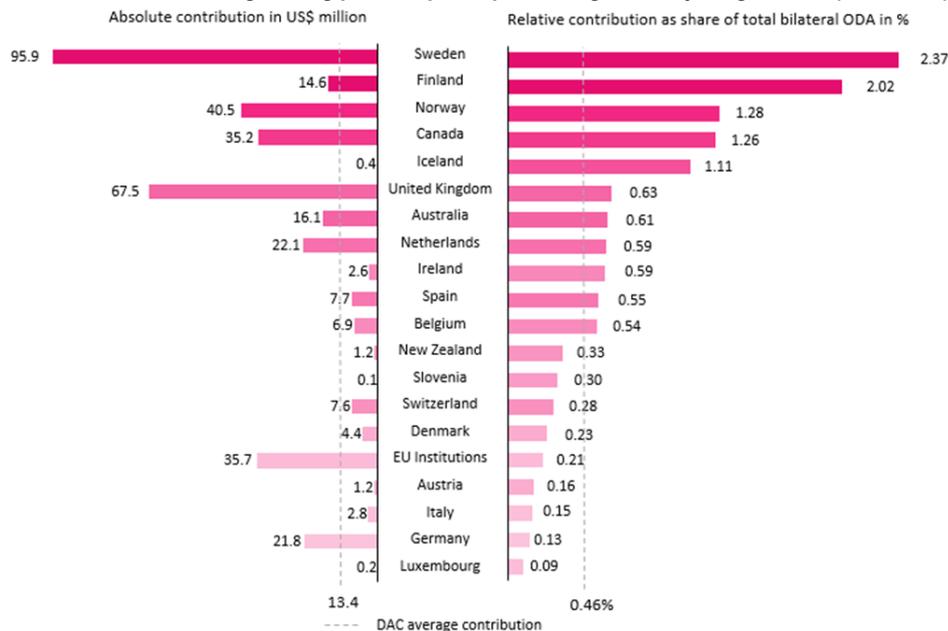
<sup>2</sup> Political participation is not limited to voting or participation in political parties. Rather, it extends to all areas of life and all sectors of society. Child and youth participation encourages girls, boys and youth to express their views and be involved in shaping decisions that affect them in an informed way.

The report's findings are based, first, on a quantitative analysis of 30 OECD donors' official development assistance (ODA) flows targeting political participation of girls and young women. Secondly, informed by the results of the financial analysis, further qualitative research and expert interviews were conducted to identify international best-practices.

## Key Findings of the Report

### 1. Financial commitments for girls' and young women's political participation

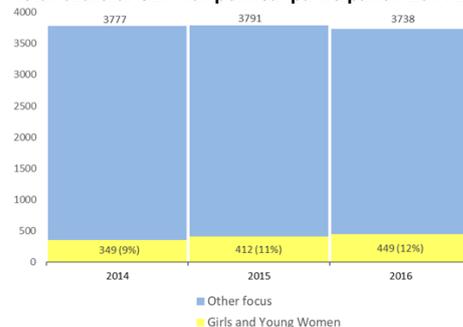
Top 20 DAC donors for strengthening political participation of girls and young women (2014-2016):



Source: SEEK Development estimates based on OECD Creditor Reporting System.

While visibility for the topic has increased in recent years, **financial support by donors for strengthening access of girls and young women to political processes is still marginal**. Taken together, the 30 donors analyzed spent US\$403 million in bilateral ODA per year between 2014 and 2016; this corresponds to 0.3% of their total bilateral development assistance. **Only five donors spent more than 1% of their total bilateral ODA on the topic.**

Bilateral ODA related to political participation with focus on girls and young women in US\$ millions, as a share of total bilateral ODA für political participation 2014-2016



#### Donor funding is highly concentrated. Only

five donors (Sweden, the United Kingdom (UK), Norway, the European Union (EU) Institutions, and Canada) provide more than two-thirds of all ODA for the political participation of girls and young women. This shows that a few donors are financially committed, but most donors provide only limited resources so far.

**Most donor funding is allocated to measures that directly promote political participation of girls and young women, and to human rights-related measures.** The analysis of projects across five OECD sub-sectors shows that the largest area of funding between 2014 and 2016 went to projects focusing on democratic participation of girls and young women, which received an annual average of more than a third (34%) of all funding. This was closely followed by projects focused on strengthening human rights (32%). On average, a quarter of funds (24%) were allocated to supporting women's equality organizations. Remaining funds supported efforts to end violence against girls and women (9%) and media projects and free flow of information (1%).

**Sub-Saharan Africa consistently receives a large majority of funding dedicated to strengthening the political participation of girls and young women.** From 2014 to 2016 an average of 37% of all funding went to this region.

## 2. Best practice countries

Three donor countries - **Sweden, Canada and the Netherlands** - were identified as best-practices, given their strategic focus on girls and young women. Other donors, including Germany, could learn from these.

- Backed by a strong political commitment at the highest level of government, **Sweden** features a “feminist foreign policy” that specifically promotes the political participation of girls and women.
- Under its “feminist international assistance policy”, **Canada** has made gender equality its top development priority. The country pledges to invest 15% of total bilateral ODA on projects specifically targeting gender equality and empowerment of girls and young women.
- **The Netherlands** champions girls and women’s participation in various international fora and initiatives, e.g. by initiating the “SheDecides” movement in 2017.

Overview of best-practice countries and key characteristics			
	Sweden	Canada	The Netherlands
ODA flows (2014-2016 annual average)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US\$96 million</li> <li>• 2.4% of total bilateral ODA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$35 million</li> <li>• 1.3% of total bilateral ODA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US\$22 million</li> <li>• 0.6% of total bilateral ODA</li> </ul>
Strategic focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feminist foreign policy (2015-2018)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Outlines political participation of girls and women as one of six strategic priorities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strategy for global equality and women and girls rights (2018-2022)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Targets structural barriers to political participation of girls and women</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feminist development policy (2017)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women as the only core action area</li> <li>&gt; Girls’ and women’s agency and participation to be strengthened across all sectors and projects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development policy (2018-2021)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women as a cross-cutting goal</li> <li>&gt; Political participation featured as the first goal related to gender equality</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Engagement and special initiatives at the global level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocates internationally for disaggregated data by age and gender</li> <li>• Driver and financial supporter of SheDecides and SRHR</li> <li>• Largest country contributor to UN Women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• G7 Presidency 2018               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Placed gender equality and women’s empowerment at the core of G7 agenda</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Holds a seat on the UN Commission on the Status of Women               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Actively involves Canadian CSOs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made UN Security Council Resolution 1325 a priority during non-permanent UNSC membership in 2018</li> <li>• Initiator and supporter of SheDecides movement</li> </ul>
Bilateral programs and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender equality goal is a prerequisite for partnerships</li> <li>• Programs focus on giving girls and young women agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15% of Canada’s bilateral ODA should benefit girls and women by 2021-2022 directly, and 80% indirectly</li> <li>• Supports the disaggregation of data by gender and age across all bilateral development efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong support to CSOs working on political participation of girls and women, especially local NGOs</li> <li>• Flexible funding along 5-year periods</li> </ul>

### 3. Commitment of the German Government

A deeper look at Germany reveals that **its ODA levels and policies have much room for improvement**. Germany is the seventh-largest donor in absolute terms (US\$22 million per year from 2014-16). However, it falls behind to 19<sup>th</sup> place when comparing funding to its overall ODA. The relevant strategies of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – the Strategy on Gender Equality in Development Cooperation and the Gender Action Plan 2016-20 – emphasize the importance of political participation of women, but lack a dedicated budget, and mostly do not identify girls as a stand-alone target group.

#### Seven recommendations to the German government

- 1. Expand financial support for the political participation of girls and young women.**  
This could be done by backing the Gender Action Plan with a dedicated funding envelope, or by setting a quota to ensure a certain share of BMZ funds specifically target the empowerment of girls and young women.
- 2. Single out girls as a stand-alone target group**, rather than grouping them together as “women and girls”. The next update of the key strategies should explicitly mention principles and measures to address the specific needs of girls and young women.
- 3. Ensure an inclusive and transparent consultation process during the next update of the Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Action Plan.** The broad consultation process conducted in Canada, incorporating recommendations from civil society, experts and practitioners, can serve as an example.
- 4. Ensure active and meaningful participation of girls and young women in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of projects funded by BMZ.** A prerequisite is the continued inclusion of “participation, voice, leadership” as a priority in the Gender Action Plan’s annual roadmaps.
- 5. Increase funding to civil society organizations that work with children and youth, particularly in those with a focus on girls and young women.** In addition, more flexible funding mechanisms would allow space for attentive programming, piloting, and learning, similarly to the approach of the Dutch government.
- 6. Strengthen visibility for the political empowerment of girls and young women at a global level.** Germany should sustain its engagement for girls and women beyond its past G7 and G20 presidencies, e.g. by leveraging its close relationship with France to advocate for this to be placed high on the agenda of France’s G7 presidency in 2019. In addition, BMZ should promote the empowerment of girls and young women in all negotiations with partner countries.
- 7. Improve the quality of data on girls and young women.** BMZ should disaggregate data by age for all projects that seek to advance gender equality, to be able to single-out girls and young women more systematically in project design and implementation. Additionally, Germany and all other donors should improve their reporting to the OECD, by comprehensively using the gender markers and describing projects in greater detail. This would enhance the comparability of donor funding and make it easier to monitor progress toward SDG 5.

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